

# The Ivy Leaf

Established in 1917 to honor those who serve

VOL. 2, NO. 23

MULTI-NATIONAL DIVISION - BAGHDAD

“STEADFAST AND LOYAL”

October 27, 2008

## MND-B Soldiers enrich lives of Iraqi children



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

A Iraqi child runs to take the hand of Spc. Chris Jackson, an infantryman with Company A, 1st Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, currently attached to 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry, in an impoverished neighborhood of the Sadr City district of Baghdad Oct. 13.

**By Sgt. Jerry Saslav**

3rd BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

BAGHDAD – The area is known as “Shanty Town” to the Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers who patrol the streets there. It is a poor section of Sadr City where the houses are flimsy structures of brick and mud, where sewage runs through the street and trash is piled along the road. But children and their families overlook the state of their condition when 1st Lt. Martin Saurez’ platoon comes for a visit.

“It’s not really the prettiest area, but there are people living there so we try to help them out,” said Saurez, a platoon leader, for Company A, 1st Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division.

On this day, Saurez and his platoon are handing out soccer balls, a cherished commodity for per any Iraqi child, especial-

ly the impoverished children of “Shanty Town.”

Saurez’ unit, based out of Baumholder, Germany, currently attached to 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, is responsible for security, government and economic development of the southern Sadr City district of Baghdad.

“There’s not many opportunities in the area. Many of them are workers in the industrial park. They get paid two to three dollars a week – if that,” said Saurez, a native of Fort Lauderdale, Fla. “Every once in a while, we’ll go in there and drop off food, a lot of food, a lot of water, some supplies and soccer balls for the kids.

“It’s like a big mob, but a good mob, a welcome mob, they like us there,” said Saurez.

Spc. Chris Jackson, a native of Washington, leaves the MRAP carrying a large black trash bag containing soccer balls, and the neighborhood children begin to gather. They remember Jackson as a barer of gifts, but they just aren’t sure what they have this time.

“Every single time we distribute soccer balls, it’s ... it’s kind of like a big mosh pit. It’s a big rush to

grab them,” said Saurez.

As Jackson takes the soccer balls from the bag, the children grow aggressive and charge to get their own ball. Some tried to tear the balls right from Jackson’s hands.

“I had them under control,” said Jackson, an infantryman in the platoon. “They just get excited, that’s all.”

Some children try to reach into the trash bag to grab the soccer balls, but Jackson stops them as a father smiles. He reprimands the teenagers and older children who try to take the balls away from the younger ones.

“You come with a box of soccer balls and candy. It’s guaranteed something; somebody is going to go wild,” Jackson said.

Jackson recently had two daughters of his own pass away.

See enrich pg. 6

## MND-B’s PSD teams safely transport selves, passengers through streets of Baghdad

**By Sgt. 1st Class Nichole Bonham**

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – The streets of Baghdad are safer these days. One can hear that message in the news or read about it in the paper. The message isn’t propaganda or hype; it’s a solid reality that every Soldier deployed to the area can recognize and be grateful for.

But safer doesn’t mean the danger is gone.

The camps and forward operating bases, and even the smaller combat outposts sprinkled around the city, are pockets of relative safety. They owe that security to the steady vigilance of the guards on their walls and towers. To get from one pocket of safety to another, however, one has to travel the streets of Baghdad..

See Skills Training pg. 17

## 10th Cav. Soldier recovers from blast with Family support

**Story and photo by Spc. Benjamin Crane**

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – American Soldiers work diligently during their deployments. Even when they are faced with adversity, they find ways to work through difficulties and get their various jobs done.



**Sgt. Kristie Edwards**

101st Airborne Div., Multi-National Division – Baghdad, is a good example of overcoming adversity.

On January 29, Edwards, a mother of two, was searching Iraqi females at a check point in Baghdad.

“We were at a check point doing female searches. I was supervising the Daughters of Iraq doing the searches on the Iraqi women,” said Edwards.

See Soldier Recovers pg. 18

## MND-B Soldiers transition Sol into job-focused skills training

**By Sgt. 1st Class Brent Williams**

1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

FORWARD OPERATING BASE FALCON, Iraq — Acceptance letters in hand, nearly 450 Sons of Iraq left their AK-47 rifles at home to register for job-focused training Oct. 6-10 at the Civil Services Department located in the Jihad community of the Rashid district in southern Baghdad.

The vocational classes, scheduled to begin Oct. 18, is the newest initiative by Coalition Forces to assist the members of the Abna al-Iraq (Sons of Iraq) find alternative employment after the security program’s recent transition to the control of the Government of Iraq, said Capt. Ryan Gavin, commander of Company C, 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National

Division – Baghdad.

“The Jihad Civil Service Department started as a civil works project meant to create a work force of about 400 locally trained Iraqis who would repair and improve services throughout the area,” said Gavin, an armor officer from Kingston, N.Y.

The students participating in the Job Training Focus Program can choose from medical training, clerical and administration training, telecommunications, civil and mechanical engineering, vehicle maintenance and commercial driving, as well as other vocational courses, explained Gavin.

“The program is very important to Rashid,” he said. “It has the potential to create a more skilled work force that will then be able to improve services throughout the district.

“It is also important in the transition of Sons of Iraq as it provides the opportunity to reduce the number of Sols by transitioning them into the workforce.”

The Soldiers of Co. C helped to secure the work site and supervised the construction and renovation of the CSD building and classrooms.

The company also worked with the local community council members to place local Iraqi residents and Sons of Iraq into the training program.

“We have been working with the local councils to try and get the word out that we have these employment opportunities,” said 1st Lt. Adam Maxwell, an artillery officer assigned to Co. C, 1st Bn., 22nd Inf. Regt., 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

See Skills Training pg. 17

**Multi-National Division - Baghdad**  
Public Affairs Office

**Commanding General:**  
Maj. Gen. Jeffery Hammond

**Div. Command Sergeant Major:**  
Command Sgt. Maj. John Gioia

**Public Affairs Officer:**  
Lt. Col. Steve Stover

**Public Affairs Chief**  
Sgt. Maj. Eric Lobsinger

**Editor:**  
Sgt. Jody Metzger

**Staff Writers:**  
Staff Sgt. Brock Jones  
Staff Sgt. Michael Molinaro  
Staff Sgt. Scott Wolfe  
Sgt. Jason Thompson  
Sgt. Philip Klein  
Sgt. Whitney Houston  
Sgt. Jerry Saslav  
Spc. Douglas York  
Pfc. Lyndsey Dransfield

**Contributing Units:**

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

## Index

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



The *Ivy Leaf* is an authorized publication for members of the U.S. Army. Contents of The *Ivy Leaf* are not necessarily official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, Department of the Army, or the 4th Infantry Division.

The *Ivy Leaf* has a circulation of 10,000. The appearance of advertising in this publication, including inserts or supplements, does not constitute endorsement by the Department of the Army, the 4th Infantry Division, or The *Ivy Leaf*, of the products and services advertised.

All editorial content of The *Ivy Leaf* is prepared, edited, provided and approved by the Multi-National Division – Baghdad Public Affairs Office.

**Do you have a story to share?**

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

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.

The *Ivy Leaf* reserves the right to edit submissions selected for the paper.

For further information on deadlines, questions, comments or a request to be on our distribution list, email the Editor or call VoIP 242-4093 or DSN (318) 847-1855.

# Progress continues in Baghdad



Photo Courtesy of MND-B PAO

## MND-B Soldiers provide Gol, citizens of Baghdad, ISF time necessary to achieve sustainable security

**By Maj. Gen. Jeff Hammond**

*4th Inf. Div., MND-B*

To all Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines:

As we enter into October, the weather is getting a bit cooler. It is no longer the 118 degrees it was. However, you continue to do magnificent work in and around Baghdad.

Progress is being made. I met with the mayor of Baghdad and we discussed what we needed to do to contribute to security. The mayor committed to allocating approximately \$100 million on three major Baghdad roads undergoing reconstruction. Now, the reason I'm telling you this is I am really excited. He is an Iraqi leader stepping forward with a vision to help the people of Baghdad.

In addition to the reconstruction of the Army Canal Road, he has already committed an additional \$60 million for the reconstruction of the Airport Road, which runs from the heart of the city to the major international airport. Between the two major projects, thousands of Iraqi citizens will reap the benefits of the potential employment opportunities.

It is through projects such as Route Sword that provide the population a renewed sense of life, a return to normalcy in the capital city and, ultimately, contributes to a greater sense of security. I believe this will help get us through the Provincial Elections, which we believe will occur in January. I truly believe, at that point, we should really turn the corner in a big way.

The MND-B team is doing great. We are down to roughly four attacks a day. We are seeing a few environmental adjustments. The enemy is starting to readjust its tactics and attempting to instill terror through assassinations, using cowardly tactics such as car bombs and sticky bombs.

So far, a majority of these attacks are directed toward the Iraqi people or against its Iraqi Security Forces. The enemy attempting to revert to causing terror and confusion as it strives to divide the country as the nation nears its upcoming elec-

tions.

Another area of emphasis that I feel it is vital to maintaining the security of Baghdad is the successful transition of the Sons of Iraq. The Awakening movement played a key role in moving reconciliation forward and improving security and stability throughout the province. It took personal sacrifice and courage to denounce al-Qaeda in Iraq and other extremist organizations. The volunteers who served their communities with the SOI security forces realized they had to do the hard right for the future of their children and the future of Iraq. They are true patriots, and many have given their lives. Together with the Iraqi Security Forces and the Government of Iraq, we must get this right. We will continue to work through this process in order to integrate the SOI into the Iraqi Security Forces or other civilian employment.

**"I'm very proud of what you're doing – and I am equally proud of what your Families are doing and their sacrifices. Through their tremendous support at home – both for their Soldiers and our great team – they are the ones making a difference. Along with our mission, they are truly the most important facets in our lives: our Families."**

We are doing a good job in providing the Government of Iraq, the citizens of Baghdad, and their security forces the time necessary in order to achieve sustainable security. I'm very proud of what you're doing – and I am equally proud of what your Families are doing and their sacrifices.

Through their tremendous support at home – both for their Soldiers and our great team – they are the ones making a difference. Along with our mission, they are truly the most important facets in our lives: our Families.

They are raising our children, and now that school has started, they're dealing with the crises and making life the best they can, as normal as possible, back home. We need to thank them for without them, we can't do anything we are trying to do in our United States Army.

I am personally involved in reaching out to entertainers and athletes through the USO to volunteer and come see our Soldiers this Thanksgiving and Christmas season.

I believe this should be easy to accomplish for if you want to see world-class volunteering first hand, you need look no further than back to our home stations. We have thousands of volunteers there – and no one needs to ask them, they just naturally just step up. We have that type of giving spirit at home.

In closing, please take care of each other. We are one Family, which makes up one of our four stalwart pillars of success for this division: **Mission – Soldier – Family – Team.**

May God bless you, our Families, loved ones and friends back home.

## After 11 months of combat, leadership continues to be best defense against complacency

**By Command Sgt. Maj. John Gioia**  
4th Inf. Div, MND-B

As the division heads into its twelfth month of the deployment, I see and hear some things across our formation that concerns me. How many of you have heard: “We’re under 120 days left in theater?” or the infamous “We are getting short?” I cringe every time I hear these words uttered for fear that Soldiers’ heads are not in the game. It often indicates they are not concentrating on what should be their emphasis: Our Mission.

As leaders, it is imperative we continue to fight against the potential onset of complacency and remain vigilant in eliminating negligence. How often do we tell our Soldiers the deployment is not a sprint – it is a marathon? Well, the fact is, it is a marathon, and we have several laps to go.

We cannot afford to let up now. If anything, we must push even harder because eventually, the troops will begin to see the finish line in sight. To be clear, I expect our operational tempo to continue to increase – not slow down. We’ll be asked to do more with less as Iraq’s security improves.

We are working in an environment that poses new, dynamic challenges for leaders as our successes have led to the reduction of day-to-day violence in our operational environment to a perceived level of calmness. It is this current environment where we are vulnerable to a level of complacency. Soldiers can develop a certain sense of numbness because they have defeated, in most cases, the enemy threat in their area. However, it is critical to bear in mind that each and every day, opportunity is provided for the enemy to cast his vote in the form of attacks and violence against Coalition Forces.

Thus, it is essential we reinforce our “attack” mentality and keep the enemy on the defensive. With the erosion of standards, there is always potential of mission failure. Only through a strict adherence of standards will we continue mission success – regardless of the standard. How many Soldiers have been injured clearing their weapons due to a lack of supervision? Clearing weapons is a leader’s responsibility. Period. The only way to eliminate negligent discharges is to enforce the standard. It’s as simple as that. Leaders enforce supervised weapons clearing!

The bottom line is disciplined Soldiers equal disciplined units. A disciplined organization can accomplish any mission successfully.

We are at a point in the deployment that many Soldiers and leaders have not experienced before. During previous deployments, when Soldiers hit the 11-month mark, most were thinking “Well, we’re done.” At that point, it was time to start inventories, clean equipment and load conexas. The reality is, however, that most of the division still has a minimum of four

months to go.

Think about that, there are at least four months remaining in the deployment. We are NOT short. There is still a lot to be accomplished before Soldiers can even begin to think about “getting short.” Unless leaders keep their Soldiers in the proper frame of mind, it could potentially be the worst four months of the deployment. When Soldiers begin to believe they are “short,” that is when they are the most susceptible to accidents, injuries, errors in judgment and the potential for making unethical or immoral decisions.

From a leader stand point, we must treat the current phase of our deployment almost as if it is the first four months of the deployment, particularly when it comes to emphasizing and focusing on safety and the mission.

Good leaders mentor junior leaders and share their experiences. This is even more important at the current phase of the deployment. We expect a lot out of our young leaders today, and many of them continue to shine as they conduct their day-to-day missions here in Iraq. However, it is also important that we, as Senior Leaders, recognize that to a large part, our junior NCOs’ institutional knowledge has been replaced by operational experience due to the Global War on Terrorism. Thus, the role of senior leaders in providing mentorship and guidance is more important now than ever before.

We must also ensure shortcuts are not tolerated in lieu of proper procedures.

You will see, at times, platoon-level leaders attempting to influence company-level leaders by suggesting shortcuts in the planning or execution of what is perceived to be “routine” missions.

One thing we’ve learned after five years fighting this war



is there is no such thing as a routine mission. The bottom line is that shortcuts result in Soldiers being killed or wounded. The statement that complacency kills couldn’t be more accurate when this breakdown occurs.

Perhaps the most important point to keep in mind here is that Soldiers will do exactly what you allow them to do. Leaders provide clear, concise guidance and “bring order to chaos” when operating in the most austere combat environments or conditions. In other words, leaders LEAD.

Defending against complacency and routine lifestyles can only be achieved through brigade- and battalion-focused leadership visits that stress security and force protection standards, which are essential for overall mission success.

Continued force protection assessments throughout the deployment keeps the enemies at wits end as Soldiers constantly improve their foxholes.

I challenge the leaders across this division to re-energize their Soldiers and maintain their focus on those force protection issues that are instrumental throughout the deployment – perhaps now, more than ever.

Nobody likes the word complacency – so stamp it out. Take charge of your Soldiers and help bring them back home with their heads high and their mission complete. They should have pride in all they have and will accomplish – I do.

## Word on the Street:

By 18th Military Police Brigade PAO

*What is your most memorable Halloween experience?*



**Staff Sgt. David Carter**  
Redding, Cali.  
Supply sergeant,  
18th MP Bde.

“One Halloween I wore a cardboard box that I made into a human refrigerator as my costume.”



**Capt. Bonnie Dunlop**  
Plattsburgh, N.Y.  
Command Judge Advocate,  
18th MP Bde.

“I used to go trick-or-treating with my horse. We would both be dressed up and I always received more candy when I brought the horse with me.”



**Capt. Jennifer Farrel**  
North Ridgeville, Ohio  
Assistant Plans Officer,  
18th MP Bde.

“My mom made me a costume when I was in third grade that was a princess with a sparkly crown made out of poster board and glitter.”



**Spc. Niesha Colvin**  
Mansfield, Ohio  
Human Resources Specialist,  
18th MP Bde.

“The ‘Children of the Corn’ movies scaring the heck out of me.”

# News briefs

## MND-B Soldiers arrest 3 criminals in Baghdad's Rashid district

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

BAGHDAD – Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers found explosives and arrested three special groups criminals in Baghdad's Rashid district Oct. 18.

At approximately 12:15 a.m. Oct. 18, Soldiers from Company B, 4th Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment attached to the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, detained two Special Groups criminals in the Risalah community.

The Co. B Soldiers took the detainees, who wanted for weapons trafficking, to a forward operating base for further processing.

At approximately 7:30 a.m., policemen from 2nd Battalion 7th Brigade, 2nd National Police Division, conducted a combined clearing operation with Soldiers from Company B, 2nd Battalion, 4th Infantry Division, attached to the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, and detained a suspected al-Qaeda in Iraq terrorist in the Masafee community near Doura.

The suspect is allegedly responsible for attacks in the area. The Co. B patrol transported the suspect to a combat outpost for additional questioning.

"Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces continue to police up the streets in the Rashid district," said Maj. Dave Olson, 1st BCT spokesman, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B. "They are committed to keeping criminals and their tools of destruction out of the hands of criminals to provide a safe and secure environment for Rashid's 1.6 million citizens."

## INP, MND-B Soldiers find weapons

### MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – Iraqi National Police and Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers took weapons of the streets of the Baghdad area in two separate incidents Oct. 17.

A Sheik turned in a cache that was brought to his residence to Soldiers serving with Company A, 1st Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, north of Baghdad, at approximately 10 a.m. The munitions turned in included two projectiles, a Yugoslavian-manufactured 76mm round and an 130mm round and detonation cord with blasting caps.

An explosive ordnance detachment recovered the two improvised-explosive devices in the East Rashid district of Baghdad at approximately 2 p.m.

Policemen serving with 7th Battalion, 5th Brigade, 2nd National Police Division, informed Soldiers serving with Troop B, 7th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, MND-B, where to find two speed bump type IEDs a local national found in his house when he was cleaning to move back in.



# NPs, MND-B Soldiers search for SG extremist in Mamun

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE LOYALTY, Iraq – Iraqi Security Forces and Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers passed out flyers and spoke with local citizens on the streets in order find Ali Sabah aka Abu Karrar in Al Amin, a Special Groups extremist, while conducting an operations in a village in eastern Baghdad, Oct. 14.

National Policeman from 1st Brigade, 4th Battalion, 1st National Police Division, and Soldiers from Company A, 1st Battalion, 66th Armor Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, attached to 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light), returned to Al Amin to pass out flyers informing residents of the possible return of SG extremists in their area.

The NPs and MND-B Soldiers spoke with shopkeepers in hopes to encourage civilians to report Ali Sabah's whereabouts if he should return to his hometown in Al Amin.

Sabah's extremist activities are widespread. They include improvised-explosive device emplacement, rocket attacks, kidnapping and murder. According to one woman in the village, her son was murdered by Sabah.

Ali Sabah's father said he still hasn't heard anything from his son since his last visit, but someone replaced the lock on his apartment, said 2nd Lt. Eric Geiger, a platoon leader with Company A, 1st Bn., 66th Armd. Regt.

"But if he does, he'll let us know," said Geiger a Littleton, Colorado native.

"We'll continue to pass out flyers and talk to the locals until he is captured."

"The capturing of this criminal would be a victory for the people of Mamun by allowing the residents to rebuild without the fear of being attacked," said Maj. Joey Sullinger, a spokesperson for 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light), MND-B.



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

National Policeman from 1st Brigade, 4th Battalion, 1st National Police Division, speaks with a resident about Ali Sabah, aka Abu Karrar in Al Amin, a Special Groups extremist, during a visit to a village in eastern Baghdad Oct. 14.

"Removing criminals from Baghdad streets is a necessary step along the path to a secure and stable future for all Iraqi citizens, Iraqi Security Forces and Government officials."

## INP, MND-B Soldiers seized weapons caches in Baghdad

### MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – Iraqi national policemen and Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers seized weapons cache in the Baghdad area Oct. 15.

Soldiers serving with Company C, 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, found a flash bang grenade and a smoke grenade while conducting reconnaissance of a market in the West Rashid district of Baghdad at approximately 12:30 p.m.

Policemen serving with 1st Battalion, 4th Brigade, 1st National Police Division, found an eight-inch explosively-formed projectile inside PVC pipe and a seven inch steel plated EFP encased in foam in the New Baghdad district of Baghdad at approximately 4:15 p.m.

## Tip, detainee lead NP, MND-B Soldiers to weapons caches throughout Baghdad

### MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – An Iraqi citizen's confidence in Iraqi National Police and Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers, and information from a detainee, led to the seizure of several weapons cache in the Baghdad area Oct. 16.

A tip from an Iraqi citizen led to the seizure of a munitions cache by Soldiers serving with Company A, 1st Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, at approximately 10:30 a.m. north of Baghdad. The munitions included approximately 65 pounds of TNT, six cans of 14.5mm ammunition, a damaged

## MND-B Soldiers arrest SG criminal in Zafaraniyah

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

BAGHDAD – U.S. Soldiers from 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light), Multi-National Division – Baghdad, arrested a suspected Special Groups criminal in the Zafaraniyah area of eastern Baghdad Oct. 15.

Soldiers from 5th Battalion, 25th Field Artillery arrested a the suspected SG leader, whose group is responsible for improvised explosive device emplacement and indirect fire attacks against Coalition Forces.

"The arrest of this SG leader will most certainly reduce the danger they pose to the citizens of Zafaraniyah," said Maj. Joey Sullinger, a spokesperson for 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light). "These arrests are really victories for the people and especially in cases like these are executed off of intelligence provided by the local communities, which are fed up with SG criminals running their streets."

rocket-propelled grenade launcher, an empty RPG rocket, a 155mm South African-manufactured projectile and a hand grenade. A bag of sulfur and a bag of sodium carbonate were also seized at the scene.

At approximately 1 p.m. Soldiers serving with Company C, 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment, 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div., seized a cache west of Baghdad. The munitions seized included four 82mm mortar rounds, an anti-personnel RPG and a 60mm mortar tube.

Policemen serving with 2nd Battalion, 4th Brigade, 1st National Police Division, and Soldiers serving with Company B, 1st Battalion, 66th Armor Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat

## Coalition Soldiers return fire, kill 2 SG criminals in Oubaidy

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

BAGHDAD – U.S. Soldiers from 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light), Multi-National Division – Baghdad, returned fire and killed two Special Groups criminals after they fired on Joint Security Station Oubaidy Oct. 14.

Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment immediately took action after SG criminals fired upon the station.

No CF were killed or injured in the failed attack on JSS Oubaidy.

"Information gathered indicates that this failed attack was conducted by a SG cell from Sadr City," said Maj. Joey Sullinger, a spokesperson for 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light).

"Unprovoked attacks will not be tolerated and will be met with swift and appropriate force."

Team, 10th Mountain Division, seized a cache during a combined cache search in the New Baghdad district of Baghdad at approximately 5 p.m. The items seized were five AK-47s, six magazines loaded with 7.62mm ammunition, a military type load bearing equipment vest and an empty 107 mm rocket.

Based off information from a detained suspect, policemen serving with 2nd Battalion, 7th Brigade, 2nd National Police Division, and MND-B Soldiers serving with 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, seized four 105mm rounds buried in a yard in the east Rashid district of Baghdad at approximately 4 pm.



# MND-B Soldiers, NPs air-assault to objective



UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters land in the cover of night in a field during an air-assault mission in Shawra Wa Um Oct. 5.

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

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE LOYALTY, Iraq – In the cover of night, Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers and Iraqi National Policemen hovered in on UH-60 Blackhawks toward their objective in the Shawra Wa Um Jidir area of eastern Baghdad Oct. 5.

Approximately 120 Soldiers from Company C, 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, and 16 National Policemen from 1st Battalion, 8th Brigade, 2nd National Police Division, participated in the air-assault mission.

The overall objective of the mission was to disrupt the operations of Special Groups extremists in the SUJ area, said Capt. Adam Cecil, the commander of Co. C, 2nd Bn., 30th Inf. Regt.

Enemy forces were using the SUJ area as a safe haven and a staging area for their operations against Sadr City and 9 Nissan, said Cecil, a Chesapeake, Ohio, native.

“The mission was very successful,” explained Cecil. “It demonstrated to the enemy a capability that we can drop in

deep behind their (improvised-explosive device) engagement area and hit them where it hurts without having to drive through those danger areas.”

One of the biggest threats out there is IEDs, and anytime those risks can be mitigated is a welcome alternative, he added.

The air assault mission isn’t one the Soldiers conduct every day. Over the period of three days, the Soldiers of Company C and their NP partners conducted rehearsals for the mission, said Cecil. The spotlight of the training focused on the aviation portion and getting the Soldiers on and off the Blackhawk.

“The most dangerous part of that mission during an air assault is landing in that (landing zone),” said Cecil. “That was definitely something we spent quite a bit of time on rehearsing and making sure we knew what to expect when we hit the ground.”

One of the challenges to this type of a mission is the platoon members air assault in from more than one aircraft. Thus, it is vital that the subordinate leaders are prepared for all facets of their assault on the objective, explained 1st Lt.

Brandon Trama, a platoon leader in Co. C, 2nd Bn., 30th Inf. Regt.

Safety is a very important part of conducting an air-assault mission, emphasized 1st Sgt. Brian Disque, the senior enlisted leader for Co. C. Landing in a dusty field, Disque said he wanted to ensure his Soldiers were comfortable getting in and out of the aircraft. The Philadelphia native said he felt the complications potentially created due to language barriers increased the risk factor for something to go amiss, which only reemphasized the importance of the rehearsals prior to conducting the actual mission.

“The rehearsals paid off, and you can definitely see the benefits from it,” said Disque.

Conducting the air assault isn’t something these Soldiers get to do often so the opportunity allows the unit to expand its “playbook,” added Disque. The primary difference between the air-assault mission and the mounted and dismounted missions is the method of insertion into the area.

Additionally, he said, there are numerous adjustments the Soldiers have to make. When entering in a convoy, the Soldiers have more time to acclimate to the terrain and to their own situational awareness. In an air-assault mission however, even though they understand the flight routes, they must adjust from flying in a helicopter to being dropped off in the middle of a field.

The unit has experience conducting air-assault missions. In fact, Co. C Soldiers conducted the brigade’s first air-assault mission during the current deployment, said Cecil, adding that they followed that up when they also conducted the brigade’s second air-assault later the same night.

The mission was clearly a combined effort, said Cecil, who emphasized the ISF was in the lead during clearing operations.

“The ISF did great,” said Cecil. “The Soldiers have been fortunate enough to have worked with the ISF for about eight months and, during that time, have watched their Iraqi partners grow.”

Having their ISF partners along also paid dividends in that it appeared to comfort the local residents to see that the ISF were leading this mission, explained Sgt. 1st Class Gordon George Smith, the platoon sergeant for 1st Pltn., Co. C. The NP participated in the planning process and briefed their part in the planning and briefing of the mission, added the Plano, Texas, native.

Disque said he wondered what the local residents’ thought as they saw the NP air assault into their area.

“That is something they don’t see every day,” exclaimed Disque. “All of a sudden, they hear all these helicopters land and you’re thinking Delta Force? No, it’s not Delta Force – it’s the Iraqi National Police.”

This mission demonstrates for SG extremists that no matter where they are, whether it be in the fields or in a city, the ISF and their MND-B partners have the capability to come down on them at any moment, said Smith.



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

Spc. Steven Nies, a native of Milan, Ind., along with his fellow Soldiers from Company C, 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, pulls security on the rooftop of a local residence in Shawra Wa Um Jidir as the MND-B Soldiers national policeman from 1st Battalion, 8th Brigade, 2nd National Police Division, conduct searches for Special Groups extremists during an air-assault mission Oct. 5.



1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

# Iraqi NPs distribute backpacks, smiles

## Ghost Squadron Soldiers, Civil Affairs Team coordinate community event

**Sgt. 1st Class Brent Williams**

1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

FORWARD OPERATING BASE FALCON, Iraq – Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers, community leaders and Iraqi Security Forces conducted a backpack and school supply hand-out to boys and girls of the Um Al-Bahananh, Al Tahdi, Al Sedjad and Anbad Al Rahman Schools Oct. 12 in the Abu T'shir community of the Rashid district in southern Baghdad.

The event was one of four school supply distributions conducted Oct. 12-16 in the Abu T'shir, Saha, Mechanics and Five Farms areas, located in southeastern Rashid, said Capt. Neville McKenzie, a detachment team leader from Wappingers Falls, N.Y., assigned to Company D, 404th Civil Affairs Battalion.

"This is an opportunity for the National Police and the Neighborhood Advisory Council to provide school bags for the (students) here in Abu T'shir," said McKenzie, who is attached to the 1st Special Troops Bn., 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division. "This is a good opportunity for them to show the community that they are working for them and that they support them, and a good chance for the community to see the good that they can do for them as well."

The 404th CA Detachment, stationed at Fort Dix, N.J., provided the school bags collected from MND-B at Camp Liberty to distribute to schools throughout the East Rashid community, said McKenzie.

Leaders from the 7th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div., stationed at Fort Hood, Texas, and deployed to Forward Operating Base Falcon in the Rashid district, worked with National Police Training Teams and local community leaders from the Neighborhood Advisory Council to coordinate for ISF participation in the separate events, said McKenzie.

Community events, such as the backpack and school supply distributions, help to build the relationship of the local ISF and legitimize the Iraqi government in the eyes of the Iraqi people, he added.

"It shows that the ISF are here to provide security and are looking out for the well-being of the people of Abu T'shir," said Maj. Robert Burgess, NPTT advisor, assigned to the



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

Sgt. Jeremy Brown, a cavalry scout from Texas, assigned to Troop C, 7th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, provides security for the school children of the Um Al-Bahananh, Al Tahdi, Al Sedjad and Anbad Al Rahman Schools Oct. 12 in the Abu T'shir community of the Rashid district in southern Baghdad.

6010 NPTT, 1st Infantry Division, stationed at Fort Riley, Kan., and deployed to Baghdad to train and mentor Shurta Wadaniya, or NPs, in support of MND-B and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"It's a fairly new battalion, but they're main role in all of this is to provide security for the people of Abu T'shir," said Burgess, referring to the new 3rd Battalion, 3rd Aburisha Brigade (National Police), the Iraqi Ministry of Interior's newest "Feather" or light NP unit, charged with providing security for Baghdad and the citizens of East Rashid.

The Iraqi NPs of the 7th Bde., 2nd NP Div., working with the Aburisha Shurta Wadaniya, distributed more than 900 school bags and school supplies to the students at four schools serving seven neighborhoods in Rashid.

"The district council supported by the Coalition Forces,

distributed this morning school bags for all students in the elementary First Grade," said Najim Abdallah Hussein, the principle of 560 students at Al-Masafee Takmeliya School located in eastern Baghdad. "The girls got girly-style bags and boys got boyish-style bags, and that was done with the help of the CF."

Najim also said that he would like to see the CF and ISF distribute bags to the other grade-school children attending the elementary schools.

Capt. Ryan Burcham, commander of Troop A, 7th Sqdn., 10th Cav. Regt., 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div., said that like the squadron's other troop commanders, he works very closely with the local leadership council in his operating area, to meet the needs of the entire community, which includes neighborhood school projects.

# MND-B Soldiers enrich lives of Iraqi children

**Continued from Page 1**

"These kids sort of touch that spot. It's sort of exciting. When kids smile, I smile back and they laugh and they're all fun," he said.

On other visits to the area, Jackson is on security and he doesn't get to interact with the children.

"When they told us we could play with the kids, it's like going back home," Jackson said. "These kids, I don't know ... I just like them."

"The kids like it when the American Army comes into their neighborhood to give the soccer balls, and they feel very happy," said Moshtak Alaebe, a parent of some of the children. "I feel very good when I see my kids playing with the soccer balls."

When the soccer balls ran out, Jackson and his fellow Soldiers bring out a case of cookies, and those go quickly.

"Considering their living conditions, I wish I could do more than hand out soccer balls," said Sgt. John Halpin, a TF 1-6 Soldier and a native of Atlanta.

With the cookies gone, some children leave while others follow Jackson down the street to see two other young Iraqi boys. Jackson high-fives the kids and they pose for pictures before he passes out Gatorade and water.

"Chocolate, chocolate," shouts some of the children. Jackson smiles and pulls some chocolate candies out of his cargo pocket as a parting gift.

"These kids are the future of Sadr City ... of Iraq," said Jackson. "I don't have any doubt in my mind that Iraq is going to do just fine years down the line. It's going to be very ugly to get there, but that's why we're here"



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

Spc. Chris Jackson, a native of Washington, D.C., an infantryman, with Company A, 1st Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, currently attached to 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, hands a soccer ball to a local child of an impoverished neighborhood of the Sadr City district of Baghdad Oct. 13.

# MND-B Soldier serves 2 countries he calls home

## Iraqi-born American Soldier proud to serve both countries

**By Sgt. Daniel Blottenberger**  
18th MP Bde. PAO, MND-B

BAGHDAD – Most American Soldiers serving in Iraq are counting down the days to when they can pack up their bags and return home.

Returning home for one Soldier serving with Multi-National Division – Baghdad's 18th Military Police Brigade literally meant to deploy to Iraq.

Spc. Emad Jadan, an interpreter serving with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 18th MP Bde., left Iraq at the age of 20 and started the process of becoming an American citizen. He lived in West Bloomfield, Mich., until the age of 39, when he returned home to serve as an interpreter for the 18th MP Bde.'s provincial level Police Transition Team.

"I am just a Soldier, who happens to speak Arabic," said Jadan.

Jadan's journey to the United States began in 1990 when he and his mother and sister fled Iraq at the start of the Gulf War. They left Iraq, which at the time was under Saddam Hussein's regime, when Iraq invaded Kuwait, starting what would later be known as the Gulf War.

After his father died in 1985, Jadan was left to care for his small family, being the only male remaining in the family.

Jadan said that he credits his father for the strong values he carries with him today. His father, who worked for 22 years with the Government of Iraq, controlling its finances, but declined when he was asked to join Saddam's political affiliation known as the Baath Party.

"The Iraqi government, under Saddam, asked my father to become part of the Baath Party and he refused, so he was forced to retire and open his own business," said Jadan. "He didn't join the party because he didn't believe in any of the things they believed in."

Growing up Jadan visited the United States several times to visit relatives in Michigan. Jadan recalled one of those times when he was 10 years old going into a toy store and how he



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

Spc. Emad Jadan, 39, an interpreter with Multi-National Division – Baghdad's 18th Military Police Brigade and native of Bloomfield, Mich., was born in Iraq and became an American citizen before joining the Army in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

was amazed by all the toys.

Jadan knew the United States is where he needed to go to keep his mother and sister safe from the war and Saddam's regime.

Jadan was forced to send his sister and mother ahead of him to the United States because his immigration papers were not complete and he had to spend two years in Jordan to complete the papers before reuniting with them in Michigan.

Life in the United States was safe for his family and Jadan went through several different businesses trying to make money to provide for his family.

He owned a video store, cell phone retail store and then owned an auto glass shop. Business was going well for Jadan until Sept. 11, 2001, the day Jadan said that changed his life forever.

"Then September 11th happened," said Jadan, pausing to recall the event. "Did you see the image of

that lady when she jumped from the window? That image is still stuck in my mind, and I cannot get it out."

From that time on, Jadan began working for the United States federal government and for police stations in Michigan, doing jobs that he was not allowed to discuss for security reasons.

"I worked voluntarily to help out in whichever way I could," said Jadan. "I wanted the criminals behind the attacks to be punished for what they did, and I wanted to prevent this from happening in the future."

Jadan said, he liked working for the government, and when Operation Iraqi Freedom started in 2003, he was keeping a close eye on what was happening.

"I don't call it the War in Iraq. I call it the Liberation of Iraq," said Jadan, who decided to join the U.S. Army as a military intelligence linguist in 2007.

He joined the Army to get the experience he needed to reach his career goal of becoming an Iraqi government advisor one day to work for a country that he says is one of his homes.

Now he is serving on his first tour in Iraq with the 18th MP Bde., serving as an interpreter for one of its PTT that trains and mentors the Baghdad IP force in hopes for IP primacy.

Since working with the brigade PTT, the team Jadan works with has seen how beneficial it is to have an Army trained linguist serving with them.

"The training is valuable, but linguistic skills are obviously developed over a long period of time," said 2nd Lt. Jonathan Holliday, the officer in charge of a PTT that Jadan works with.

"Jadan can read, write and speak Arabic better than any linguist I have worked with. He attempts to view his translations in both the context of how the people I speak with see the world and communicate and in the context of how I view what is being said and what I want to communicate."

Holliday added everyday he works with Jadan it reinforces to him how important it is to have a disciplined Soldier, who can translate for him and also understands the culture he is working with, is a huge benefit for the team.

"Apart from the actual words being said, he can also help me understand many of the shared and differing cultural perspectives of Iraqis and Americans," said Holliday.

"Being a Soldier, he has an added perspective that Soldiers share, which translates into the ability to further understand my objectives and perceptions. Having a civilian translator is valuable, but civilians see the world in a slightly different way than military personnel."

Jadan said, he is able to do his job so well because he feels at home here.

"I like Iraq," said Jadan. "I am in a country that is more than 7,000 years old. It would be easy for the U.S., government, was both Iraqi and American as the link between the two nations."

From seeing Iraq as it was growing up and seeing Iraq under the Saddam regime, Jadan said that after seeing Iraq now, Iraq is much better today.

"The Iraqi people are tasting freedom for the first time," said Jadan. "Iraqi's are able to deal with any companies they would like and there are no restrictions on them as consumers."

Jadan said he feels Iraq is on its way to being a successful democracy and that once all the educated Iraqis return who fled during the war, that the government and economy will become more successful.

"This is the first government in Iraq that is not run by a military force," said Jadan.

"Things are better than they were, and they will continue to get better as long as the Iraqi government continues to work for the Iraqi people."

Now a husband and father of two girls Jadan is proud to be serving both Iraq and America in the War on Terror... or the Liberation of Iraq.



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

Spc. Emad Jadan, (left), 39, an interpreter with Multi-National Division – Baghdad's 18th Military Police Brigade and native of Bloomfield, Mich., translates Arabic to English and vice versa at a ceremony to honor fallen Iraqi Policemen, Sept. 23, at the Baghdad Provincial Directorate of Police Headquarters station.



2nd BCT, 101st Abn. Div.

## Life at Baghdad Zoo returning to normal with stable security

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

BAGHDAD –The Baghdad Zoo opened its doors to Iraqi citizens in 1971. Since then, it has been a key centerpiece to the lives of many Iraqis. Many travel from throughout Iraq to enjoy a peaceful day at the zoo with their families.

Due to the potential threat of violence and security issues in Iraq however, the last several years have not brought many people to the zoo as many feared leaving their neighborhoods and, for some, the safety and security of their own homes.

“After Coalition Forces pushed into Iraq, ousting the Saddam Hussein regime in 2003, the zoo and surrounding park were left unattended and desolate,” said Staff Sgt. Paul Sanford, with the 2nd Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Multi-National Division – Baghdad. “Animals were abandoned, stolen or freed by looters and the park grounds were vandalized.”

It was nearly two years before Coalition Forces began to seriously focus their efforts on the zoo after troops gained a foothold on the adjacent International Zone, which provided the opportunity for Dr. Salah, the Zawra Park Director, and Dr. Adel Mousa, the zoo’s director, to truly begin rebuilding the area.

Their efforts, combined with the efforts of Multi-National Division – Baghdad, have brought life back into the zoo.

“The people of (Iraq) visit the zoo quite frequently,” said Sanford, who works closely with the zoo’s director. “It is a central location that helps them see the future of Iraq as a revitalized society and continues to build family relationships and a sense of normalcy in an area so often torn by hardship and conflict. Visiting the zoo and the surrounding Zawra Park area is as much a family outing here in Iraq as it is in the United States.”

This time to forge friendships and strengthen family ties would not be where it is today without the efforts of Iraqi

Security Forces and MND-B troops positioned throughout greater Baghdad.

When Iraqi Security Forces and MND-B cracked down on Special Groups extremists and sent many fleeing the area, it brought new life and a sense of normalcy back to the Iraqi people.

“The current security situation has been one of stabilization and peace in the area, drawing more families from their home and into the park and zoo for leisure and recreational activities once thought to be too risky to chance,” said Sanford. “The continued efforts of both Coalition Forces

and the Government of Iraq have allowed people who once only ventured out for necessity to stray far from their homes at times, even if just to see the new tigers, Hope and Riley, now being proudly displayed there and considered a large success by both the zoo staff and Coalition Forces.”

Mousa said he now sees a secure place for people from all over Iraq to visit.

“The people are all smiling; they are happy,” the zoo director said.

The security situation has made many Iraqis happy people, but none may be as happy as those children who walk through the gates of the Baghdad Zoo daily to see the lions, tigers,

bears, an array of fish, flamingos, crocodiles, alligators or even a little girls favorite, a Pony.

Many are seen smiling, maybe some a bit frightened by those larger animals, as they walk across the green grass or the natural or manmade paths during their leisurely strolls.

Sitting atop the freshly cut green grass are many families with picnic baskets and soda cans in tow. The children seem to run endlessly until exhausted from the heat of the sun or the endless life breathing through their lungs.

Many young couples sit along wooden benches, perhaps even discussing their next steps together in life. It is unbelievable to think that a zoo can provide so much to a land stricken by endless war.

When Sanford visits the zoo to meet with his Iraqi counterpart, he too feels a difference in his surroundings.

As he walks onto the grounds on the zoo, just as many do daily, he finds himself walking along a marble walkway with an array of birds and fowl on either side surrounding him.

“As you walk from cage to cage, you will almost definitely notice the significant difference in cleanliness of the area,” Sanford said. “Trash is placed in trash cans and sidewalks are kept swept and clean.

“As you make your way around, you will see families laughing and smiling, couples holding hands and children tugging on their parents to point out some fascinating creature. It is truly an experience – just as fulfilling for Soldiers often surrounded by the frustrations of war and the rebuilding of a country as it is for families often thrown into chaos by acts of seemingly random (violence).”

When leaving the zoo’s grounds, one will most likely be reminded of how much every nation has in common no matter how different they are seen.

“The building of families and friendship is the core message provided by the Baghdad Zoo, and it is a message certainly not lost on those of us lucky enough to be a part of that,” Sanford said.

Like many nations across the globe, families play an important role in the everyday lives of Iraqi citizens. The Baghdad Zoo offers them a place to strengthen those family bonds.

With young girls in sundresses, families carrying baskets of food and children with smiles for miles, it’s a small world without any worry to the situation on the outside.



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

A young Iraqi couple sits and talks while enjoying the sites of the Baghdad Zoo Oct. 11. With the current security situation in Baghdad, more Iraqi people are visiting the zoo daily.



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

Iraqi children look on as a camel makes a funny face at the Baghdad Zoo Oct. 11. With the current security situation in Baghdad, more Iraqi people are visiting the zoo daily.



# Mountaineer repair shop keeps Striker gunners on safe



Photo by Staff Sgt. Shane Bender, 64th BSB, 3rd BCT PAO, 4th Inf.

Pvt. Johnathon Adams, a Portland, Ore., native, installs a new M-2 .50-caliber machine gun safety kit Oct. 9 in the repair shop at Camp Taji.

**By Staff Sgt. Shane Bender**

64th BSB, 3rd BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers have only had one safety for the M-2 .50-caliber machine gun – the gunner. Soldiers have relied on either their own discretion or a spent round for the purpose of keeping the M-2 on safe.

In January however, an alert 64th Brigade Support Battalion Soldier was scanning the new M-2 technical manual, dated January 2008, and noticed a new addition: a National Stock Number for the new M-2 safety kit.

Realizing the significance of this new addition, an immediate order for 50 of the safety kits was submitted to obtain this new vital hardware for the Soldiers of 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

Providing assistance in ordering the new equipment was Sgt. 1st Class David Lee, a native of Woodbridge, Va., who serves as the maintenance control sergeant for Company B, 64th BSB, 3rd BCT, 4th Inf. Div.'s Shop Office.

Much to Lee's satisfaction, the safety kits in August and were quickly installed on the entire Striker Brigade's .50-caliber machine guns. Additionally, a Modification Work Order was sent out by Department of the Army requiring that the .50-cal. safety kits be installed on all .50-Cal. Weapons

systems by 2010.

"I think the Army finally took our constant reminders of the issue to heart and did something about it," said Staff Sgt. Andrea Larios, a Pine Springs, Ark., native, who serves as the Headquarters platoon sergeant for the 64th BSB.

The kit serves one simple purpose: it allows the gunner to put a weapon on safe. Period. So, the weapon system, which used to be dangerous to use because it could not be placed in a safe mode when loaded, and despite all training in Iraq and at a unit's home station, is now safer to use for any type of mission – both during training and actual combat missions.

Another side benefit is it helps eliminate a potential cause for negligent discharges since it dramatically lessens the chances of a weapon being accidentally fired by a gunner inadvertently applying pressure to the trigger while traveling over rough terrain.

Aside from the multiple benefits granted by the M-2 safety kits, there are also mission-oriented advantages. Tactics, techniques and procedures can be modified to allow the gunner to fire the weapon faster when warranted.

"The safety kits are new and will require practice and additional training, but the benefits of the safety kits will help make the United States Army safer," said Sgt. Jeremy Osterling, an Adrian, Mich., native, who serves as an armament tank turret supervisor with Co. B, 64th BSB.

## 3rd BCT, 4th Inf. Div. commander escorts Sadr City sheiks during visit to water source



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

Assam Hameed (center) leads a group of sheiks from the Sadr City district of Baghdad on a tour of the R3 Water Treatment Plant in the Hay Ur neighborhood of northeastern Baghdad.

**By Sgt. Zach Mott**

3rd BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

HAY UR, Iraq – Sheiks from the Sadr City district of Baghdad were invited to tour the facility that provides more than 4,000 cubic meters of water per hour for their people Oct 11.

Led by Col. John Hort, commander of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, more than 30 tribal leaders from the northeastern Baghdad district walked the grounds of the newly completed R3 Water Treatment Plant in Hay Ur, a neighborhood that buttresses Sadr City's northwestern edge.

"It's important for them to see because they may not have the opportunity because of the security situation so we're enabling them by bringing them out here to the site," said Maj. Brian Horine, a Phoenix native, who serves as the civil affairs officer for 3rd BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

During a recent meeting, Hort invited the attending leaders to see the plant where their water comes from for what he termed a "field trip." The day included a tour of the newly opened facility as well as a traditional lunch at a nearby joint security station.

"We will take this message, what we see here, what we talk about, what's going on here in this project and tell our tribe people about this so they'll be really happy about what's going on here," said Sheik Abbas Jabil al-Zurfi, a tribal sheik from Sadr City.

The plant, which has been under construction for more than five years, represents the culmination of a group effort, led by the Government of Iraq, to provide clean, useable water for people who have long-suffered under the former regime here.

"The R3 Water Treatment Plant was built in conjunction with GoI the entire time," Horine said. "It's a huge accomplishment to be able to provide potable water for the community. It's something that the sheiks now truly understand."

The \$24 million project now allows Iraqi families in Sadr City something they have lacked for many years: potable water.

"We are trying to help the people who have suffered all their lives," said Assam Hameed, the project manager who oversees operations there. "We are very proud that we could achieve the best water plant in all of Iraq"



2nd BCT, 25th Inf. Div.

# 'Lions of Babylon' will roar again

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

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – The lion's roar hasn't been heard in years. Their gun systems are silent. All that remains of Saddam Hussein's ambitious attempt to develop tank production in Iraq are broken down, barely running vehicles.

Approximately 20 T-72 Main Battle Tanks, nicknamed "Lions of Babylon," have lain dormant for years on Camp Taji, northwest of Baghdad, until now.

Soldiers from the Czech Republic Army contingent in Iraq have offered their expertise to Iraqi Army soldiers from the 2nd Tank Battalion, 34th Armor Brigade, 9th IA Division, to help repair the tank's gunnery systems and get the engines roaring again.

"Our task here is to help the Iraqi Army fix their T-72 tanks," said Czech Maj. Frank Gramela, commander of the Czech Republic Army contingent in Iraq.

"We were asked to help get these tanks ready to shoot."

The Czech Republic has recently upgraded their tank systems to a newer model but used the T-72 MBT as their primary fighting vehicle for years.

The Czech soldiers were selected because of their expertise on the systems. Knowledge of the battle systems is something U.S. Soldiers do not have, said Maj. Augustus Tutu, a native of Brooklyn, N.Y., and chief of operations of the 34th Military Transition Team.

"Our role was to link the Czech Republic Army with the IA," he said. "We have taken a backseat in this operation and are here just to provide advice and assistance if needed."

Gramela said his soldiers are experts in the tanks systems, and this partnership is a give-and-take relationship.

"We share experiences," Gramela said.

"We can learn something from them because of their experiences of war, and we can share our experience of maintenance with them."

ance with them."

Camp Taji was the building place for the modified T-72 MBT for Iraq's Army under Saddam Hussein's regime. Originally a Soviet design, the Army assembled their tanks from spare parts sold to them by the Russians.

It wasn't until in 1989 that the first Iraqi built T-72 came off the production line at Camp Taji.

But after the United States – led invasion in 2003 and the fall of Baghdad, many of the tanks were destroyed or abandoned.

Even though the tanks were manufactured at Camp Taji, the soldiers who are fixing the systems have limited spare parts and are forced to work with what they can find in the tank bone yards on the camp due to no local spare parts depots.

"We are doing the best we can and trying to get spare parts from wherever we can," Gramela said.

"It's hard when we are told we can't get any new spare parts."

Even though the soldiers are having diffi-

culty, Gramela said their proficiency and creativity makes up for it.

"They are working hard to get these tanks ready," he said. "They will be ready soon."

Gramela and Tutu said the hope is to repair vehicles for their first firing in years at a range in Besmayah, south of Baghdad, later this month.



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

Iraqi Army Capt. Mohamad, maintenance company commander, 2nd Tank Battalion, 34th Armor Brigade, 9th IA Division, ground guides another IA soldier driving a T-72 Main Battle Tank, "Lion of Babylon," at the unit's motorpool on Camp Taji, northwest of Baghdad, Oct. 4. Czech Republic Army contingent soldiers help the IA soldiers fix, maintain and train on the tanks.

# Families return to Zaitun after security increases



Photo by Cpl. Dustin Weidman, 1st Bn., 21st Inf. Regt., 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div.

More than 50 families return to the Zaitun, west of Baghdad, Sept. 29, after they were forced to leave because of violence a few years ago. This marks a fresh start for these families as they begin to rebuild and move forward along with the rest of Abu Ghraib and its residents.

By Cpl. Dustin Weidman  
2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div.

BAGHDAD – The quiet village of Zaitun, inside Abu Ghraib, west of Baghdad, was crowded Sept. 29 as more than 50 families returned home after violence forced them to leave just a few years ago.

"We are finally home," shouted a family member when he saw his house for the first time in more than three years.

The streets of Zaitun were lined with trucks, Iraqi news teams, Iraqi Army soldiers from the 24th Brigade, 6th IA Division, Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment "Gimlets," Multi-National Division – Baghdad and the citizens of Abu Ghraib rejoicing with tears and shouting praise to Allah while welcoming their loved ones home.

According to Sheik Jalad Al-Din Al-Sagir, the head sheik for the Zaitun village, the return of the residents marks a time of rebuilding after years of intense fighting.

"This is particularly special as this event is happening during the end of Ramadan, the Laylat al-Qadr period, the holiest month in the Muslim religion," he said.

Historically, Ramadan was a time of

increased attacks by sectarian extremist groups in honor of Ramadan; nearly 800 attacks took place in 2006 across the Baghdad area and more than 500 attacks in 2007.

However, with the partnership of the Iraqi Security Force, local government and Coalition Forces, that number has dropped more than 80 percent fewer attacks during Ramadan in 2008.

"This is a step forward for the Iraqi people and the Iraqi government. Those people have been waiting for a long time to come to their homes and close that chapter of their lives," said Iraqi Police Brig. Gen. Kareem, commanding officer of the Abu Ghraib district Police.

It is because of increased security that Iraq is making a national effort to help those displaced families return to their homes and help rebuild their communities.

"We, the Shurta, (Iraqi Police) and the Jundi (Iraqi Soldiers) with the help of the Coalition Forces, worked very hard to ensure that the city is safe enough for the people to come back and start having normal lives," Kareem said. "We still have much to do, but this is a step in the right direction. God willing, more displaced persons will follow and bring prosperity to Abu Ghraib."

# CAB MEDEVAC saves lives on battlefield

By Sgt. 1st Class Brent Hunt

CAB PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Medical evacuation Soldiers from Company C, 2nd Battalion, 4th Aviation Regiment, Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, have one mission – save lives on the battlefield.

They facilitate the safest and most rapid evacuation of all casualties, to include Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, civilians and even detainees.

The “Lonestar” dustoff company of the Fort Hood, Texas – based CAB is in the midst of its fourth deployment to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Its mission, and the Soldiers' mindset, haven't changed through the multiple deployments.

“We are the theater MEDEVAC company for MND-B and parts of Multi-National Corps – Iraq,” said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Dennis Fletcher, aeromedical Pilot from Sunnyvale, Calif. “We respond to any nine line MEDEVAC call to us.

“I've done roadside and FOB (Forward Operating Base) pick-ups. The first mission I had was a roadside pick-up where a Stryker vehicle was hit by an (improvised explosive device),” he said. “On average, we respond to a call in nine minutes, and that's from getting the call to wheels-up.”

The company performs its duties much like a regular ambulance company in the United States. Soldiers rotate on shifts, being on call for 48 hours at a time, and then they are off for 24 hours. A MEDEVAC crew consists of two pilots, a crew chief and a flight medic.

The crew starts its day by making sure the aircraft is ready to go at a moment's notice. As an essential part of their fast-paced, live by the seat-of-their-pants lifestyle, maintenance checks are completed, medical supplies are stocked and personal protective gear is always within arm's reach.

Then, once the crew gets the call “MEDEVAC, MEDEVAC, MEDEVAC,” it's time to sprint to the waiting helicopter and save a life on the battlefield.

“Today, we had an urgent patient at FOB Liber-

ty,” said Staff Sgt. Brad Stevens, flight medic from Crystal River, Fla. “From when we got the call, we had the patient to the (Combat Support Hospital) in under 25 minutes. Whenever I hear, ‘MEDEVAC, MEDEVAC,’ I try to mentally prepare myself for the worst possible scenario. When you do that, you can deal with anything.”

Some of their evacuations take them to the most dangerous parts of the battlefield, including rescuing casualties from roadside bomb attacks, force against force casualties and suicide bomb attacks.

Improvements in medical care and the speed in which MEDEVAC's rescue patients have dramatically increased survivability on the battlefield from previous conflicts.

Over each of the past U.S. conflicts, enemy weapons used against troops have increased in firepower and lethality. Yet during the Global War on Terrorism, U.S. troops have seen a significant decline in fatalities.

According to a recent study by the Department of Defense, Soldiers who fought in the Revolutionary War, who were wounded in action, had a 42 percent chance of dying from the wounds they had suffered. During World War II, Soldiers had a 30 percent chance they would not survive and during the Vietnam War, troops had a 24 percent chance of not surviving. Today, if a Soldier is wounded in action, the patient has more than a 90 percent chance of living through the traumatic event.

Simply put if a troop is wounded on the battlefield, he has a much greater chance of survival because of the use of body armor, blast resistant vehicles and advances in medicine.

However, the speed in which Soldiers get to the hospital has greatly contributed to the survivability of the modern day combatant.

“Today, with the speed of the MEDEVAC, we can save more lives than ever,” said Stevens, who is on his third deployment to Iraq. “I straight-up like helping people, and that is what I like most about this job.”



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

Capt. Nolan Roggenkamp, pilot, Company C, 2nd Battalion, 4th Aviation Regiment, Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, from Enumclaw, Wash., prepares to land an air ambulance helicopter in Baghdad to a urgent medical mission. Soldiers from the “Lonestar” dustoff company are committed to saving lives on the battlefield.

## Russian-born CAB Soldier prepares for citizenship, enjoys U.S. Army experience

By Sgt. 1st Class Brent Hunt

CAB PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – A Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldier born and raised in Russia is scheduled to become a citizen of the United States in November while deployed to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Spc. Eynar Ayupov, a personnel clerk with Headquarters Support Company, 404th Aviation Battalion, Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, said he never thought he would become a citizen of the United States while growing up in Russia – let alone a U.S. Army Soldier deployed to Iraq.

“I never thought when I was a kid that I would be in the U.S. Army, but I'm really glad I joined,” he said. “Being in the Army has been a great experience for me.”

Ayupov grew up in Ufa, Russia, which is about 100 miles southeast of Moscow. The city, founded in 1574, boasts more than 1 million residents and is an industrial center for electrical and mining equipment, oil refining, petrochemicals, synthetic rubber and processed foods.

Ayupov, along with his mother, first came to the United States in 2004 when he was just 16 years old to visit family friends in Youngstown, Ohio. After visiting for a while, Ayupov's mother went back to Russia, but he decided to stay.

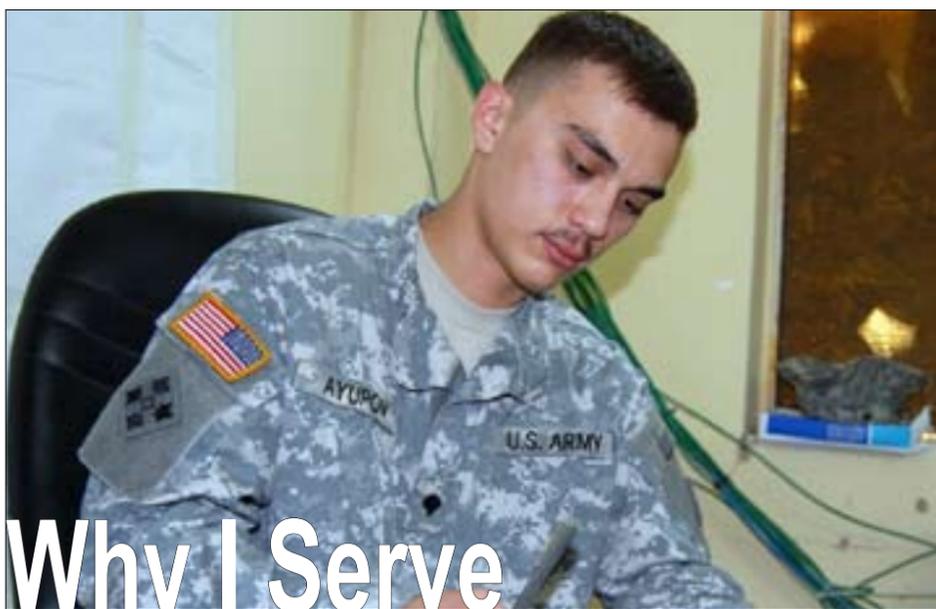


Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Brent Hunt, CAB PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

Spc. Eynar Ayupov, personnel clerk, Headquarters Support Company, 404th Aviation Support Battalion, Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, who is a native of Ufa, Russia, cleans his M16A2 rifle while sitting at his desk on Camp Taji Oct. 14.

“I wanted to try new things and meet new people,” he said. “The U.S. is a great country with a lot of opportunities for education and for employment. People in the U.S. seem to smile a lot, and I like that.”

In November 2006, Ayupov joined the U.S. Army. After graduating from Basic Combat Training and Advanced Individual Training, he was stationed with the CAB out of Fort

Hood, Texas. Since he has been with the aviation unit, Ayupov deployed to Iraq in June 2008 and is currently stationed on Camp Taji, north of Baghdad.

Now that Ayupov has made the change from being a Russian kid to a U.S. Army Soldier fighting in the Global War on Terrorism, his next milestone is to become a United States citizen.

“I want to become a U.S. citizen so I can visit my mother back in Russia. I plan to try and visit her back in Russia when I go on leave,” said the 20-year-old.

“Originally, I joined the Army because I wanted to see the world. I'm pretty proud of the work we are doing over here in Iraq.

“I work in the orderly room right now, taking care of Soldiers,” he said. “I feel my part of the mission is taking care of Soldiers so they don't have to worry about their paperwork and they can do their job better.”

Not only does Ayupov feel he is helping with the mission, so does his company commander.

“Spc. Ayupov is a good kid and a hard worker. He is really reliable,” said Capt. Scott Coleman, commander of HSC. “He has really spread his wings since he has been here and done a great job.

“I think he has adjusted very well to being in the U.S. Army,” Coleman said.

Other than his last name and knowing his history, if I didn't know that, I couldn't tell him from any other Soldier who is here.”

## Why I Serve

# Strike NCOs, Soldiers vie for top honors during competition

Story and photos by Staff Sgt.

James Hunter

2nd BCT PAO, 101st Abn. Div.  
CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq

Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), competed for top honors Oct. 4 during the Noncommissioned Officer and Soldier of the Quarter Competition.

The primary purpose and overarching theme of the competition was to promote esprit de corps among the Soldiers of the Strike Brigade.

For most competitors, they have only a few things in mind. They want to win, pursue personal and unit pride, and gain recognition among their peers and leaders.

From a BCT perspective, the competition allowed for the senior NCO leaders within the Strike Brigade to gain a “snapshot” of the individual combat skills of the competing Soldiers in order to identify the strengths and weaknesses in unit training plans, said Sgt. Maj. Richard Vangenewitt, operations sergeant major, 2nd BCT, 101st Abn. Div.

Strike Soldiers, many of whom traveled from various joint security stations in northwest Baghdad, were met with a great deal of daunting tasks during the competition. They would be tested, both physically and mentally, and pushed well beyond their breaking point to preserve a very sacred honor as the best NCO and Soldier within the Strike Brigade.

Well before the sun rose, Strike Soldiers lined up with gear in tow. The competition began with a brief of the day’s events, followed by a weigh-in of all competitors.

Then they moved on to the physical training pad where they were tested on their muscular fitness with push-ups and sit-ups. If the competitor did not meet the minimum standards of the Army Physical Fitness Test between the age group of 27-31, they were disqualified from the competition.

Following the APFT events, the competitors had to lay out their equipment needed for the day’s events for an inspection.

With the sun just beginning to rise above the horizon, the competitors set off on a 3.7-mile foot march over graveled terrain with a zeroed weapon in hand, 25-pound assault pack, while wearing their Improved Outer Tactical Vest and Army Combat Helmet.

With most competitors running the majority of the foot march, they had to finish within one hour and 15 minutes.

The foot march ended at Caughman Range on Victory Base Complex where they would begin an individual stress shoot session.

The stress shoot consisted of four stations, and each competitor was issued six five-round magazines and one 10-round magazine.

While at a full-sprint, competitors negotiated the stations and fired five rounds from their natural firing hand, and five rounds from their opposite hand at each 9 mm pistol target.

Each station had to be negotiated differently. The stations consisted of sandbagged positions, low walls, high walls and a window.

“Speed and accuracy were essential as competitors received points on how fast they negotiated the shoot and how many hits they got on each station’s target,” said Vangenewitt.

“Competitors were also evaluated on properly loading, unloading, changing magazines and clearing their weapons through the stress shoot. Improper procedures resulted in more time being added to their score. The fastest time received the most points.”

Immediately following the stress shoot, Soldiers were then tested on three tasks from the Soldier’s Manual for Common Tasks, Warrior Skills. The areas

included: weaponry, medical tasks and com-

Following the common task testing, the competitors were given a 50-question written exam derived from the common tasks handbook.

Immediately following the written exam, each Soldier had to complete a “mystery” task, which is unknown to them until they begin their task.

Their task was a six-question map reading exam using a pencil, map and protractor that the competitors had to complete in 30 minutes.

After completing their mystery event, the competitors then prepared for their last event of competition. They went before a board, compiled of Command Sgt. Maj. Scott Schroeder, the brigade’s senior enlisted leader, and each battalion command sergeants major, where they were grilled on basic military knowledge and leadership.

Overall, the most a competitor could score was 1,000 points. At the end of the competition, less than one point separated the winner from the runner-up.

Winning the NCO competition was Sgt. Jeremy Clark, a native of Sylvania, Ohio, who serves with Company C, 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd BCT, 101st Abn. Div.

Spc. Daniel Brooks, from Troop B, 1-75th Cav. Regt., won the Soldier of the Quarter Competition.

Winning the competition did a lot for Clark, who said he believes the competition gives an NCO the chance to showcase his excellence in all aspects of their job as a leader.

“It filled me with a keen sense of accomplishment; but, more importantly, it has inspired and motivated my Soldiers to want to compete and win in future competition boards,” Clark said.

With many of the competitors located at remote outposts throughout northwest Baghdad, their ability to properly prepare for this competition was limited.

However, those truly dedicated would by far showcase their abilities, said Schroeder.

The time for preparations is there, but how they decided to use that time to better themselves and prepare for the competition would be the separating factor.

As the competition went on, many were physically and mentally exhausted; however, times like this is when the true spirit of the warrior shines through. The cream rises to the top, and the wheat is separated from the chaff.

“It’s not the tests that were physically exhausting. It was the frequency in which they were fed to us that wears on your endurance,” Clark said.

In the end, the best Soldier and NCO won; however, every Soldier took something away from the event.

“Win or lose, all competitors learned something. Whether that learning came from the competition events or the learning was derived about themselves, their individual strengths or weaknesses, they all got something out of it,” Vangenewitt said.

“Overall, I believe it not only increases competitor morale but unit morale too as units strove to win in the spirit of the competition.”

Schroeder said he felt the units as well gain a great deal out of this competition as the Soldiers get an insight on what they can improve upon, which allows for them to make improvements as individual Soldiers.

As the Soldier improves, so do the Soldiers around him as they aspire to follow in his footsteps and want to compete and gain recognition as the brigade’s top Soldier.

The competition brought out the best and brightest within the Strike Brigade and those operationally attached. They represented their respective units to the highest of standards.

At the end of the day, each competitor stood strong with a sense of pride in knowing they represented themselves and their unit to the best of their ability.



A Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldier with the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), performs push-ups during the Strike Brigade Combat Team’s Noncommissioned Officer and Soldier of the Quarter Competition Oct. 4.



– Sgt. Jeremy Clark, a native of Sylvania, Ohio, talks into a radio during a communications test as part of the Strike Brigade Combat Team’s Noncommissioned Officer and Soldier of the Quarter Competition Oct. 4.



A Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers with the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), participate in a foot march as part of the Strike Brigade Combat Team’s Noncommissioned Officer and Soldier of the Quarter Competition Oct. 4.



1st Sgt. Plummer determines the height of a Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldier during the Strike Brigade Combat Team’s Noncommissioned Officer and Soldier of the Quarter Competition Oct. 4.



Spc. Daniel Brooks reviews the 3.7-mile foot march prior to movement during the Strike Brigade Combat Team’s Noncommissioned Officer and Soldier of the Quarter Competition Oct. 4.

# Day in the life ...

## Division's only woman Stryker driver lives for challenge

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

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – At Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, a string of chances enabled a Soldier to become the Division's first – and only – woman Stryker Armored Vehicle driver, an experience she says changed the course of her Army career.

"It all happened by chance," said Spc. Tiffany Knotts, a signal support systems specialist. "I showed up at the unit at the right time, and I was sent to the training."

The right time for the Army proved to be the wrong time for her family. Knott's father passed away two weeks before she made it to Hawaii, but she said that even in death, her father watches over her, and his death made it possible for her to get to Hawaii at the perfect time. Her move was delayed two weeks to attend his funeral.

"I consider this opportunity as a gift from my father," she said. "He was always so proud of me and raised me to push and challenge myself, and being in the position I am in allows me to take on challenges."

She considers herself a jack of all trades. Assigned to the 556th Signal Company, 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team "Warrior," 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, Knotts is not only the commander's Stryker driver, she also works in the administrative shop, handling a variety of personnel issues, from promotions to pay. It's not the job she joined the Army for, and said she was upset at first when it happened but quickly gained a new perspective.

"It's really great to be able to take care of the Soldiers in the company," she said, as she performed her daily checks of the company's Morale, Welfare and Recreation room. "I learned what it takes to ensure Soldiers get what they need to be successful. It is hard work."

And her hard work does not go without notice.

"She works really hard and has learned a lot in a short period of time. She loves to goof off and laugh, but when it is time to work, she puts the game face on," said Sgt. James Canedy, a native of Radcliff, Ky., and Stryker team chief, 556th Sig. Co.

Like so many in the military, Knotts was shaped by a legacy of service. Her grandfather and father served in the Air Force and Army respectively. They fought for their country and lived to tell her their stories. She was intrigued by them and wanted to follow in their footsteps. The desire to serve hit her so badly, she gave up one love in the pursuit of another. This pursuit led her to switch high schools.

Her first school, in her hometown of Riverside, Calif., didn't have a Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps. Knotts was determined to find a school with JROTC program be-

cause that is what she wanted to do. With that goal in mind and with support from her family, she moved to a new school – a better school for her to achieve her goals.

"I loved the Air Force JROTC program. Every minute of it was awesome," she said.

The program took up so much of her time, she was forced to give up playing the clarinet.

"I loved it, but the band's stance was 'band or nothing else,'" she said. "I wanted JROTC and sports more so that is what I concentrated on."

Knotts enjoyed a good amount of success during her tenure. She was awarded Cadet of the Year and spent her time as a member of the many different color guards.

Four and half years after she joined the Army, she has an even more prestigious position, one she proudly holds alone.

"It was pretty intimidating at first, but this is the coolest thing I have ever accomplished. It is such an honor and flattering to hold this position," she said, without an air of arrogance or a nonchalant attitude sometimes found in someone who has accomplished so much in such a short period of time.

The vehicle more than dwarfs her short frame, but she makes climbing to the top look easy.

"It's like I am at Discovery Zone," she said, while checking the maintenance systems on her vehicle and spouting off parts of her Stryker as fluidly as a folk singer croons a melody.

She attributes her proficiency with vehicles to her father, a former mechanic. She laughed as she recounted stories of Soldiers who struggle with something as simple as checking the oil on their vehicles but added that she is always willing to give them a helping hand and teach the right way to do things.

"Young Soldiers are so reliant on technology. They're not used to getting their hands dirty; but on the flipside, it helps when driving one of these," she said.

Being only 24 years of age herself, it may seem baffling to hear her talk about "young Soldiers," but she considers herself an "old soul" and much more mature than most of her peers.

"It was weird sometimes when I was growing up," she said. "All my friends were talking about clothes and what boys they wanted to date, and I was concentrated on my future and worried about school."

Even now, Knotts has her mind firmly planted in her future. She is undecided whether she wants to stay in the Army and continue what she is currently doing or come back with a commission.



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Christina Bhatti, 2nd SBCT PAO, 25th Inf. Div. Spc. Tiffany Knotts, a native of Riverside, Calif., who serves as a Stryker driver assigned to the 556th Signal Company, 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team "Warrior," 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, stands next to her Stryker vehicle Oct. 13 at Camp Taji, northwest of Baghdad. Knotts is the first and only woman Stryker driver in the Division.

However, she said she does know the military will continue to be a part of her life.

"She could be a sergeant major," Canedy said. "She constantly amazes me with her knowledge, drive and determination. She knows more than I do."

That drive and determination will make her a sergeant soon, and she said she is looking forward to being a leader. But judging from her actions, she is already there.

"I take all of this very seriously," she said. "I take the lives of everyone in my Stryker seriously, and I take the responsibility of having a Stryker that is mine seriously. I take taking care of Soldiers seriously. This is an awesome responsibility and one that I hope I can learn from and pass on that knowledge to others."

# 'Big Country' gladly pits will against deployment, wild hogs



Photo by Staff Sgt. Scott Wolfe, MND-B PAO

Pvt. 1st Class Robert Jones, also known as "Big Country" to his platoon, prepares his Caiman Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected vehicle for a mission at Joint Security Station Sheik Marouf Oct. 7.

## By Staff Sgt. Scott Wolfe

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – Most Soldiers deployed to Iraq miss home. They miss Family, food or a favorite activity. For the most part, everyone misses someone or something.

A Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldier has a taste that runs a bit different from the norm.

"'Big Country'... that boy is just wild," said 1st Lt. Patrick Dowdell, a platoon leader with Battery A, 4th Battalion, 42nd Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, attached to 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

"His favorite thing (to do back home) is to go hog hunting."

For Pvt. 1st Class Robert Jones, hog hunting means going out into the backwoods of eastern Texas in search of a 210-350 pound hog.

He takes along a length of rope, his dogs and sometimes his wife.

He sends his dogs through the thick Texas brush to chase hogs out to where he waits to shove the angry animal's head to the ground, knocking it onto its back and tying its feet together with the rope like a rodeo cowboy wrestling steers.

The hog stays tied until he gets it to where it is butchered for the meat.

"It's exciting," said Jones, with a smile and a soft east Texas drawl.

Jones is 6 feet 2 inches tall and weighs nearly 220 pounds, and says that hogs can weigh more than 450 pounds, and nearly fills up the bed of a pick-up truck. Even the smaller hogs are a handful, he said.

"It's even better because my wife likes to hunt with me."

Jones is known as "Big Country" to those he works with due to his size and how he has never quite forgotten the rural life of eastern Texas.

"I hate cities," said Jones, a Palestine, Texas, native. "There's no pine trees and no hills out here."

"I miss back home, and my Family, but I am glad I am here, doing my part," he said.

Describing Jones, Dowdell called him a hard worker, big on using his hands and always an early riser.

"It'll be his day off and he'll be up before anyone else," said Dowdell, with an accent that emphasized his Brookline roots.

"He doesn't sleep in."

Jones has served as a dismount and vehicle gunner with the "Aztec's" 3rd Platoon, also known as Blue Platoon. Now, he is the driver of the Caiman Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected Vehicle his squad rides in.

"I was a truck driver for a bit, before I joined (the service). That's how I got to be a driver when they found out."

Jones' reasons for leaving his home to join the Army were a Family legacy he intended to preserve, the need to provide for those he loves, and the respect he felt for service members.

"I joined up for the stability and to take care of my Family. I have wanted to be in the Army since I was a little kid, I just never got around to it until now," said the big Texan.

"My Family goes back in the service until about the Revolution. My dad was in Vietnam; my grandfather was in World War II. Every male in my Family has served since I don't know when."

"Every male person I have ever respected has been in the military. Everyone I didn't wasn't in. That's got to mean something."

Jones and the Soldiers and leaders he serves with have formed a "Family" away from home and a brotherhood with his fellow platoon members.

"My platoon is good. No. It's the best platoon in the battalion. And the chain (of command) is the best. We all know our jobs, and we know what needs to happen, what to do."

He waggled his hand back and forth in a rocking motion to describe the sibling-like rivalry as that of how they get along.

"We act like a Family full of brothers," he said, the corners of his mouth turning up in a smile.

Jones is set to go home on leave soon, where he will see his wife and two kids he hasn't seen for months.

He said he looks forward to their smiles and the scent of pine in the air.

He also shook his head at the mention of wrestling hogs.

"Hunting hogs is about pitting yourself against something as big as you that weighs as much if not more than you and is meaner than hell."

Whether it's tackling wild hogs in Texas or long deployments in a foreign land, getting the difficult job done and doing it well is just another day in the life of "Big Country."

# Arabic media analysts important to MND-B information war



Photo by Spc. Benjamin Crane, MND-B PAO

Sgt. Andrew Pershing, a Marion, Iowa, native, who is the noncommissioned officer in charge of the Media Monitoring Analysis Cell, 4th Infantry Division, stands with his group of linguists in the Media Operations Center.

## By Spc. Benjamin Crane

MND-B PAO

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – The phrase "knowledge is power" has been used for many years, and in a time of modern warfare where technology and information are used as weapons, knowing what the enemy is saying may be the difference between winning and losing.

For Sgt. Andrew Pershing and the nine linguists who work in the Media Monitoring Analysis Cell, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, finding out what the Iraqi media is saying about the U.S. Armed Forces, especially as it pertains to MND-B, is their everyday duty.

"They are civilian contractors, and they monitor the open-source Arab media," said Pershing, a Marion, Iowa, native, and the noncommissioned officer in charge of the MMAC, referring to the civilians he works with. "They watch TV, listen to the radio and they look at Web sites and basically collect information about what the Arab media is putting out so we can monitor that side of the media field."

Four TVs line the walls of the office inside the Media Operations Center on Camp Liberty, where Nick, Mike, Ray and Marcus, all of whom speak Arabic as their primary language, sit in front of them for at least seven hours a day to get a feel for what is going out over Iraqi airwaves.

"The Iraqi media reflect what the Iraqi side is talking about, the main issues for the Iraqi people or what the Iraqi channels or the Iraqi parties are saying to the local people about our side and the American troops," said Marcus, a resident of Chicago, who serves as a linguist working in the MMAC.

"It's very important because we consider ourselves as a liaison between the Iraqi people and the American Army," said Nick, a resident of Detroit, who also serves as a linguist in the MMAC. "It's important to the civilians, the state department and the Army. They need to know that the Iraqi media is saying on their TV and radio's and they need to know the Iraqi people's reactions."

After they gather the information from 15 Arabic TV stations, radio stations and Web sites, they take the information and make it so it can be distributed through email to the leaders of 4th Inf. Div. and MND-B.

"The linguists collect the information from their shift and put them in a concise, compiled word document, and then they give it to me and I ask questions to make sure the story is correct," said Pershing. "We then put the product out to the people in the International Zone, the leaders of 4th Inf. Div. and MND-B so they can use it to further other missions."

As for what the Iraqi media is broadcasting, those working in the MMAC all say the same thing: It is not completely accurate but pretty close.

"It's not accurate 100 percent, but most of the channels belong to different parties and each channel is like the party that they represent. Each party gives different opinions so that is why we watch and listen to different channels," said Najjar.

"This is the main issue: If you listen to the same subject as a foreigner, and I listen to it as an Iraqi man, I will feel different than you will you feel," said Sorrou. "I can say it different than you can say it."

Having Arabic-speaking contractors, those who know about the Iraqi people, to analyze the media gives leaders and Soldiers of MND-B an edge in gaining greater support from the local populace and hopefully eliminates the potential for misunderstandings in a fight where information both good and bad, true and false, has become a major weapon.

# Maddawg Soldiers keep combat vehicles rolling

## Mechanics fabricate parts to accomplish any mission



Photo by Justin Carmack, 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

Spc. Larissa Reed, a metal worker assigned to Company B, 4th Support Battalion, cuts a piece of steel plate at the battalion motorpool Oct. 12 at Forward Operating Base Falcon in southern Baghdad's Rashid district.

**By Sgt. David Hodge**

1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

FORWARD OPERATING BASE FALCON, Iraq — Thanks to the intuitive efforts of a team of Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers, combat vehicles undergo a few structural changes while deployed to Forward Operating Base Falcon in Baghdad's Rashid district.

Soldiers of Company B, 4th Support Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, are often faced with the demands of fixing many types of combat vehicles without an excess of available parts or the manufacturer's training manual.

"In our fabrication shop, it is always quicker to manufacture an item, which can get done in a day or so compared to ordering items from the states, which may take from one week to six months to get here," said Chief Warrant Officer Mark Davis, brigade allied trades technician assigned to Co. B "Maddawgs," 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

It is important to have a quick turnaround when vehicles break down because they are used every day by Soldiers securing the 1st "Raider" Brigade operating environment, said Davis, who hails from Wilburton, Okla.

"The Soldiers need to be able to utilize as many vehicles as necessary to minimize attacks against us and our allies," Davis explained.

"If our presence is perceived as being lax, there may be a spike in activity which could show us as being weak. We don't want that."

The Support and Recovery Section of Co. B fabricates replacement parts on armored vehicles, such as the Mine Resistant and Ambush Protected family of vehicles and humvees, said Davis.

The rear steps on one model of MRAP ve-

hicle present a reoccurring problem, said Spc. Thomas Beaty, a wheeled-vehicle mechanic assigned to Maddawg Co. The ramps often break because the length of the vehicle causes the rear end to hit the ground while crossing a deep rut.

A collaborative effort between a small team of Soldiers and a Field Service Representative, which is typically an engineer or mechanic sent by the manufacturer of each vehicle, determines the method of repair when faced with either a broken part or manufacturing defect, said Davis.

Other improvements and repairs include door handles on humvees and the sway bar on the MRAP vehicles, an anti-roll device that stabilizes the vehicle during cornering.

"The (noncommissioned officers) and Soldiers work with each other to solve any problems," said Beaty, a native of Moreno Valley, Calif.

"There is a lot of mechanical knowledge between all the Soldiers."

The FSRs are also very knowledgeable and a big help when addressing technical aspects of the vehicles, said Beaty, who worked on farm and marine equipment before enlisting into the U.S. Army.

"My job is great," Beaty stated. "I fix the vehicles, which keep the Soldiers on mission safer."

"The FSRs, welders and I look at a problem and work out the best way to fix or upgrade the part to bring the vehicle back to its fully mission capable status," Davis added.

The Soldiers of Co. B, 4th Supt. Bn., 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div., are currently serving a 15-month deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

## 'Raider' Bayonet training lanes reinforce Soldier skills in combat zone

**By Sgt. David Hodge**

1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

FORWARD OPERATING BASE FALCON, Iraq — In addition to accomplishing its combat mission in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, has made time to conduct a mandatory lanes-training exercise for Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers to sharpen their marksmanship skills while reinforcing basic Soldiering skills essential to today's battlefield.

"The Raider Bayonet" is a command-directed training event that provides Raider Brigade Soldiers the opportunity to reconfirm their battlefield zero and qualify on their individual weapons at Forward Operating Base Falcon in the Rashid district of southern Baghdad.

"The training is centered on Soldiers that go in and out of the gate on a daily basis," said 1st Sgt. Reuben Tull Jr., Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div. "As we have heard about complacency, the training is to keep them on edge and to think about what they're doing on and off the mission."

Soldiers arrive early in the morning to begin Humvee Egress Assistance Training, marksmanship training and enhance their situational awareness with the Engagement Skills Trainer, stated Tull.

"They are given a safety brief with (pre-combat checks and inspections); then, the leaders go through and make sure the Soldiers are ready for training as well as in the proper uniform," said Tull, a native of Fayetteville, N.C.

HEAT training provides a realistic scenario of a vehicle rollover by turning a simulated truck upside down while Soldiers inside the simulator navigate their way out.

Staff Sgt. Bill Springs, a HEAT instructor and safety officer assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Special Troops Battalion, 1st BCT, said the training is good and he thinks the Soldiers are learning a lot from the opportunity to return to base and focus on the new training.

"It's a reality check once the Soldiers get into the vehicle," said Springs, a Los Angeles native. "Most of them have never experienced a rollover, so they find out the seatbelts really do save lives."

Soldiers attack the range to zero and qualify with their weapons, which can be many different models used by Soldiers in Iraq, such as the M-9 pistol,

M-4 rifle and M-249 Squad Automatic Weapon, explained Springs.

Raider Bayonet is for the Soldiers, said Staff Sgt. Andrew Tillery, a range safety officer and information technology specialist assigned to Company B, 1st STB.

The Soldiers are the ones pounding their feet on the pavement every day, he added.

"The Soldiers come in, zero and qualify to make sure their weapons are right before they go back out in sector," stated Tillery, a 7-year Army veteran who hails from Washington, D.C.

Tillery said being a range safety officer for the Raider Bayonet training event gives him a feeling of accomplishment.

"It feels good to be picked for a position like this," Tillery explained. "It shows me being here is for a reason."

The last exercise on the range is reflexive fire, where Soldiers react to a threat and quickly raise their weapon to fire downrange.

"The course has been good so far," said Pfc. Blake Herron, an indirect fire infantryman, assigned to Troop C, 7th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 1st BCT. "We are learning useful skills we need to know. Since we roll out all the time, we need to make sure our weapons are zeroed."

Herron said he believes it is imperative to keep the skills taught in Raider Bayonet fresh in the Soldiers' minds.

"It was good to get a refresher on the HEAT trainer, and I am sure reflexive fire with our weapons will be the best," stated Herron, who hails from Adger, Ala.

The final training event of Raider Bayonet is the Engagement Skills Trainer, which is similar to a video game. The Soldiers are faced with different scenarios on a large screen and learn to identify threats in those scenarios, explained Tillery.

The EST hones the Soldiers skills and reinforces their proficiency by increasing awareness, said Tillery, adding that he believes the Soldiers looked sharp and are operating proficiently.



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

Spc. Juan Soto, an indirect fire infantryman assigned to Troop C, 7th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, zeros his M-4 rifle Oct. 4 at Forward Operating Base Falcon in southern Baghdad's Rashid district.

# MND-B Soldiers transition Sol into job-focused skills training at Rashid district's Civil Services Department

**Continued from page 1**

Gainful employment within the communities is an important aspect to ensuring that security in the muhallahs continues to improve in southern Baghdad's Rashid district, said Maxwell, who hails from Santa Maria, Calif.

"We are trying to get a lot of these guys trained so that they can stay gainfully employed in the future," he said. "The local Sol are attending this class to begin working toward finding employment in other fields and stay off the streets."

Employment initiatives offered in programs such as the CSD will help to keep unemployed Iraqis from falling under the influence of criminal elements and gangs in Baghdad, he explained.

"Regulars" Soldiers of the 22nd Inf. Regt. are also charged with providing local security for the registration process and the first day of the vocational classes, said 1st Lt. Jonathan Muir, an infantry platoon leader from Pittsburgh, assigned to Co. C, 1st Bn., 22nd Inf. Regt.

The Soldiers continue to monitor the Sol involved in the program, ensuring that those registering in the fledgling program are searched and escorted to their classes without incident, explained Muir.

"There's a lot of pessimism among the Iraqi people about the validity of the program," Muir said. "Overall though, the end result is the Sons of Iraq have achieved a lot of security and stability in the country."

When Abna al Iraq Wussam arrived at the CSD in Jihad to register for his classes scheduled to begin later in the week, he said that he was unsure of exactly what the results of the three-month program will yield.

"We will receive vocational training to help prepare the security guards for job opportunities outside the Iraqi Security (Forces)," Wussam said.

"If there are no jobs, then I want to stay in the Sol."

Wussam explained that when he volunteered for the schooling, he did not care about the increase of money he stands to

make in the vocational training, where he will be paid \$326 dollars per month to attend the vocational classes.

"We just want to make this country better and this area safer," he added.

Wussam also said that he is happy about the CSD program and hopes that more Sons of Iraq in the area will have the opportunity to participate in the training.

"The Sol program was never meant to be a permanent thing," said Capt. Ryan Garling, commander of Co. E, 1st Bn., 22nd Inf. Regt.

Established more than 18 months ago, the Sons of Iraq, a Coalition Forces-sponsored program involving more than 99,000 concerned Iraqi citizens charged to provide security for their neighborhoods and communities throughout Baghdad and Iraq, transferred to the control of the Iraqi Government Oct. 1 and will eventually be dissolved.

"We are taking care of the Sons of Iraq, who are here right now, and when they need a job later on in life, right after their three-month training course, we give them a job where they will begin making more money than they did in the Sol," he explained.

Coalition Forces began working with the Sol contractors in West Rashid, distributing school applications with job descriptions for the different skill sets taught at the CSD, explained Garling, whose unit provides security and over watch for two muhallahs, or neighborhoods, in the Hayy Jihad-area.

Upon completion of the registration process, the students are dropped from the Sol program and enrolled in the vocational training at the CSD receiving approximately \$326 per month during the three-month course, said Garling, who supervised the enrollment of more than 190 Sol into the CSD program.

The Government of Iraq is paying for the classes, added Garling, who also said that approximately 20 percent of the remaining Sol members employed by the ISF will only make approximately \$250 per month.

"The classes they have here were specifically selected as jobs needed in the Rashid area," he added. "These jobs are actually needed to rebuild the area."

Based on the program's success, other CSD programs will be created for the Rashid district and Baghdad, he added.

"Rashid has always been an area of doing prototype work, making something happen and then hopefully letting the rest of Iraq benefit from it," Garling said.

"Hopefully they will see success here, and it will continue to East and West Rashid and then eventually head up North."



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

Capt. Ryan Garling, commander of Company E, 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, meets with an Iraqi instructor for the Job Training Focus Program at the Jihad Civil Services Department in the Rashid district of southern Baghdad Oct. 5, the first day of registration for former Sons of Iraq seeking valuable job skills in the Iraqi work force.

## MND-B's PSD teams safely transport selves, passengers through streets of Baghdad

**Continued from page 1**

No walls, no towers, no guards – safer, but still not completely safe.

Safety is the primary job of a personal security detail team, otherwise known as the PSD. The mission is to convoy their designated VIPs – whether it's a general, a command sergeant major, or any myriad of other Soldiers – safely and securely through the streets of Baghdad from one base to another.

"There's really no other way to do it," said Staff Sgt. Charles Mitchell, a native of Richmond, Ky., who serves as a convoy commander with the 223rd Military Police Company, 18th MP Brigade, Multi-National Division – Baghdad. "You have to have someone else that's capable of taking (them) ... to the places (they) need to go. There's just too much involved in the war that's going on for them to concentrate on their own safety."

One PSD team member recently described the job, jokingly, as a high-tech taxi service. But when that taxi is an up-armored humvee or Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected vehicle, and requires a gunner in the turret with a .50 caliber machine gun, it stops being a joke and every PSD Soldier takes it seriously.

"The main job is not getting complacent," said Sgt. 1st Class Dallas Parkerson, a native of Indianola, Miss., who serves as platoon sergeant for the command sergeant major's PSD team, Headquarters and Headquarters Co., 1st Battalion, 66th Armored Regiment, 4th Infantry Division, MND-B. "You make sure you're looking for new things out there that you didn't see the day before. You keep situational awareness so you can make it there and back without any problems." Each team member knows which sector is his responsibility to watch so the team can keep a constant 360-degree view of the route. That's their mission – know the route, drive it safely and get their passenger where they need to go and back again.

Their passengers' missions is where the story usually lies – "General visits troops" or "Celebrity tours FOBs," and all of the PSD team members know what their passengers' missions are – it's a vital part of situational awareness. But that's not where their focus lies. Instead, members of PSD teams throughout the city focus on providing the constant guarding and steady vigilance needed to keep their passengers, and themselves, safe on the streets of Baghdad



Photo by 1st Sgt. Robert Logan, MND-B PAO

Sgt. 1st Class Dallas Parkerson (far left) who serves as the senior enlisted leader of the personal security detail team for the command sergeant major, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 66th Armored Regiment, 4th Infantry Division, stands with the Soldiers from his platoon for a group photo.

# 10th Cav. Soldier recovers from blast with Family support



Photo by Spc. Benjamin Crane, MND-B PAO

Sgt. Kristie Edwards, a native of Radcliff, Ky., who serves as a personnel section noncommissioned officer with Troop D, 4th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, attached to 2nd BCT, 101st Airborne Div., Multi-National Division – Baghdad, stands beside her husband, Staff Sgt. Rodney Edwards, Oct. 13.

## Continued from page 1

“The (improvised explosive device) was placed inside the sandbag wall where we were standing.”

When the IED blew up, Edwards was knocked to the ground and things went silent for her.

“After the blast, you don’t hear anything; you don’t see anything,” she said. “It’s all just white dust everywhere. I

“I got shrapnel in my ankle but I didn’t know it. I just thought I twisted it when I fell,” she said. “I tried to grab some litters to help the other guys to the Bradley (Fighting Vehicle) and I didn’t know my ankle was hurt until I took my boot off and there it was.”

Edward’s husband, Staff Sgt. Rodney Edwards, who

started freaking out because it just dropped me straight where I was standing, face first. It was like I couldn’t move and everything was going in slow motion.”

After reaching for something to stabilize her but finding nothing, Edwards laid on the ground. Her first thought was that she was missing some extremities due to lack of feeling in her body.

“I thought my leg was gone because I couldn’t feel it and I was thinking, ‘Oh my God!’” she said. “A couple minutes later some one came up and pulled me around to the other sand bag wall where I saw two other guys who were hurt. It seems so unreal but you could hear the gun shots close by and I was thinking, ‘Do I need to get my weapon and am I going to shoot somebody? What’s going on?’”

With members of her unit hurt and bleeding around her, she realized that she still had all her limbs but had yet to discover that she was injured beyond nearly being knocked out.

serves in the same unit, reacted as most husbands would upon receiving news that their wife was hurt or wounded.

“My first reaction was panic,” he said. “I just ran out of the motor pool non-stop until I made it to my wife’s side. They tried to stop me when I got to Riva Ridge (aid station) but I busted right through the doors.”

Edwards was sent to Qatar for a couple weeks after she left the combat support hospital in Baghdad while her wound healed, and it wasn’t long before she was back in the saddle with her unit.

There were no fatalities in the blast that was only ten feet away from Edwards and her fellow Soldiers. Each one of the wounded was awarded the Combat Action Badge and Purple Heart Medal for their involvement by Lt. Col. Monty Willoughby, commander of 4th Squadron, 10th Cav. Regt.

Edwards now works in the orderly room at her unit’s headquarters at Camp Liberty. The near-disastrous experience is something that she says she will always carry with her.

“I am fine now but I can tell there is a difference in how I think or how I act. I am really, really sensitive now,” she said. “If I start talking or thinking about something that’s sad, I will just start crying, really crying, and I wasn’t like that before.”

Edwards’s physical wounds have healed now and she is lucky enough to have her husband nearby to support her, and the love of her two children, Rashawn, 13, and Raciona, 4, to look to for strength.

“I have tried to comfort her in every way possible,” said Edwards.

“I have been encouraging her to continue to do her best and don’t let the injury bring her down emotionally and physically.”

They say that time heals all wounds, and though that may be true, perhaps a better way to express those sentiments would be to say that time, along with the love of a supportive family and the support of friends, heals all wounds.

In the example of Sgt. Kristie Edwards, such is proving to be the case.

# IA, Gimlets distribute aid to Zaidat

By 1Lt. Aaron Oliver

1st Bn., 21st Inf. Regt., 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div.

BAGHDAD – The village of Zaidat, west of Baghdad, sits in the shadow of one of Iraq’s oldest and best known ancient monuments, the Ziggurat of Aqur Quf (1400 B.C.).

The village used to suffer from lack of employment and poor security, but the security situation has improved and many residents are moving back home.

However, those returning are moving back home to dry farm lands due to lack of irrigation, which dealt a blow to this year’s crops.

To help supplement the small yield, Iraqi Army soldiers from 3rd Battalion, 24th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, and Soldiers from Company C, 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment, attached to 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment “Gimlets,” 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, “Warrior,” 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, distributed approximately 600 bags of food to local citizens Sept. 25.

“It feels good to build rapport with the locals by actually showing them that we do care and really want to help them – especially in an area that has been neglected,” said Sgt. Ashants Harris, a New York City native, and infantryman assigned to 1st Bn. 27th Inf. Regt.

The residents appreciated the bags filled with rice, pasta, cans of peas and corned-beef-hash.

Once all the food was handed out, the IA soldiers and Co. C Soldiers took a few minutes to talk and joke with the people.

At the end of the day, the entire village was able to return to their homes with food for their families and lightened spirits.

“It was great,” said Pfc. Joshua Baxter, native of Mount Sterling, Ky., an infantryman assigned to 1st Bn., 27th Inf. Regt. “It’s nice to be able to take part in something that shows another face of the U.S. Army to Iraqi people in need.”



Photo courtesy of 1st Bn. 21st Inf. Regt., 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div.

Pfc. Joshua Baxter, a native of Mount Sterling, Ky., medic assigned to Company C, 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment, attached to 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment “Gimlets” 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team “Warrior,” 25th Infantry Division, hands bags of food to a man during a food distribution in Zaidat, west of Baghdad, Sept. 25.

# Iraq Badger vehicle tackles route clearance

By Sgt. Carmen Guerrero  
890th Eng. Bn., 926th Eng. Bde.

BAGHDAD – A day to be remembered for engineer and Iraqi soldiers is Sept. 14. On this day, members of the 6th Iraqi Army Division trained and conducted a route-clearance mission with the 836th Sapper Company out of Kingsville, Texas, using their own route clearance vehicle – the Badger. The 836th Sapper Company is attached to the 890th Engineer Battalion out of Gulfport, Mississippi.

The day started with a link-up between the 836th Sapper Company and the 6th Iraqi Army Div., to start rock drill rehearsals for possible scenarios that could be encountered while on patrol.

Iraqi Lt. Jusim Wisam, of the 6th IA Div., and his Soldiers were eager to learn more about the job Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers perform on a daily basis, route clearance. Rock drill rehearsals went well and both Iraqi and U.S. Soldiers seemed very pleased with the information shared and presented between both units.

Once rock drill rehearsals were complete, members of the 6th Iraqi Army proudly displayed their vehicle, the Iraqi Light Armored Vehicle, also known as the Badger. The Badger is similar to the U.S.'s version of the Buffalo. The Badger is an armored vehicle built for mine detection and to withstand roadside bombs and is an effective choice for route clearance missions. Amazingly, the Badger can carry up to 10 personnel and has easy access to get both inside and outside of the vehicle.

After the proud showcase of their vehicle, the Iraqi Army mounted their Badger and merged into the route clearance patrol to begin their mission alongside 890th Engineer Battalion Soldiers.

The Iraqis proved to be sufficient with their new equipment and began their own IED interrogations.

This event went well for both members of the 6th IA Div., and the 836th Sapper Company. Many experiences were exchanged and integrated into the training.

"I was impressed with the Iraqi's interrogations of suspicious objects when they used the arm on their Badger," said Sgt. 1st Class Glenn Sierra, of Brownville, Texas.

"They are very efficient and effective while on mission. Once we got over the basic learning curve and communication obstacles, we were practically seamless in our joint efforts."

"I have personally been out on missions with Soldiers of the 6th Iraqi Army conducting joint operations in route reconnaissance and clearance patrols," said Capt. Mikel Sledge, of Hockley, Texas. "They are competent and eager to perform

their duties. In the future, we will continue to conduct missions side-by-side with the Iraqis. Eventually, they take over the mission in its entirety.

"From what I have witnessed thus far, they will do very well in the future," he added.

Lt. Col. Joe Hargett of Madison, Miss. and the commander of the 890th Engineer Battalion said, "Today is historically significant for the 890th Engineer Battalion and the 6th Iraqi Army Engineers. This is the first route clearance patrol where the Iraqi Badger has been the center piece of the patrol formation."

"This event signifies the will and desire of the Iraqi Army to enhance their capability to perform independent missions. Conducting these missions will ultimately lead to the Government of Iraq developing its capacity for enhancing security in and around the Baghdad area."

"(Iraqi) Col. Ahmed and I have agreed that we will conduct these type missions routinely with the goal of assisting and enabling his engineers to conduct independent route clearance missions in the future."

"This arrangement is a win for both of us. Not only do we maintain and sharpen our route clearance skills while training the Iraqi soldiers, our efforts also help to add legitimacy to the Iraqi Army, especially when the civilian population observes the Iraqi soldiers supporting the counter IED fight."

In closing, Hargett said, his team has been pleased with the training, performance, and attitude of the Iraqi soldiers. They have been very eager to learn and even more proud to show what they have learned in the past from previous partnerships with U.S. forces. Working directly with the 6th Iraqi Army engineers will continue to be the highlight of this deployment for the 890th Engineer Battalion.



Photo by Sgt. Carmen Guerrero, 890th Eng. Bn., 926th Eng. Bde.

Lt. Jusim Wisam, of the 6th Iraqi Army demonstrates the ferret arm Sept. 14 used on the Badger, route-clearance vehicle. The 836th Sapper Company, of Kingsville, Texas, train alongside the Iraqi Army and provide route clearance support for the Iraqi Army.

## Army Engineers increase safety of American Forces in Iraq

### COP Comanche upgrades improve force protection

By 2nd Lt. Michael Cirillo  
Company A, 46th ECB (H), 926th Eng. Bde.

BAGHDAD, Iraq – The 46th Engineer Combat Battalion (Heavy) continues to make numerous upgrades and improvements to civilian and military living quarters in Baghdad.

The most recent project sent Soldiers from 1st Platoon, Company A, based in Fort Polk, La., to Combat Outpost Comanche to upgrade force protection for Company C, 1st Battalion, 35th Armor Regiment.

In mid-September, the Engineers were tasked with building guard tower fighting positions on the roof of a three-story structure, building platforms in two guard towers and conducting electrical repairs.

"The towers they had here were inadequate," stated Cpl. Scott Carter, 46th ECB (H), a native of Rochester, N.Y. "The new fighting positions will make the guards happier. They're the ones that have to spend all the time in there. Guard shifts are long, so building them something nice keeps morale up along with giving them more protection." The newly built fighting positions will give the Infantrymen the ability to ob-

serve key terrain in the Sadr City area while providing cover, shade and protection to guards on duty.

Building the wood-framed structures was tough enough, but with the added job of carrying all the building materials up three flights of stairs, and navigating through cramped hall-



Photo by 2nd Lt. Michael Cirillo, 46th ECB (H), 926th Eng. Bde.

Cpl. Scott Carter, Company A, 46th Engineer Combat Battalion (Heavy), a native from Rochester, N.Y., measures a piece of plywood for the construction of a fighting position at Combat Outpost Comanche, Sept. 13.

ways, it made the job even tougher. However, the 46th ECB (H) Engineers stay in great shape in the desert and worked hard to complete the project – ahead of schedule.

Before the Engineers made the improvements to the guard towers, Soldiers on duty had to climb a straight 15-foot high ladder to reach the top of the towers.

Now guards climb six feet to a platform and then another six feet to a second platform, before reaching the top of the tower. These added platforms provide a quick break and is a safety feature provided during the climb up and down.

The electricians noted much of the wiring was not weather proof and with the rainy season approaching that could be hazardous.

"The wiring at COP Comanche wasn't up to standard and there was a lot to fix," commented Kevin McDaniel, a native of Los Angeles, and an electrician with 1st Pltn.

The electrical upgrades completed by the electricians of the 46th ECB (H) were numerous, including rewiring two generators, rewiring a bathroom panel box running new electrical systems to that panel box and rewiring two freezers.

McDaniel is confident that the repairs he made with his team of electricians will make life more comfortable on COP Comanche whether they are running on generator or city power.

# Doug's Dig on Hollywood:

## Not a 'Goodyear' for Black September

By Spc. Douglas York  
MND-B PAO

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq — Many of us are prone to binge, be it junk food, shopping, “fire-water” or other such “fun-inducers;” at one time or another, most of us have gone on a shameful spree of sorts.

Like you, I am no different in that regard. However, my binges generally end up centering on bad Hollywood “B” movies or disaster films, which are what I’ve been watching a lot of lately.

Every once in a while though, I come across a decent flick in this genre and that is exactly what happened recently with my discovery of “Black Sunday,” a 1977 film distributed by Paramount Pictures and directed by the famous John Frankenheimer, whose resume also includes the original “Manchurian Candidate,” “Reindeer Games” and “Ronin.”

The film’s three main stars include Robert Shaw (of “Jaws” fame) as Kabakov, an Israeli Mossad agent, Bruce Dern (Jurassic Park actress Laura Dern’s father) as Michael Lander, an American blimp pilot deranged by years of torture as a prisoner of war in Vietnam, a failed marriage and a bitter court martial, and Swiss-born actress Marthe Keller as Dahlia, who is an operative from a Palestinian terrorist group known as Black September.

Yes, that is the same Black September terrorist group that kidnapped and then murdered 11 Israeli athletes during the 1972 Summer Olympic Games in Munich, Germany. Moreover, they were the bad guys who were summarily hunted down and killed by actor Eric Bana and company in Steven Spielberg’s 2005 film “Munich.”

As a result of his failings and the thoughts that his country betrayed him, Lander longs to commit suicide and take as many people as possible with him, so he conspires with Dahlia to launch a massive suicide bombing on American soil. Their plan is to detonate a flechette-filled bomb (think of the guts of several thousand shotgun shells being directionally shot at one time) housed on the underside of a Goodyear blimp, over the old Miami Orange Bowl during the National Football League’s 1976 Super Bowl.

American and Israeli intelligence agencies, led by Kabakov (Shaw) and FBI agent Sam Corley (played by actor Fritz Weaver), race to prevent the catastrophe, although they aren’t exactly sure what the bad guys’ plans are. To add further in-



Spc. Douglas York

trigue, the president of the United States (which was President-elect Jimmy Carter at the time and he does make an appearance in the film) attends the Super Bowl despite the pleas of Kabakov and Corley not to do so.

The film was a huge hit when it was released in 1977, and many critics applauded the final scenes of the film, featuring a helicopter/blimp chase over the Orange Bowl as one of the more riveting and unusual in movie history. Put me down on record as agreeing with them.

The acting is superb as Dern is spot-on in his portrayal of the tortured Lander. Additionally, the film is unusual because it shows what the bad guys are doing and why they are doing it. I wouldn’t go so far as to say the film wants you to feel sorry for them (though the way Lander’s life turned out is tragic) or rally behind their cause, but odd as it sounds, you do understand their madness.

Nevertheless the “good guys,” spearheaded by the aforementioned Kabakov, are where it’s at in this film.

Several times I wanted to holler at the screen with disgust because, as the viewer, I knew what Black September was up to, yet the agencies involved were always a day late and a dollar short.

A significant portion of the filming was done during the actual Super Bowl X (Pittsburgh Steelers versus Dallas Cowboys) at the Orange Bowl in Miami, January 18, 1976. In fact, in the movie, Kabakov discusses the security arrangements for the game with former Miami Dolphins owner Joe Robbie, who plays himself.

Black Sunday won a few Academy Awards in several sound, editing and visual effects categories, all things you’d expect from a disaster flick. But what was unexpected and should’ve been recognized by “Oscar” are the stellar perfor-

mances in acting and directing.

The film nailed all of its marks, and given the tragic events (such as 9/11), which have occurred since its release, it seems Frankenheimer and the author of the book the movie is based on, Thomas Harris (who also wrote “The Silence of the Lambs,” “Red Dragon” and “Hannibal”), were almost prophetic in what they were showing on the big screen. Watching it in hindsight with all that’s happened in the last few years, it gave me chills to feel like I was seeing how the criminal mind, moreover, how an unremorseful terrorist’s mind, really works.

With that, it is my recommendation that you make like the 1986 Super Bowl Champion Chicago Bears and do a “Super Bowl Shuffle” to your nearest movie outlet and buy or rent this flick. With no remorse of my own, I award “Black Sunday” with three chevrons and three rockers.

If you would like me to consider a movie for future review or to give feedback on these films or these films’ reviews, feel free to email me at [mndb\\_pao@yahoo.com](mailto:mndb_pao@yahoo.com).

## BLACK SUNDAY

It could be tomorrow!



Paramount Pictures Presents a Robert Evans production a John Frankenheimer film starring Robert Shaw, Bruce Dern, Marthe Keller "Black Sunday" co-starring Fritz Weaver and Bekim Fehmiu, Music Scored by John Williams, Director of Photography John A. Alonzo, A.S.C., Executive Producer Robert L. Rosen, Based on the Novel by Thomas Harris, Screenplay by Ernest Lehman, Kenneth Ross and Ivan Moffat, Produced by Robert Evans, Directed by John Frankenheimer, Services by Connaught Productions, In Color

Read the Bantam paperback Panavision, A Paramount Picture



# Brothers in Arms take to Dutch streets during WWII battle



## Gaming Review: Hell's Highway

By Sgt. Jason Thompson  
MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – The gaming industry has frequently strip mined the battlefields of World War II for content, but few of the titles released have covered the action or the tales of the soldiers in the field like Gearbox's Brothers in Arms series.

Following the footsteps and drawing from the experiences of the actual 502nd Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division, from World War II, the titles in the series have always delivered a glimpse at the men on the front lines, including their thoughts and fears in the midst of seemingly overwhelming odds.

The latest installment of the game, Hell's Highway, takes the men away from the fields and farms of France into one of World War II's most colossal failures for the allies.

The story of Hell's Highway revolves around Operation Market Garden, a plan designed to end the war before Christmas of 1944 by capturing a highway through Holland and punching through enemy lines into the heart of Germany. While it was the largest airborne invasion in the history of the world, the Allies didn't know that Hitler's best soldiers and tank divisions were in the surrounding area.

After initial success, the Nazis surrounded and crushed the Allied troops, leading to the last significant Nazi victory of the war.

Hell's Highway is set against this backdrop of the war, telling the tale of Staff Sgt. Matt Baker and his squad as they try to survive the hazards of Holland that are constantly thrown their way.

The story is particularly trying for Baker, who was always an introspective character in the previous games. Often stoic and measured in his thought during down time in between missions, the weight of the war has obviously started to weigh heavily upon Baker.

Much of his time throughout the game is spent remorsefully reflecting on the deaths of many of the previous Soldiers under his command. This stress and pressure seems to be manifesting itself in the early stages of shell shock, and there are even some moments where Baker's mental state is called into question by both himself and his squad mates.

It's rare that you see a title handle material like this with sensitivity, care and respect, and Gearbox does a great job



Sgt. Jason Thompson

of taking this serious and life changing condition that affects many Soldiers and depicting it realistically.

You don't have to know the story of the previous games in the series to catch up on the characters in the platoon (though you gain a better sense of how these men have developed if you do); the cinematics and flashbacks will fill in newcomers with more than enough info to explain the plot.

Even better, the title provides a comprehensive history of the operation thanks to the in-game Recon Reports, giving a full sense of the magnitude of the mission and how flawed it eventually was.

If you've seen HBO's Band of Brothers, Hell's Highway feels like a lost episode of the show, and has the sense of scale and cinematic grandeur that you'd expect from Hollywood.

As far as the standard game play mechanics are concerned, Hell's Highway plays out exactly like the previous titles in the game, so veterans of the series will have no problem dropping into a warzone and attacking the Nazis.

For beginners, however, you'll quickly learn that simply running ahead and trying to blast anyone in sight is a quick way to get put in a body bag; instead, players will have to dig into cover, leaning out or popping up to take aim and blast the enemy from safety. You'll also have to effectively control individual teams, pinning down threats with suppressing fire from one location so that you or another squad can flank them and eliminate the enemy.

There are three separate kinds of teams that you'll be able to direct, such as a fire team, who are great for initially suppressing enemies, assault teams that are good for flanking attacks and special weapons squads, like machine gun or bazooka crews, who are ideal for eliminating entrenched enemies or platoons of enemies.

Knowing the strengths and weaknesses of each squad, as well as adequately using their skills to destroy enemies, is a key tactic of the game.

Unfortunately, your teams are sometimes slow when it comes to responding to commands maneuvering them to safety, which is one of the core game play mechanics. For example, you'll instruct your Soldiers to run over and take cover behind a low rock wall to ensure the safety of your troops. Unfortunately, instead of running under cover and crouching, your Soldiers will sometimes run directly in front of enemy positions and leap over the wall, frequently getting turned into Swiss cheese.

This is a problem that has always existed within previous Brothers in Arms games, but you'd think that it would have been fixed by now.

Then again, this issue isn't solely held to your troops; the enemy AI will perform nonsensical actions as well. For the most part, they'll attempt to flank you, find cover and pour on a large amount of gunfire on your positions, making progress extremely difficult.

However, there are times where the AI will simply stand in the open and disregard incoming gunfire or explosions, not moving a muscle until you get within an unspecified proximity that seems to trigger them coming to life.

There are two problems of this triggered response. The first is that it simply doesn't feel realistic at all and takes you out of the atmosphere of the battlefield into an obvious simulation. The second – and more serious issue – is that the enemies will frequently shrug off this damage as if it never occurred, which feels extremely flawed. Like I said, it doesn't happen all of the time, but when it does, it stands out like a sore thumb.

Visually, the title is truly a hit or miss affair, which is unfortunate considering how solid the storytelling elements are. There are some nice details that will pop up here and there, such as particle effects during explosions as well as building details and rubble as you go through villages.

What's more, the cinematic slow motion shots that zoom in and focus on kill shots during attacks, such as head shots or grenades that rip limbs off are excellent. However, this is balanced with some elements that look terrible on these systems, such as the flat and unimpressive 2D grass and flower textures that you'll continually run past.

The sound for Hell's Highway fortunately makes up for some of the visual downfalls of the game with a score that feels pulled directly from a war film.

Swelling orchestral pieces punctuate dramatic moments of the game, and you almost feel as though a composer was intentionally underscoring the action of the game to showcase the feats of Baker's squad.

The Airborne soldiers who fought and lived through the horrors of World War II, and particularly that Operation Market Garden, deserve respect, honor and tales that highlight their sacrifices on the field of battle – as all Soldiers deserve.

Brothers in Arms: Hell's Highway does an excellent job of presenting the story of these men and is as compelling as many war movies. While many of the franchise's traditional game play elements return, such as the tactical controls of squads, so do the issues associated with those controls. Tie in some questionable visuals and AI issues, and you have a title that's good, but not great.

I give Brothers in Arms: Hell's Highway 3 Bronze Stars out of 5.

# Camp Taji holds Army Ten-Miler



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

More than 100 servicemembers stationed at Camp Taji begin the Army Ten-Miler on Camp Taji Oct. 5. The event, held annually in Washington, was held for deployed Soldiers on the camp, north of Baghdad, who also wanted to run the race.

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

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – More than 100 service members stationed at Camp Taji ran the Shadow Run Oct. 5 – the camp north of Baghdad’s version of the Army Ten-Miler.

The Army Ten-Miler, held annually for the past 24 years in Washington, is America’s largest 10-mile running event with normally more than 26,000 runners from around the world competing in the road race.

Camp Taji’s Shadow Run was held so service members could also get their chance to compete in the event while they are deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

This year, Pfc. Stephen Baker, infantryman, 1st Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Stryker Brigade, 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, from Dixon, Ill., placed first in the race with a time of 59:07.

“I love fitness, and I love to compete,” said Baker, who averaged less than six minutes a mile blazing through the race on the rocky roads of Camp Taji.

“I try to race as much as I can. Today, I just ran until I got to the finish line. I am going to keep running until I make the All-Army Running Team.”

Although winning the race was a great accomplishment, and making the All-Army Running Team would also be an even greater

accomplishment, some Soldiers just wanted to improve their running times while they are deployed.

“I beat my personal best by three minutes,” said Sgt. 1st Class Tim Rake, frequency manager, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Combat Aviation Brigade 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, from Danville, Pa., who ran the race in 72:40.

“I have been training for this event for about three weeks. For the train-up, I just increased the time I ran every day.”

Running every day is the key for many Soldiers stationed on Camp Taji. For a few Soldiers with the CAB, the ten-miler was just a portion of the milestone they have in mind for the deployment.

“I am trying to run 1,000 miles before the end of this deployment,” said Capt. Kelsy Williams, brigade executive assistant, HHC, CAB, from Pulaski, N.Y.

“This is the second month I am going for my goal of 100 miles. I ran 100 miles last month and today makes 20 miles for October.

“My brother in (Las) Vegas and my best friend in New York are doing the 1,000 miles goal as well,” she said.

“I’m lucky to be motivated by the (CAB) command group, because they are the ones that started this goal. I need to run 90 more ten-milers.”



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

Pfc. Stephen Baker, infantryman, 1st Battalion, 14th Inf. Regiment, 2nd Stryker Brigade, 25th Inf. Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, from Dixon, Ill., finishes in first place with a time of 59:07 at the Army Ten-Miler on Camp Taji Oct. 5.

# CRANE'S Sports Talk

## NBA Preseason still with its flaws

By **Spc. Benjamin Crane**

MND-B PAO

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – David Stern, the commissioner of the National Basketball Association, in all his wisdom is trying to make games that mean nothing interesting. All the way to even the most diehard of fan, the preseason is nothing more than a warm-up and try-out session for the NBA.

So, why? Why try to take butter and turn it into a 5-star meal?

Now the NBA has games in Barcelona, Spain and Berlin, Germany, featuring the New Orleans Hornets and Washington Wizards. The biggest surprise here was the Dallas Mavericks weren't invited, even though Dirk Nowitzki, a Germany native, is so popular over there.

That's like not taking Yao Ming on a road trip to China.

The wild ideas continued as the Denver Nuggets and Phoenix Suns battled at Indian Wells in California – an outdoor tennis facility! The players said that they were excited to see what would happen if the wind started to whip up on the stadium floor but when the wind misdirected some of their shots, they didn't seem too pleased.

I guess Stern wanted the NBA to return to its roots. All it needed was a peach basket and the game would have been right on point.

Hey, where was James Naismith. Did anybody see him? I digress.



**Spc. Benjamin Crane**

Then there was the reunion tour for Carmelo Anthony and his alma mater, Syracuse University. He took his Nuggets team in the Carrier Dome in New York to face off with the Phoenix Suns again. The dome was filled with screaming Anthony fans, still living off the excitement that he brought them in 2003 when he single-handedly carried the Orangeman to a national title his first, and only, year there. This time, Anthony was only on the court for about 24 minutes but scored 14 points, one being a thunderous dunk for the Nuggets first two points in the game.

Oh, did anybody catch the Lakers against Regal FC Barcelona. Good game, right? Sure, the Lakers of Hollywood won 108-104, but not a bad showing for those Europeans. I thought we got enough of the International play during the Olympics. Maybe this time they used American rules since it was at the Staples Center in Los Angeles. Kobe Bryant scored a game high 28 points and, more importantly, escaped the game with out any injuries.

These games that don't mean much may be drawing fans now, but at what cost?

Watching the Utah Jazz's all-star point guard Deron Williams go down with a sprained ankle recently, I was reminded these players are just trying to stay healthy for the regular season when the games mean something.

No matter what Stern does, teams will still only give about half the effort they normally give, and the stars that the fans want to see will only play sparingly. So, try as you might to make more money, the preseason, no matter how you dress it up, will always still be practice basketball and nobody wants to pay to see practice.

When the antagonizing madness is finally over, we can all look forward to seeing a few pretty good games.

Six teams will start the season off with a bang Oct. 28 in three highly anticipated matchups.

Cleveland Cavaliers @ Boston Celtics: The World Champions and the Three Musketeers host King James and his loyal subjects. If James' supporting cast can start to produce offensively instead of just watching LeBron do all the work, the Cavs will be a force to be reckoned with.

Ray Allen, Kevin Gar-

nett and Paul Pierce will be a good test for the Cav's defense. Stopping one All-Star is difficult for most NBA teams but to deal with three is almost too much.

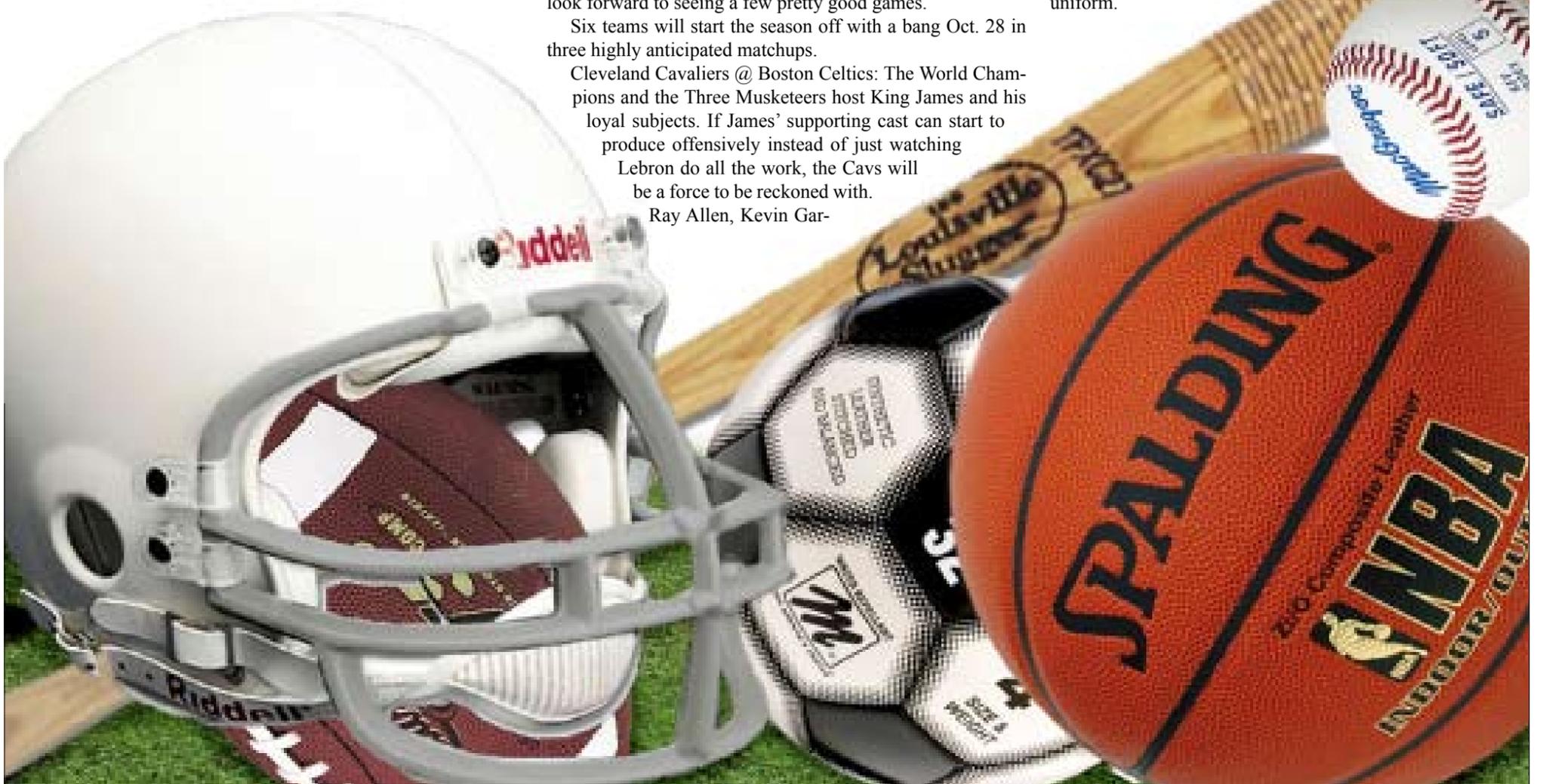
Stop the other two men on the court and limit what KG does in the paint and the Cavs can pull off an early upset here. Too bad it's going to be in Boston's TD Banknorth Garden where the Celtics merely lost only six games last season.

Milwaukee Bucks @ Chicago Bulls: If only these teams can bring the excitement that the Brewers and Cubs do to these two rival cities, this game could be memorable. If the Bulls can start the season off with a win, it will give them a much needed boost propel them to success in the 2008-09 season.

Portland Trailblazers @ Los Angeles Lakers: Greg Oden will finally make his NBA debut after sitting out all of last season due to a knee injury he suffered in a preseason game last year. The Trailblazers will face an always potent Lakers offense featuring Kobe Bryant, Andrew Bynum and Pau Gasol.

However, the Blazers are this years up-and-comers, and this game will be a great measuring stick as to how far the team has come and how much more they need to be playoff contenders.

And just for the few of you who have been under a rock for the past few months or just busy with your daily routine, I want to remind you that the Seattle Super Sonics have relocated and have become the Oklahoma City Thunder. Yes, the team still has last year's rookie-of-the-year, Kevin Durant, he just won't be as recognizable in his new blue and orange uniform.





# Gimlets disrupt weapons supply, flow

Photo by Cpl. Dustin Weidman, 1st Bn., 21st Inf. Regt., 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div.

The residents of Aqur Quf, northwest of Baghdad, woke to the sight and sounds of more than 300 Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment "Gimlets," 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team "Warrior," 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, and their partners from the 24th Battalion, 6th Iraqi Army Division, Oct. 4. Operation Gimlet Tidal Wave, the MND-B and IA Soldiers searched targeted areas historically used by terrorists in the vicinity of Abu Ghuraib to plant improvised-explosive devices and transport weapons and militants to Baghdad. The one-day operation netted 20 caches throughout the Abu Ghuraib area.



Photo by Cpl. Dustin Weidman, 1st Bn., 21st Inf. Regt., 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div.

Staff Sgt. Anton Kiren, a resident of Ewa Beach, Hawaii, digs for a possible weapons cache that was pointed out by Spc Ricky Lyles, native of Pharr, Texas, during Operation Gimlet Tidal Wave in Aqur Quf, northwest of Baghdad, Oct. 4. Both Soldiers are assigned to 2nd Platoon, Company C, 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment, "Gimlets," 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team "Warrior," 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.



Photo by Cpl. Dustin Weidman, 1st Bn., 21st Inf. Regt., 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div.

Sgt Chris Chaparro, a native of Rancho Cordova, Calif., double checks a hole with his metal detector before Spc. Ricky Lyles, a native of Pharr, Texas, digs any deeper while searching for a weapons cache during Operation Gimlet Tidal Wave in Aqur Quf, northwest of Baghdad, Oct. 4.



Photo by Cpl. Dustin Weidman, 1st Bn., 21st Inf. Regt., 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div.

Pfc. Jordan Eddy, native of Lake Wood, Colo., and gunner for 2nd Platoon, Company C, 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment, "Gimlets," 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, "Warrior," 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, crosses the river on a pipe during a dismounted patrol during Operation Gimlet Tidal Wave in Aqur Quf, northwest of Baghdad, Oct. 4.