The Striker Torch

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1-63CAB Partners with IA

Dragons Fire up Mahmudiyah

STRIKER 6 On Line

By COL Pat White
2nd BCT Commander

Camp Striker - New Area of Operations

In my last column, I discussed how the Iron Brigade was going through a time of transition. For clarification, TF 1-6, "Regulars" Commanded by LTC Brian Eifler are still attached to the 3rd BDE, 4th Infantry Division, and operating in Baghdad.

The Brigade Headquarters (HQ), HQ 40th ENG, 47th FSB, most battalion task force Headquarters and headquarters companies (HHCs), and the Separate Companies (502 MI and 589 SIG) have now moved into Camp Striker and have assumed the battle space of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division in the Mahmudiyah Qada in addition to our more familiar battlespace in Mada 'in. Our new area of operations now includes what is called the 'southern belt' of Baghdad.

Task Force Dragon, commanded by LTC Jim Bradford, is responsible for much of the 'new' battlespace we inherited from 3/101. TF Thunder, commanded by LTC Mike Mammay, has completed their move, and are now neighbors with TF 1-63. We welcome back two of our companies, into TF Thunder, B/1-35 and B/2-6. It is good to have them back in the fold!

And, just so everyone understands, we didn't move just to change it up. The repositioning of the brigade headquarters and units from FOB Hammer to Camp Striker was to better situate the brigade leadership and our logistical assets for command and control and support to all of our subordinate units across our expanded area of operations. Word has it that the food Soldiers receive is now better than ever, and that is a direct result of our proximity to the Victory Base Complex.

Because of Camp Striker's larger size and closeness to Baghdad City the Soldiers stationed here now have easy access to internet capabilities, cell phone coverage, a Bazaar comprised of over six local national shops, three fast food restaurants, a coffee shop and a gift shop. There is also a much larger and better stocked AAFES PX for the Soldiers to frequent.

This is not the first time the Iron Brigade has occupied this battle space. We occupied this area in 2004 and everyone is encouraged by the progress that has been made here.

For reference, in case somebody asks, Mahmudiyah Qada (1-63 and 4-27 land) is 300 square kilometers holding a half a million people and contains areas previously known best as "The Triangle of Death" and "Samarra Jungle". Al Qaeda in Iraq once controlled the area but Coalition Forces partnered with the Iraqi Army have driven AQI out of the region and they are no longer a dominant force.

Much has changed over the past four years and the area now has a solid foundation for economic and social revitalization (one of the steps required to get us all home). We will continue to work with the Iraqi people, the Iraqi Security Forces and the Iraqi government to enable continued progress.

In the past seven months, since our departure from Baumholder and the transfer of authority with the 3/3 ID, the Iron Brigade has met every challenge and change which has come our way. Our successes under four different commands (Division headquarters 3rd Infantry, 10th Mountain, 1st Armored, and now 4th Infantry), as well as executing a mission completely outside our normal area (if you remember back in July and August we operated in Diyala), and while attaching the mighty 'Regulars' to a different brigade, is a testament to the great Soldiers and leaders of the Iron Brigade.

I want to personally thank the leadership of the 10th Mountain Division, as by the time everyone reads this letter, we will have transitioned over to the 4th Infantry Division. Your professionalism and constant attention to our requirements and needs was essential to our success. The Iron Soldiers will miss you. Climb to Glory!

And, through all these changes, the Family Readiness Groups have adapted and overcome. We would not be able to remain as focused on mission accomplishment without the awesome support you all have offered. In closing, thank you to all Family Members, friends, and organizations that continue to contribute to our success through your support.

STRIKE HARD!

COL Pat White
Commander, 2BCT
"Striker 6"

STRIKER 7 On Point

By CSM Michael Eyer
2nd BCT Command Sergeant Major

Don't forget nothing!

Welcome home, is what some of our old Iron Soldier are saying since we arrived her at Camp Striker, for it was our Brigade that gave Camp Striker its name back in OIF 1-2. The Striker BDE was the first BCT to occupy Camp Striker. However we are seeing many signs spelling Striker with a Y (Stryker) which my little hit team will change over the course of our stay.

As we get settled onto Camp Striker "The Big City", we are all making adjustments. These adjustments come in many different ways for some of us by working new hours, getting new roommates, and of course new offices. Camp Striker is far faster pace than Hammer. For some Iron Soldiers, the move is bittersweet, getting better living areas but having to put up with less room. With the outstanding D-FAC we have a variety of many different cuisines to choose from with portions to fill any appetite. With the move to Striker we do have access to internet and AFN in our Chu's, the bad news is the cost is a little more. We have all the amenities we could need here. We can cross the street and shop till we drop or eat all the junk we want. With Camp Victory right next door we can catch a bus and check out their Bazaar. With that said we also have local national's shops selling anything from movies to perfume. Iron Brigade Soldiers are spread thru out Camp Striker and If you're lucky you could see a familiar face in the D-FAC, but even then with the size of the D-FAC that's if you're lucky. We also have entertainment; just the other night Iron Brigade Soldiers had the opportunity to experience Everclear in concert. So as we get settled into Camp Striker take a minute to recon your new AO and enjoy the added advantages like the Bazaar, MWR, and of course the excellent gym. Introduce yourself to our new neighbors and make sure they know who you are. We will maintain the standard and ensure that Camp Striker personnel know that the Striker Brigade is home.

The reason Camp striker is here is to support our great Iron Soldiers living in Combat out posts and Patrol Bases around our Operation area. The mission for our Soldiers on Camp Striker is the same as it was on Hammer: to support the Brigade Combat Team with all they need to accomplish the mission.
Our Iron Soldiers are performing as true American ambassadors should, with pride and distinction. And like the Soldiers on Striker our Soldiers and families back in Baumholder and around the world continue to support with that same pride.

I thank you all for your hard work and mission first attitude.

STAY SAFE

STRIKE HARD!

CSM Michael Eyer
"Striker 7"

Task Force 1-6 IN

TF 1-6 IN

By CPT
Nicholas Schenck

DFAC

The Task Force 1-6 Infantry DFAC section has been getting after it in no uncertain terms. With the Battalion spread out in 5 different locations, supporting over 800 hungry mouths is a difficult proposition for only 17 Food Service Specialists. However, by task organizing into three distinct Field Feeding Sections and an ordering section, they are getting it done.

Operating with 3-5 cooks, each section supports 1-3 companies at any given time. At JSS Ur, the section supports C CO 1-6 IN, E CO 1-68 AR and an MP platoon. The Section at JSS Sadr City supports A CO 1-6 IN, C CO 1-35 AR, elements of HHC 1-6 IN and Task Force Gold. At Old MOD, the section supports elements of HHC, 1-6 IN, several MiTT teams, an MP company and elements of 3-89 CAV. At Camp Taji, the DFAC NCOIC, SSG Olmos handles the ordering for all three field feeding sites and keeps the task force supplied meals and other essentials such as Gatorade and Energy Drinks. As the OE develops over time, the Old MOD section will shut down and move to JSS Comanche to give C CO 1-35 AR their own capability.

Working in mobile kitchen trailers with outside summer temperatures above 120 degrees and inside temperatures approaching 140 degrees or in the rain and mud of the late fall and winter, each section works 16+ hour days providing three hot meals per day to each location ensuring that soldiers coming off of patrol have something to look forward to. In addition, they keep each DFAC stocked with snacks, cold drinks and hot coffee 24 hours a day to ensure that no matter what time it is, something is always available.

They have also integrated local national hires to serve as kitchen police to increase their productivity. This has both created jobs in the local neighborhood and increased cooperation between US and Iraqis.

Working in these austere conditions presents challenges, however. According to SPC Nathaniel Long, “the equipment we have is limited and makes it difficult to produce the prime rib and fried chicken that we regularly make, but we make it happen.” “Making timelines for three meals a day with only a couple of cooks is difficult and really keeps us on our toes,” says SPC John Smart. However, it does provide some opportunities, “It’s different here, than in garrison, there are no recipe cards here. You have a chance to get creative and changeup the different, ingredients, spices and food combinations,” says Smart. “Everyone has different tastes so we always vary the same menus as many different ways as possible,” says Long.

As we pass the halfway point of the deployment, these cooks have their systems down and will no doubt, continued to provide the same level of quality work for the last half.

Hop, Skip, and a Jump

By CPT Josh Adelman

As Task Force Gator maintained its adjusted boundaries as it assumed some additional battle space, a key logistical node for the Gators was executing a jump. As the Iron Brigade repositioned from FOB Hammer to Camp Striker, the Field Trains executed final combat logistics patrols to COPs Cahill, Carver, and Cleary to build days of supply. Near the end of October, the Field Trains began convoying the mass of equipment to our new home at Camp Striker. Support Platoon and Maintenance were the primary muscle for this operation providing lift and manpower to conduct several simultaneous efforts. There were tasks to closeout FOB Hammer beginning with pre-inspections by TF Ram of motorpool and office areas. Piles of equipment were processed by PLL and either turned back in to the SSA or pushed forward to the combat outposts for use. Vehicles were T/I'd and prepared and the packout of MILVANs, QUADCONs, and shop vans tested the Tetris abilities of leaders and Soldiers.

The torch party of SFC Brown and SGT Harvey, at Camp Striker worked to assess facilities and plan the arrival of the main body. The Field Trains were looking at a tight window, about 10 days, to execute final CLPs, packout, convoy to Striker, clear Hammer, and finally resume resupply operations. It took detailed planning and a lot of execution, but under the guidance of 1SG Scott, CPT Adelman, SFC Gallenberg, and SFC Nelson, the tasks came together. Convoys rolled on schedule and all the Field Trains personnel arrived safely at their new home. SFC Gallenberg and SFC Nelson and the efforts of the Soldiers ensured that the motorpool was cleaned and all facilities handed over in great shape. Thanks to the torch party, the Soldiers were able to move straight in to their CHUs and begin familiarizing themselves with the new home. Of course everyone knows that Striker is smaller, but much busier than Hammer and there are a lot more elements moving around that need to be accounted for – corps, etc.

Support Platoon vehicles staging for operations. Outstanding resupply of both COP Cahill and COS Carver continues to be their trademark.(Courtesy Photo)

Over the past two weeks, the Support Platoon has executed three CLPs back to the COPs – the first was of course anxiously anticipated by the Soldiers forward due to the long pause without mail or laundry. It was good to see comrades again and to test our new routes in and out of our AO. All were relieved that they would not have to roll on Butler Range Road any longer. Maintenance and the staff sections have been busy working to establish their areas and plug in to the vast logistical network that is available here at VBC. The battle rhythm shakes itself out a little more everyday and the area is quickly becoming more familiar and friendly. Add to all the fun the fact that HHC/2-6 IN has started change of command inventories and it can be seen that the Field Trains is juggling several plates. The Soldiers have met these challenges with resolve and poise and been a credit to the task force. Hopefully our next move is the move home!!

The Bustling Narhwan Market

TF 1-35 AR

By 1LT Luke Barber

"Mae! Mae! Mae!" yells an elderly woman in a crowded district in Narhwan. No, she's not trying to confront a thief who stole some of her product. "Mae" is Arabic for "Water" and she's selling plenty of it. Throughout Iraq, city markets have similar vendors selling water. The Narhwan market is no different, as the loud, crowded and diverse 1.5 kilometer long stretch of shops exemplifies. Inside this lively section of town one can find just about anything. From Ahmed's shoe store and Ali's jewelry shop to from Sadat's juice bar and Hamid's live chicken cages, the market is anything but empty. There are even small shops where men gather to drink tea, eat bread from the bakeries and talk politics. No virgin trip throughout the market is complete without a walk through the food district and taking in a whiff of the overwhelming smell of fish, lamb and various other raw meats. Needless to say, every Charlie Battery patrol through the market can turn into quite an adventure.

Since arrival in Narhwan, Charlie Battery has been enjoyed the hustle and bustle of the market. The primary goal for going to the market is to ensure that the market is a safe place for the local citizens to come and buy and sell goods. The result of these efforts is clearly evident in the distinct increase in the numbers of people shopping in the area. Recently Cobra patrols have been working diligently to gather information on market businesses and their owners. The intent is to help the market grow economically, and the businesses in the area to expand and improve. Cobra has also been handing out business contracts through which businessmen in the area can apply for small grants to improve their shops. It is no easy task, given the language barrier and the diversity of owners and businesses the market contains. The important thing is to ensure that this money is being used properly and not wasted on personal items or extorted by local militiamen. "I need to re-iterate to them over and over that the only thing they owe us is a detailed business plan in the grant contract and a promise to make sure these funds are used in that manner," said 1LT Zachary Busenbark.

In addition to businesses, the Narhwan market has no shortage of interesting people to meet. Often, men gathered together in small shops will invite the patrol leaders in for tea and to talk about a variety of issues in the town. Cobra Soldiers enjoy getting to know the people over a conversation and many friendships area created after a few visits. On one particular market patrol an old man approached the Charlie Battery Soldiers with an interesting story. His son had been flown out of Iraq to the USA to receive treatment 2 months prior to Charlie Battery's arrival in the area due to bad electrical burns over much of his body. The father had not heard anything from his son or wife (who travelled with him) since leaving for America. Charlie Battery, was able to find the whereabouts of the gentleman's son and the word is that he is doing great. Needless to say, the father was elated to hear word about his family.

Welcome Party

By CPT Jim Beam

TF 4-27 FA

The Al-Janabi tribe is the second largest group of tribes in Iraq and a large part of their members reside within Task Force Thunde'rs new Operating Environment. The Al-Janabis number almost a million, and play a significant role in the governance and security of much of Thunder's Battle Space. In order to show their support and willingness to work with Task Force 4-27 the Al-Janabi tribe has shown a desire to initiate a working relationship. One such gesture came in the form of an invitation for small talk and an afternoon feast with the Al-Janabi's head Sheik, Sheik Kamel.

Upon arrival, LTC Mike Mammay, CSM Robert Clark, and their entourage were received in a traditional receiving line manner, each officer and Soldier shook the hands of 13 senior Sheiks and Sons of Iraq leaders for the region before being led into the reception area of the Al-Janabi headquarters for that traditional chi-tea and further introductions. After some informal discussions, Mammay and Clark were given a guided tour around the hall, where Sheik Kamel led the leadership team to various portraits of his family, explaining a little bit of Al-Janabi history, and stressing the accomplishments of previous Sheiks of the tribe.

Lunch was announced during the tour and Sheiks and Soldiers were invited to the dining hall for the feast. Seven four-foot platters were carried in, each loaded with enough rice and meats that it took two people to carry them into the hall. In traditional Iraqi fashion the party split into smaller groups around each of the platters. Eating with Iraqi bread and fingers, Soldiers tasted not only the main entrées but also various side dishes such as humus, stuffed potatoes, dates, and assorted Iraq salads.

Command Sergeant Major Robert L. Clark, of Saint Stephens, South Carolina, discusses local issues with one of the Al-Janabi Sheiks. (Photo by CPT Jim Beam)

Once lunch was complete Sheik Kamel guided the group outside and everyone was given an opportunity to wash their hands before returning to the reception hall. About an hour of conversations covered a variety of topics such as local security and improvement projects, though soon talks eventually drifted towards the recent U.S. Presidential Elections and what effects the change of leadership would have on the American people. Mammay explained to Sheik Kamel the intricacies of our democratic process and how the American people supported the process. By the end of the visit both Soldiers and Sheiks alike promised follow-on meetings and expressed a desire to further develop working relationships towards security and safety of the region.

CPT Marcus Syverson, of Eden Prairie Minnesota, enjoys an Iraqi feast during an Al-Janabi tribe welcome party. (Photo by CPT Jim Beam)

Everything "new" for the Castle Rock Company

40 EN

By CPT Daniel Lucitt

The month of October 2008 was the turning point for Charlie Company, 40th Engineer Battalion, Task Force Ram, where almost everything changed for the Castle Rock Company. In October 2008, the company was in the middle of reconsolidating the company's platoons. Finally, after five months apart and attached to other units, Charlie Company came under one castle guidon. The reason for the reconsolidation was Charlie Company's latest mission as the 2nd Brigade Combat Team's newest Route Clearance asset. This is a true engineer task and of vital importance to the Iraqi people and our own coalition forces. This reconsolidation required Charlie Company to completely retrain in preparation for the mission. Capt. Scott Snyder, the previous Charlie Company Commander and Capt. John Holcombe, Bravo Company Commander, 40th Engineers, did a fine job planning the events that 1sg. Leo Love, the Charlie First Sergeant, and 1sg. Ricky Cliatt, Bravo Company First Sergeant trained our engineers to assume. As Capt. Snyder's last official responsibility to Charlie Company prior to his change of command, he ensured his Soldiers were properly trained just as he had done for the previous 26 months. With that, Capt. Snyder turned over the reigns to the current company commander, Capt. Daniel Lucitt. Charlie Company then conducted a movement by platoons to Camp Striker, conducting three platoon movements, stretched over the course of two weeks. Once Charlie Company arrived at Camp Striker they were out of their element.

In November 2008, Charlie Company conducted a relief in place with two engineer companies that had the route clearance mission for this area. This region orientation went as planned as did the scheduled route clearance. Many Soldiers from the three companies involved in

Charlie Company's 1st Platoon Soldiers, Sgt. Nathaniel Cassidy and Sfc. Ricardo Ranger enjoy their new office areas in the Charlie Company CP while utilizing the time to conduct some much needed weapons cleaning. (Courtesy photo)

the relief in place were familiar to each other from previous deployments, as the Engineer Corps has evolved into a tight knit community.

After settling into Camp Striker, many Charlie Company Soldiers seem to be impressed with the accommodations offered at our new location, causing a new release of motivation at the halfway point of the deployment. Soldiers remarked about the amount of space Camp Striker has, as each platoon in Charlie Company now occupy their own offices. Sfc. Donald Hoover, the Platoon Sergeant for 1st Platoon in Charlie Company mentioned, "It's nice to have someplace to work that's not my tent. I even have a desk" he said. "I have room for my weapons, my training and my Platoon Leader doesn't sit on my lap anymore."

SFC Ricardo Ranger and SPC Michael Ioshua take a break while unpacking and settling into Charlie Company's new CP area on Camp Striker.(Courtesy Photo)

As Charlie Company, 40th Engineer Battalion heads into the holiday season, they eagerly lean forward in their foxhole with a new found motivation, a new mission at hand, a new location to enjoy and a new company commander to follow.

ROCK 7,1SG. Leo Love stands alone and unafraid outside of Charlie Company's new CP area on Camp Striker. (Courtesy Photo)

502nd MI Company

40 EN

By 1LT Jackie Chang

At Six months Down

Six months down! For the past six months, the 502nd Military Intelligence Company has called Forward Operating Base Hammer, specifically CHU rows G and H 'home'. The faces of the Soldiers and Contractors, the dining facility menus, along with established battle rhythms and daily responsibilities were familiar. Then, the delivery of some big news: the 502nd MI CO would be packing up to move to Camp Striker. The move proved to be a welcome change of environment as Soldiers in the 502nd entered the half way point of the deployment, traditionally considered to be the most difficult time for units.

The impending move was reminiscent of the months in Germany prior to the deployment in March 2008, with several hours spent packing and annotating the specific location of each piece of property. This movement however, proved to be more challenging with the added twist of packing while also still maintaining and conducting combat operations simultaneously. Each platoon was been busy separating all property into different groups: organizational, sensitive, theater provided equipment, and equipment attached to specific intelligence systems.

The challenge many 502nd Military Intelligence Soldiers faced was continuing their critical operations, while also having to meet their 'pack out' timeline. Many dedicated 502nd Soldiers utilized their equipment until the day it was loaded into a conex and shipped out. Despite this challenge, 502nd Soldiers still managed to accomplish both tasks concurrently, while also finding a few hours of down time to play company PT, as they appreciated their final days at FOB Hammer.

Upon arrival to Camp Striker, 502nd Soldiers eagerly hit the ground running, conducting an aggressive relief in place and re-establishing operations. Being that for the last six months, 502nd MI Company has time to polish off standard operating procedures, their relief in place was effortlessly conducted ahead of schedule with no loss in operational support.

As the 502nd Soldiers began the transition to Camp Striker, they bid adieu to FOB Hammer and happily moved one step closer to home.

Modern Pioneers make

Commitments to each other and their country

47 FSB

By CPT Seth Norman

When recently married Army Sgt. Jesus Lomeli and his wife, Spc. Ashley Jayne, vowed to make a lifelong commitment to each other, the deployed newlyweds also committed to a career in the Army.

The couple was married three months ago while on mid-tour leave and on November 12, in a duel reenlistment ceremony, they reenlisted for four more years in the Army.

The couple is one of several married couples deployed together with the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division headquartered at Smith Barracks, Baumholder, Germany.

Lomeli, from Fillmore, Calif., a Team Leader in the Convoy Security Platoon, and his wife, Jayne, from Jackson, Miss., a combat medic assigned to the Brigade Commander's Personal Security Detail, made the commitment to serve their country by reenlisting at a small ceremony in front of the 47th FSB Battalion headquarters.

CPT Seth Norman (left), San Francisco, Calif., reenlists dual military spouses SPC Ashley Jayne, Jackson, Miss., and SGT Jesus Lomeli, Fillmore, Calif., in front of a United States flag held by SFC Jennie Jones and PFC Shemeke Sprivey on November 13, 2008 at the 47th FSB, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division headquarters, Camp Striker, Iraq. (U.S. Army photo by CPT Arthur Ball)

"I have served with the Modern Pioneers for four and a half years, and the soldiers here are like a family to me," said Lomeli after the reenlistment. "My wife is my family now, and this was a way for us to have new opportunities and stay together as a family."

The couple first met each other while serving at their first duty station with the 47th Forward Support Battalion in Baumholder.

They are also probably the only two people in the 2nd BCT, 1st Armd. Div. who can look back on their Mission Rehearsal Exercise experience at Hohenfels, Germany in October 2007 as a warm and happy time when the young couple began their courtship and their journey continued when they were both assigned to convoy escort duties upon deployment to Iraq.

"Given everything we've done together, this definitely looked like the next logical step," said Jayne. "I guess this makes us a pretty good match."

No one could disagree with the logic that their co-reenlistment was a fitting step in their time together as Modern Pioneers, a story that will only be complete when they redeploy home together and move to their new duty station in California.

"Given the economy and the hard times, we wanted to do something for each other to ensure we had a stable life together," said Lomeli. The couple both reenlisted to be posted near Lomelis' hometown near Fort Irwin, Calif. Both Soldiers intend to pursue careers in the Army nursing program as officers.

Given their auspicious start, the Army can probably expect some pretty big things in the future from this pair of Warrior spouses. Southern California recruitment offices are already looking forward to enlisting a junior Lomeli in the 2026 timeframe.

1-63 CAB Assumes Authority

from the Red Knights

1-63CAB

By CPT
Jon Boyle

U.S. and Iraqi soldiers gathered on a crisp Iraqi morning to celebrate the transfer of authority of military operations in the Mahmudiyah Qada.

The outgoing unit, 3-320 FA from the 101st Airborne Division, conducted operations for the past 14 months in this region, assisting Iraqi Security Forces through periods of violence and uprisings. Today, Mahmudiyah is considered one of the most stable regions of Iraq – a true credit to the work of the Red Knight battalion.

In front of a formation of soldiers, as well as local Iraqi military and civil leadership, LTC Jim Bradford, of Lynchburgh, Tennessee, commander of 1-63 CAB, welcomed all of the distinguished visitors and thanked the Red Knights for their efforts over the past several months as well as the tireless effort put forth throughout the relief in place process.

"LTC Zemp, CSM Watkins, Soldiers of the Red Knight battalion, I want to personally thank you for your service, your sacrifices, and the efforts you have made to make this transition as smooth as possible. It is only fitting that you are leaving Mahmudiyah and returning to your families over the Veterans' Day Weekend," said Bradford.

LTC William Zemp, commander of 3-320 FA, shared LTC Bradford's sentiments and wished the Dragon's well. "I do not see today as the as the end of one unit's mission. Today the Dragon Battalion picks up where we leave off, continuing to bring safety, security, and stability to the Iraqi people. Your energy and effort during the transition has shown me that you will do well. I wish you all the best," said Zemp.

The ceremony was highlighted by the casing of the Red Knight guidon and the uncasing of the 1-63 colors. This tradition is a symbol of the transition from one unit to the next. It recognizes the work and achievements of the departing unit, and officially starts the tour of the incoming battalion.

Also in attendance were VIPs from the Iraqi Army and Coalition Forces: Staff Major General Ali, the commander of the 17th Iraqi Army Division, Movayed Fadhil Al Amri, the former mayor of Mahmudiyah, COL Joe Martin, the commander of the 2nd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, COL Dom Caraccilo, from Seneca Falls, N.Y., commander of the 3rd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, and COL Pat White, from Apple Valley, Calif., commander of the 2nd Brigade, 1st Armored Division, were all on hand to celebrate the transition ceremony.

Mada'in Qada Leaders meet to discuss agriculture and water issues

By PFC Evan Loyd

Abu Bahar, mayor of the Mada'in Qada, talks with Mr. Jabbar, technical deputy governor, about location for another living community in the Mada'in after a meeting at the Salman Pak Government Center Oct. 29. (U.S. Army photo by PFC Evan Loyd)

Leaders of the Government of Iraq, Mada'in Qada and 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division met Oct. 29 at the Salman Pak Government Center to discuss issues of importance to the qada.

Mr. Abu Bahar, mayor of the Mada'in Qada, expressed his appreciation for all the work Coalition forces have done to help the farmers in his area. He spoke specifically of the efforts of Floyd Wood, a U.S. Department of Agriculture employee and member of the Provincial Reconstruction Team. The drip and spray irrigation system Wood introduced has increased crop production throughout the Mada'in.

Dr. Leylo, director general of water resources for the Baghdad Province, discussed the approximately 65 square kilometers of land between al Lej and Wahida that don't have water, but will be reclaimed and renewed for use.

He also described a meeting with Baghdad's deputy governor during which a committee was established to find a solution to balancing fish farms and land farms. The meeting included plans to build more canals from Wahida, and reduce the

number of fish farms in order to help with irrigation distribution.

"The main problem for irrigation is still the lack of electricity and abuse by individual citizens," said Leylo.

Mr. Jabbar, technical deputy governor, asked Wood if the drip irrigation system will work in Nahrawan.

"I just came from Wahida and have set aside (space) for an apartment complex with a park, supermarket, sewer, water, electricity and many other facilities," said Jabbar. "If the irrigation system can work in Nahrawan, I would like to build a complex to house families and equipment to get the community started."

Wood said that the irrigation system could work but educating the farmers on water use is paramount for a successful transition to better farming methods.

"If I was an Iraqi farmer, I would be excited because of the bright future for the agriculture sector in the Mada'in," said Wood.

Dr. Ayad, the director general of agriculture in the Baghdad Province, also discussed the credit bank in Salman Pak and the opening of two new credit banks in Jisr Diyala and Nahrawan, which will provide walk-in service to complete the necessary paperwork for loans.

Dr. Ayad, the director general of agriculture in the Baghdad Province, thanks LTC Matthew Mckenna, from Pittsburgh, deputy commander of the 2nd BCT, 1st AD, for all of the CF help with the farmers of the Mada'in after a meeting at the Salman Pak Government Center Oct. 29. (U.S. Army photo by PFC Evan Loyd)

Tanks Rumble, Roar across

An American M1A1 Abrams Main Battle Tank and a crew of Soldiers in the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, demonstration on Forward Operating Base Hammer, Oct. 31. (U.S. Army photo by PFC Evan Loyd)

MSG Wilmer Morales, from Puerto Rico, a Master Gunner for the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, answers questions from the Iraqi Army leader about the M1A1Abrams Main Battle Tank before the live fire demonstration on Forward Operating Base Hammer, Oct. 31. (U.S. Army photo by PFC Evan Loyd)

M1A1 Abrams Main Battle tanks from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division and Iraqi T-72 tanks have been on opposite sides of the firing line since they first saw each other in Operation Desert Storm.

Recently, leaders from the 2nd BCT, 1st Armd. Div. and Iraqi Security Forces brought the two tanks together and fired in the same direction on the Iraqi's Besmaya Range Complex for a live-fire demonstration Oct. 31 at Forward Operating Base Hammer.

Both tanks fired rounds from a defensive position and the Abrams demonstrated its ability to fire on the move during the demonstration.

Iraqi Army crewmen of a T-72 tank perform checks in preparation for the live fire demonstration on Forward Operating Base Hammer, Oct. 31. (U.S. Army photo by PFC Evan Loyd)

Staff Maj. Gen. Jassem Nazal Qassim, Commanding General of the 9th Iraqi Army Division, examines the static display M1A1 before the live fire demonstration on Forward Operating Base Hammer, Oct. 31. (U.S. Army photo by PFC Evan Loyd)

An Iraqi Army T-72 tank and its Iraqi Army crewmen perform a live fire demonstration on Forward Operating Base Hammer, Oct. 31. (U.S. Army photo by PFC Evan Loyd)

MSG Wilmer Morales, a master gunner for the Iron Brigade, facilitated a class on the M1A1and answered the Iraqi leader's questions.

Both groups of leaders then had a hands-on tour of the M1A1 and the T-72.

"This is the closest I've ever been to a working T-72," said Sgt. 1st Class Dustin Rinehart, a non-commissioned officer in 2nd BCT, 1st Armd. Div.'s Command Security Detail. "Only time I've seen them before this is down a gunsite or in a museum."

After the first live-fire demonstration, both groups leaders were invited to fire the others tanks.

An Iraqi Army crewmen of a T-72 tank walks away from his tank after performing checks in preparation for the live fire demonstration on Forward Operating Base Hammer, Oct. 31. (U.S. Army photo by PFC Evan Loyd)

Iron Brigade Soldiers complete move to Camp Striker

By PFC Evan Loyd

Every Soldier knows he must be ready at a moment's notice to move out - but a brigade combat team and its three battalions?

That is exactly what the Soldiers of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division recently did as they repositioned Soldiers from Forward Operating Base Hammer in the Mada'in Qada, to Camp Striker in the Victory Base Complex.

"This headquarters and unit repositioning better situates our brigade leadership and our logistical assets for command and control and support to all of our subordinate units across our expanded area of operations that stretches across southern Baghdad province," said LTC Jason Kirk, from Garland, Texas, the brigade executive officer.

SGT Tony Harvey, from Columbus, Ga., a Soldier in Headquarters and Headquarters Company 2-6 Infantry, 2nd BCT, 1st Armd. Div., enjoys a coffee from the local Green Beans Coffee Shop at Camp Striker Nov. 8. (U.S. Army Photo by PFC Evan Loyd)

CPL John Wilson, from New York, N.Y., a Soldier in the command security detail, 2nd BCT, 1st Armd. Div., signs out of his room while headed to the gym for a late afternoon workout on Camp Striker Nov. 8. (U.S. Army Photo by PFC Evan Loyd)

The 2nd BCT, 1st Armd. Div. has been deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom since April in Southeastern Baghdad Province, where it grew strong ties to the local communities and their leaders.

The Iron Brigade also partnered with the Iraqi Security Forces of the Mada'in to conduct training and develop a more professional force. These connections and commitments across the Mada'in will continue.

The 2nd BCT, 1st Armd. Div. will now work to build similar working relationships with the government and security leaders of the Mahmudiyah Qada. The Mahmudiyah Qada has been under the operational control of the 3rd BCT, 101st Airborne Division (AASLT), for the last

year and has shown a steady drop in violence and an increasingly more capable Iraqi Army Division.

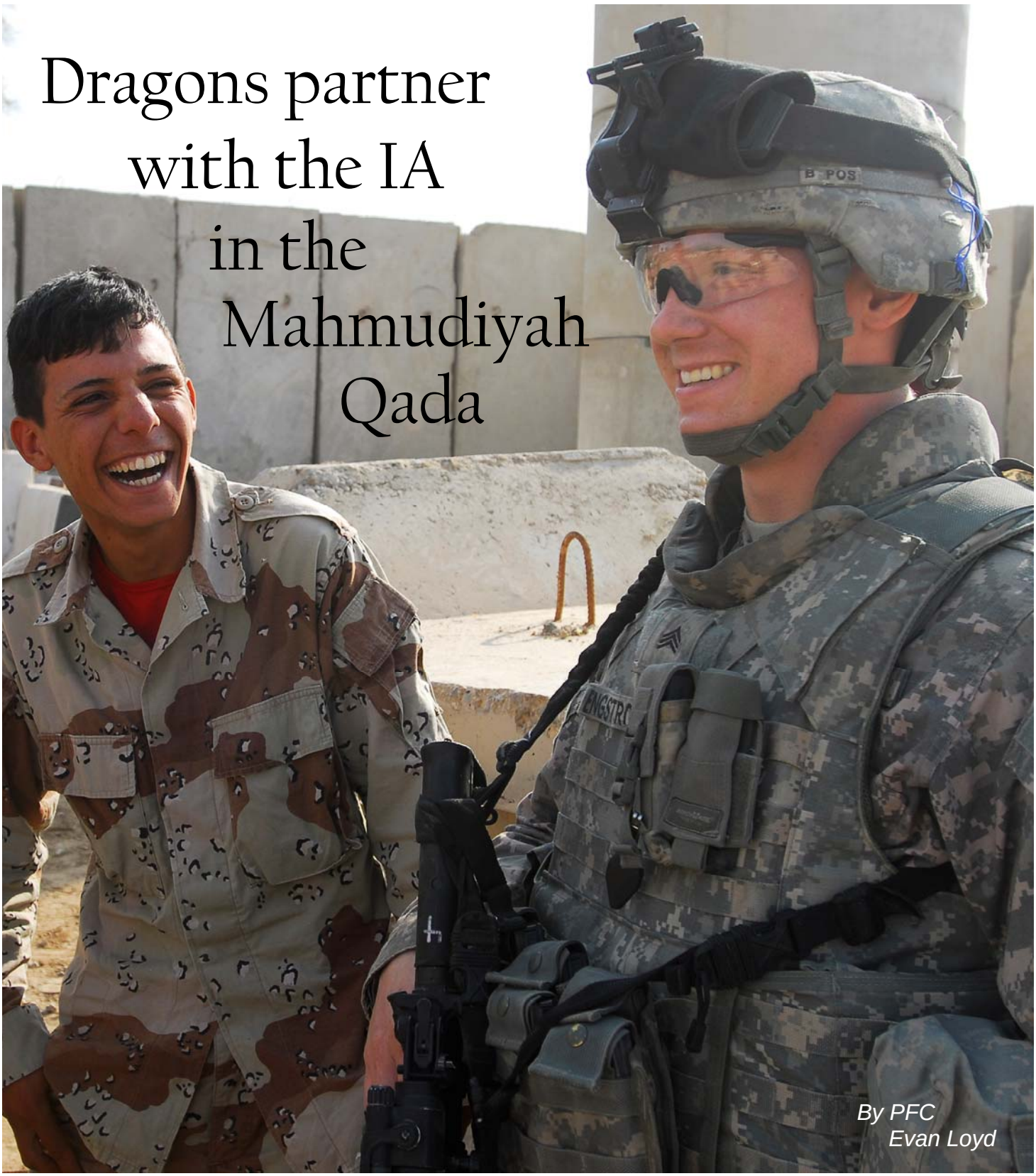
"I don't really mind the move; it splits things up in the deployment," said Spc. James Doster, from Lexington, Ky., command security detail. "It's all the same to me as long as we complete our mission and get home safe."

That's not to say the move to Striker doesn't offer benefits to the Soldiers of the Iron Brigade. Because of Camp Striker's larger size and proximity to Baghdad, the Soldiers stationed here now have easy access to internet capabilities, cell phone coverage, a bazaar comprised of six local national shops, three fast food restaurants, a coffee shop and a gift shop. Also, there is a large, well-stocked post exchange to top it all off.

"There is a lot of opportunity on Striker for Soldiers that we didn't have on (FOB) Hammer. It's great that we are close to the gym, Morale, Welfare and Recreation center, PX and the connectivity to the outside world is really good and allows Soldiers to stay better in touch with their families back home and do correspondence courses online," said Staff Sgt. Jorge Cornejo, from Brentwood, N.Y., 2nd BCT, 1st Armd. Div. CSD team.

"It's a lot less dusty here, and there is no smoke from the Nahrwan brick factory," said Spc. Sam Conrad, from Lancaster, PA. "So, it's a step up for us."

Dragons partner with the IA in the Mahmudiyah Qada



By PFC
Evan Loyd

SGT Eric Engstrom, from Ft. Riley, Kan., a gunner in 1st Platoon, D Company, Task Force 1-63 Armor, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, laughs with a soldier of the 1st Battalion, 25th Brigade, 17th Iraqi Army Division at the Iraqi Base in Lutifiyah, Iraq, Nov. 13. (U.S. Army Photo by PFC Evan Loyd)

COL Moyhe the Commander of the 1st Battalion, 25th Brigade, 17th Iraqi Army Division, welcomes CPT Landgrave Smith, from Norman, Okla., commander of D Company, Task Force 1-63 Armor, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, to the Iraqi Base in Lutifiyah, Iraq, Nov. 13. (U.S. Army Photo by PFC Evan Loyd)

Task Force 1-63 Combined Armed Battalion,2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, commanded by LTC Jim Bradford last week during a transfer of authority ceremony at FOB Mahmudiyah.

"The previous unit here did a tremendous job forging relationships with the Iraqi Division, the civic leaders and most importantly, the (people of) Mahmudiyah," said Bradford. "My expectations as the commander are to continue that great leadership and the outstanding support to the community and Iraqi leadership."

The Dragons are partnered with the 17th Iraqi Army in the Mahmudiyah Qada in what is called the 'southern belt' of Baghdad.

The unit hit the ground running and within hours of the TOA was out meeting the Iraqi soldiers and people.

CPT Landgrave Smith, from Norman, Okla., commander of Company D, TF 1-63 CAB, was welcomed to the area by soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 25th Brigade, 17th Iraqi Army Division at the Iraqi Base in Lutifiyah, Iraq, Nov. 13.

Company D will be working closely with the Iraqi Army throughout their de-

deployment.

"The Coalition has been great in helping us to secure and build the areas communities," said COL Moyhe the Commander of the 1-25-17. "I look forward to working with CPT Smith and his Soldiers in the coming months."

For some of the D Company Soldiers this isn't the first time in the Mahmudiyah Qada.

"Things are a lot different from when I rolled through here in OIF3," said Sgt. Eric Engstrom, from Ft. Riley, Kan., a gunner in 1st Platoon, D Company. "The people trust the Iraqi Army now."

Company D Soldiers are optimistic about working with the motivated Soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 25th Brigade, 17th Iraqi Army Division.

"The Iraqi Army has worked hard to be successful," said Capt. Smith. "I am looking forward to working with the soldiers of the 1-25-17 Iraqi Army Division."

SPC Matthew Brickman, from Cleveland, Ohio, a gunner in 1st Platoon, D Company, Task Force 1-63 Armor, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, pulls security with a Iraqi Soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 25th Brigade, 17th Iraqi Army Division, at the Iraqi Base in Lutifiyah, Iraq, Nov. 13. (U.S. Army Photo by PFC Evan Loyd)

Iron Brigade Soldiers and ISF celebrate water distribution system

By PFC Evan Loyd

CPT Benjamin Neasse, from Murfreesboro, Tenn., civil affairs officer for the 3-320th FA, celebrates with a toast with a local contractor and Mr. Dean Michael, from Farmingdale, Mich., a Bilingual Bicultural Advisor, to the completion of a water distribution system in the Muhmudiyah Qada Nov. 4. (U.S. Army photo by PFC Evan Loyd)

Local sheikhs, Iraqi Army and Coalition Soldiers feasted in celebration of a water distribution system now complete in the Mahmudiyah Qada Nov. 4.

"Before this system, some people had no water besides the dirty canal water," said a local Sheikh Kagoob Joad al-Merce. "Now many of those people have clean drinking water for the first time in their lives."

Six months ago, Coalition forces helped to complete a water treatment plant for the region. The treatment plant could only supply a small amount of water to surrounding area.

Mr. Dean Michael, from Farmingdale, Mich., a bilingual bicultural adviser with the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division developed underground water distribution pipe system that enables clean drinking water from the treatment plant. This process provides water to more than 30,000 Iraqi citizens.

The project was funded through the Iraqi Commander's Emergency Relief Program. Coalition and Iraqi Security forces partnered to provide security during construction.

"It is good to see the people getting what they need, and I look forward to working with the Coalition forces on future

projects to improve the Qada," said Col. Muhammad, commander of the Iraqi Army's 3rd Battalion, 25th Brigade.

This project clearly emphasized to the local citizens the cooperative relationship between the Coalition and the Government of Iraq.

"I am glad I could see this finished. It's great to see how many people we have helped," said Capt. Benjamin Neasse, from Murfreesboro, Tenn., the civil affairs officer of the 3rd Battalion 320th Field Artillery, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division. "This is what I came to Iraq to do."

COL Muhammad, 3/25th IA commander, and CPT Benjamin Torpy, from Butte, Mont., an officer in the 3-320th FA, 3rd BCT, 101st Abn. Div., talk with a local Iraqi citizen after a feast celebrating the completion of a water distribution system in the Muhmudiyah Qada Nov. 4. (U.S. Army photo by PFC Evan Loyd)

Soldier on fourth deployment

All in the same unit

By PFC Michael Schuch

Sergeant 1st Class Cameron Richardson provides security during a foot patrol through the Four Corners market in June 11. (U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Michael Schuch)

There are a handful of Soldiers who can say they have served three tours or more in Iraq. Very few can say they served those three tours with the very same unit.

Sergeant First Class Cameron Richardson, of Palm Springs, Fla., has the unique distinction of deploying to Iraq with the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division three times. In his nearly 15 year Army career, he has three deployments to Iraq and a deployment with the Iron Brigade to Kosovo in 1999 as part of Task Force Falcon.

"We did security patrols in Kosovo. We either went out dismounted or mounted in Humvees in a peace-keeping operation for seven months," said Richardson.

Following his tour in Kosovo, Richardson returned with the Iron Brigade to the brigade's home in Baumholder, Germany. For the next several years, Richardson trained with the Iron Brigade – ready to be called upon for the next mission. After the terrorist attacks of 9/11, it was only a matter of time.

In March 2003, the time came.

Richardson was a staff sergeant in charge of a section of Bradley Fighting Vehicles in Company C, 2nd Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment. When the V Corps Commander, (then) Lt. Gen. William Scott Wallace, tasked the division for a mechanized infantry company for his headquarters security force, Richardson's unit became the first 1st Armd. Div. unit to leave its garri-

in Germany and deploy for Kuwait.

"We were in Mission Oriented Protective Posture 2 (gear) for the first two weeks, which was not a pleasant experience," said Richardson. "Our mission was to keep a 360 degree perimeter for the V Corps Tactical Army Command to ensure the general was not attacked."

"We were bounding up behind the Third Inf. Div., which was moving forward so fast. But we had to keep up with them to ensure the general had communications with them. We finally set up at Baghdad International Airport," said Richardson.

After the collapse of Saddam Hussein's regime, the Army's focus shifted to stability operations and securing the country for the Iraqi population.

"We went to Camp Muleskinner in Rustimayah. We did operations around what are now COP Cashe South and North. We figured we would be in Iraq for around a year based on our orders," said Richardson.

The division began a 15-month deployment, which was unprecedented at the time. Richardson and his unit began redeploying to Germany in March 2004.

"As the first unit with boots on the ground in Iraq, we were the first to redeploy back to Germany," said Richardson.

Then, in April 2004, the Mahdi Army began its uprising, and the 1st Armd. Div. was extended for 120 days of extensive combat.

"We had already redeployed to Baumholder and gone on our 30-day leave. I was back in the States when I got a phone call to return to Baumholder in order to deploy back to Iraq," said Richardson. "I was disappointed thinking I had survived Iraq after a long tough year of combat, and now I had to return."

Richardson deployed with Company C as the master gunner at brigade headquarters.

Richardson redeployed in July and returned to Baumholder to continue training and improving not only his own skills, but the skills of the Soldiers around him.

"When I got on the plane to return to Baumholder, I said to myself that I never wanted to come back to this place," said Richardson.

Richardson was offered an assignment back in the United States, having completed more than a full tour in Germany. Rather than starting fresh with new Soldiers in a separate unit, however, Richardson chose to remain an Iron Brigade Soldier.

In November 2005, Richardson and his fellow Iron Brigade comrades answered yet again their nation's call to duty and deployed to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom 05-07.

"When they say to go, you have to go. I was thinking, 'OK this is the last time,'" said Richardson.

That deployment was different than the first. The Iron Brigade deployed as a separate brigade and not with the 1st Armd. Div. Also, the Iron Brigade was the CENTCOM Theater Reserve force and remained in Kuwait for several months before its units deployed to Iraq.

Upon finishing his second tour in Iraq, he returned to his family and started to consider his career options. Having given the idea much thought and deliberation, Richardson decided to start working toward becoming a platoon sergeant.

Shortly thereafter, he was offered the chance to lead the command security detail for the 2nd BCT, 1st Armd. Div. command sergeant major. Richardson accepted the offer, becoming the leader of the CSD team and taking on a new role in the Iron Brigade.

In April, Richardson deployed to Iraq in Support of Iraqi Freedom 07-09 for his third tour with the Iron Brigade.

"This deployment is unique in the fact that I was in the forefront in the first deployment as a Bradley section leader. The second deployment I was the master

gunner, a part of the Theater Reserve for six months and then moved up to Baghdad to finish the deployment. Now, I have a unique challenge in ensuring that the command sergeant major gets where he needs to go," said Richardson.

For a Soldier who has seen the war in Iraq from its very beginning and now after a successful "surge," Richardson says that he has seen tremendous progress in the last five years.

"It has progressively gotten better each time. The Iraqi Army seems to have gotten the grasp of what to do and is getting more professional," said Richardson.

Each day in Iraq, Richardson is tasked with route planning, caring for his Soldiers' physical and mental health, performing pre-combat checks and inspections on all gear and equipment and, once out on a patrol, ensuring the security of the Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Eyer, Iron Brigade command sergeant major.

As Richardson's team maintains the security of the area, he remains no more than an arm's length away from Eyer, acting as the last line of defense between him and any opposing threats.

"We roll out five to six times a week," said Richardson. "Sometimes, the hardest part of the job is just trying to keep up with the sergeant major."

Richardson will remain in Iraq for the duration of this deployment with the Iron Brigade. Upon his return to Baumholder, he plans to request a continuing position with the 2nd BCT, 1st Armd. Div., though he expects to be sent back to the U.S. to continue his Army career.

"I would love to stay if they'd have me," said Richardson. "My wife is German, and she would love to stay in Germany."

Until then, Richardson is taking it one day at a time, as he has done on his two previous OIF tours.

"I want to get myself and my guys all back home safely," said Richardson. "I hope I don't have to come back, but if ordered, I will and complete the mission." That's all the Iron Brigade and his country can ask from him.

Sergeant 1st Class Cameron Richardson, the leader of Commad Sgt. Maj. Eyer's security detail, from Palm Springs, Fla., walks through the Four Corners market during a foot patrol June 11. (U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Michael Schuch)

S1 Personnel

By SFC Steven Martz

Postal Addresses

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

No matter where Iron Soldiers are located, mail call is available. The Brigade S1 works along side the Battalion S1s to ensure all Soldiers receive mail sent from home in a timely manner. To assist in this mission, Soldiers are asked to use their appropriate mailing address based on location. Mail is delivered to Camp Striker and send on logistic patrols to other bases and outposts. Mailing addresses are as follows:

1.CAMP STRIKER AND ALL OTHER DESTINATIONS EXCEPT FOB HAMMER AND FOB RUSTIMIYAH:

RANK, FIRST-LAST NAME
COMPANY, TF, 2BCT, 1AD
CAMP/FOB/COP
APO AE 09322

2.FOB RUSTIMIYAH:

RANK, FIRST-LAST NAME
COMPANY, TF, 2BCT, 1AD
FOB RUSTIMIYAH
APO AE 09390

3.FOB HAMMER:

RANK, FIRST-LAST NAME
COMPANY, TF, 2BCT, 1AD
FOB HAMMER
APO AE 09308

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

Safety Bulletin

By Jerrold Scharninghausen

THE IRON BRIGADE
OLD IRONSIDES
STRIKE HARD!

UXOs

With moving into our new AO, everybody is working on settling into our mew mission. While arranging your sleeping area and figuring out the DFAC hours are important, don't forget to maintain your situational awareness. These new areas may include additional threats that were not as large a hazard at FOB Hammer.

UXO's can be potentially found anywhere in theater. Avoidance is the best way to deal with them. Following these simple guidelines will insure that you avoid harming yourself and others if you find a suspected UXO.

• UXOs can be found in all shapes and sizes, on and off the FOB

• If a suspicious object is found remember the 3R's:

• Recognize – A munition may have been encountered.

• Retreat – Do not touch or disturb it, but move away carefully, walking out the same way as entered.

• Report – What was seen and where it was seen to EOD.

<u>After identifying potential UXO, do not move any closer to it.</u> Some types of ordnance have magnetic or motion-sensitive proximity fusing that may detonate when they sense a target. Others may have self-destruct timers built in.

<u>Do not transmit any radio frequencies in the vicinity of a suspected UXO hazard.</u> Signals transmitted from items such as walkie-talkies, short-wave radios, citizens' band (CB) radios, or other communication and navigation devices may detonate the UXO.

<u>Do not attempt to remove any object on, attached to, or near a UXO. Some fuses are motion-sensitive, and the UXO may explode.</u>

<u>Do not move or disturb a UXO because the motion could activate the fuse, causing the UXO to explode.</u>

• Next complete a 9-line UXO Spot Report & submit to it to your higher headquarters. Mark the UXO without touching it. If possible, mark the UXO hazard with a standard UXO marker or with other suitable materials, such as engineer tape, colored cloth, or colored ribbon. Attach the marker to an object so that it is about 3 feet off the ground and visible from all approaches. Place the marker no closer than the point where you first recognized the UXO hazard.

• Caution Soldiers against collecting dud rounds, bomblets, or suspected UXO's for souvenirs. Ordnance and munitions are designed for one thing – and that is to blow up.

Once the UXO is marked, leave the UXO hazard area and contact your local Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Team ASAP. These guys are the experts and if it does turn out to be a UXO, they can dispose of it properly. Until EOD arrives, secure the area to ensure that curious individuals don't wander by to see what all the fuss was about. Crowd control is important to prevent others from being injured. Remember it is better to call it in and be wrong, than to blow your fingers off confirming that it is real.

For more information on UXO procedures, reference GTA 9-12-1 and FM 21-16 dated 30 Aug 94.

Chaplain's Corner

By CHAP (MAJ) Nana Bassaw
2nd Brigade Chaplain

Kindness in Time of Great Need

Long ago, Seneca said that what man (people) needs above all else is a hand let down to lift them up.

As we get closer to the middle of our tour in Iraq, with the transition to a new place behind us, it is instructive to reflect on how far we have come as a brigade - and somewhere along the way plot the contours of our "journey" so far.

We can recall the number of people we have met, the lives we have been able to change positively by our encounter with them, and conclude that if the past is a prologue, then, surely the future is going to be as exciting, though demanding of our time and effort.

But we need to remember that to be kind is always better than to be clever – not that the two things are mutually exclusive, but they so often tend to be.

Charles Kingsley once wrote in *A Farewell to C.E.G*

Be good, sweet maid, and let who will be clever,
Do lovely things, not dream them all day long.
And so make Life, and Death, and that For Ever
One grand sweet Song.

The world admires the clever people, but it loves the kind people; the memory of kindness lives on when the memory of cleverness has long since faded.

In our hustle and bustle, nothing comes closer to lifting up a person who is down than a kind word spoken when rebuke was expected; affirmation given than criticism, and hope assured in place of despair. It is kindness that matters.

No one can think along these lines at all without going back to the words of Jesus: 'Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren you have done it unto me' (Matthew 25:40).

Striker Justice

By SFC Emanuel Mines
2nd BCT Paralegal NCOIC

Consumer Protection

One of the most common legal issues we are seeing among Soldiers is the confusion over civilian contracts, both stateside and in Germany. During the course of everyday life, it is necessary to enter into contracts with various businesses, for services such as internet and phone use, or for purchases like homes and consumer products. It is very important that you read carefully any documents that we sign, as consumers. A salesman may not interpret the language in the contract or sales agreement correctly, in the interests of having your business and earning a commission.

Verbal agreements are hard to enforce or prove. In the event you have a problem with your contract, whether the product you purchased has a defect, or you decide you don't want to continue your internet service, it is important that complaints, returns, or cancellations are done in writing. Many Soldiers rely on what they are told in the store, rather than what is on paper. However, the store will frequently hit the Soldier with late fees, cancellation fees, or continue the monthly charges, claiming the Service member did not properly cancel the contract. During such a contract dispute, things that were done verbally, either over the phone or in person, are very hard to prove. Be sure to send a written letter to the company that you are having the dispute with, as well as any other parties involved, such as collection agencies, law firms, or manufacturers. Also save all the paperwork associated with your purchase and subsequent claim. That paper trail is what both the companies and the courts will look to in order to decide whether you will get your money refunded. Ensure you keep paperwork or emails, and always follow-up phone calls with written letters to avoid having to pay for things you don't want or need anymore.

Doctor's Desk

CPT Joseph May
2BCT Surgeon

But I don't Inhale

It's not uncommon in a deployed environment to see a group of Soldiers sitting around in the evenings smoking cigars together. Because an average cigar smoke can last an hour or more, smoking with friends and colleagues becomes an opportunity to socialize and discuss the bigger and smaller things in life—rather than a simple nicotine hit that comes with cigarettes or dip.

A common perception among cigar smokers is that they are a safe alternative to cigarettes, and are exempt from the well-known hazards that come with other tobacco products like lung cancer, decreased exercise performance, and high blood pressure. Because most cigar smokers do not inhale the smoke into their lungs, cigars are perceived to be less hazardous to health.

While there is some truth to this, cigars are by no means risk-free. Only about one in five cigar smokers smokes a cigar daily—the rest smoke on average once a week or less. This means that cigar smokers take in a lower amount of nicotine over time than the average cigarette smoker does, and have less exposure to the ill effects of tobacco.

However, what's lost in frequency can be made up in size. The average premium cigar has 15-20 times more tobacco than a cigarette—so one cigar can deliver the same amount of tobacco as an entire pack of cigarettes! Also, cigars tend to emit much higher amounts of carbon monoxide, a chemical that can lead to both short-term and long-term health effects like dizziness, fatigue, and even heart attacks. Cigars do pose cancer risks as well, including cancer of the mouth, throat, and esophagus. Plus, regular cigar smokers are three-times more likely than non-smokers to develop lung cancer—even without intentionally inhaling the smoke.

Bottom line is this: if you're a committed cigar smoker, try saving them for a rare, special occasion only. In fact, giving them up completely is the best way to promote health.

STRIKER TORCH

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

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

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