

The Ivy Leaf

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MULTI-NATIONAL DIVISION - BAGHDAD

"STEADFAST AND LOYAL"

DECEMBER 8, 2008



MND-B Soldiers enjoy Thanksgiving feasts in Iraq

U.S. Army photo by Sgt. David Hodge, 1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

Maj. Jose Polanco, a New York City native, pours gravy for Staff Sgt. Corinne Peterson, from Los Angeles, at the Raider Café Dining Facility Nov. 27 to celebrate Thanksgiving Day. Leaders from the 1st "Raider" Brigade served a traditional turkey and dressing lunch.

By Pfc. Lyndsey Dransfield
MND-B PAO

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – The line stretched out the doors and curved along the sidewalks as Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers gathered at the 4th Infantry Division's Ironhorse Oasis Dining Facility to celebrate Thanksgiving together Nov. 27.

Historians say it was 1621 when colonists and Indians shared an autumn harvest feast, known to many Americans as the first Thanksgiving celebration. The shared meal became a symbol of cooperation and interaction – and has held great meaning and importance over time.

The legacy has survived centuries as people throughout the United States gather every year on the last Thursday of November to celebrate their thanks and share enormous amounts of food with their Family and friends.

Although Soldiers with MND-B weren't home with their Families and loved ones this Thanksgiving, they made every attempt possible to continue the traditions and celebrate their gratitude.

More than 72,000 Soldiers, fellow service members, contactors, subcontractors and Department of the Army Civilians throughout Baghdad feasted on 49,600 pounds of turkey, 6,300 pounds of fresh shrimp, 35,000 pounds of fresh

mashed potatoes, 8,000 pounds of bread and dressing, 10,400 pounds of corn, 7,300 pounds of green beans, 55 gallons of gravy and 10,000 assorted pies, said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Sharon McCray, a native of Fort Worth, Texas, who serves as command food advisor with Company B, Division Special Troops Battalion, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B.

A great deal of time and effort was spent planning the occasion, hoping to make it as genuine as possible.

A few weeks ago, a query was put out to MND-B Soldiers in the area, asking them to submit recipes from their Families back home. The chosen recipes were made for the feast.

"We have selected eight recipes from our Soldiers' Families. They range from stuffing, to pecan pie, to macaroni and cheese. As long as we had the ingredients and tools to make them, the cooks prepared them," said Capt. Charley Mahle, a native of Kingsport, Tenn., the commander of Headquarters Support Company, DSTB, 4th Inf. Div., who oversaw the operation of the dining facility.

Staff Sgt. Jessica Douglas, a native of New York City, who serves as a medic with Headquar-

see **Turkey Day** Pg.12

Iron Brigade Soldiers complete move to MND-B, Camp Striker

MND-B PAO

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – Every Soldier must be ready at a moment's notice to move out and complete the mission at hand, even an entire a brigade combat team and its three battalions.

That is exactly what the Soldiers of 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, did as they were repositioned from Forward Operating Base Hammer in the Mada'in Qada, to Camp Striker in the Victory Base Complex and realigned to fall beneath the operational control of Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

"This headquarters and unit repositioning better situates our brigade leadership and our logistical assets for command and control support to all of our subordinate units," said Lt. Col. Jason Kirk, a native of Garland, Texas, who serves as the brigade executive officer with 2nd BCT, also known as the Iron Brigade.

The 2nd BCT, 1st Armd. Div., has been deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom since April in southeastern Baghdad province, attached to Multi-National Division – Center. The brigade partnered with the Iraqi Security Forces in Mada'in to conduct training and develop a more professional force. These connections and commitments across Mada'in will continue.

The Iron Brigade is now attached to Multi-National Division – Baghdad, and will work to build similar working relationships with the government and security leaders in the Mahmudiyah Qada, south of Baghdad.

"This is a big step forward for us," said Lt. Col. Michael Runey, a Killeen, Texas, native, who serves as chief of plans with 4th Infantry Division, MND-B. "Having 2nd BCT, 1st Armd. Div. as part of MND-B assures we are fully partnered with Iraq across the Baghdad province."

"They are the key piece for coordination in the southern Qada," he added

The Mahmudiyah Qada has been under the operational control of 3rd BCT, 101st Airborne Division, for the last year and has shown a steady drop in violence and an increasingly more capable Iraqi Army division.

The move, on a large scale is one that will further the security of the entire Baghdad province, but is also one that Iron Brigade Soldiers have benefitted from as well.

Because of Camp Striker's larger size and proximity to Baghdad, the Soldiers stationed here now have easier access to internet capabilities, cell phone coverage, a bazaar comprised of six Iraqi-owned shops, three fast food restaurants, a coffee shop and a gift shop. Also, there is a large, well-stocked post exchange.

"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 in better touch with their Families back home and do correspondence courses online," said Staff Sgt. Jorge Cornejo, a native of Brentwood, N.Y., who serves with the CSD team, 2nd BCT, 1st Armd. Div., MND-B.

Any large-scale movement of an Army unit, no matter the size, is something that takes planning and effort at all levels. With the hard work of that move behind them, the Iron Brigade Soldiers, along with the Ironhorse Soldiers of 4th Inf. Div. and MND-B can work together with steel resolve to keep Baghdad province on course toward permanent and sustainable security.

Warriors bid farewell to Macedonian Army partners

By Maj. Al Hing
2nd SBCT PAO, 25th Inf. Div.

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – After 11 rotations since the beginning months of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the Macedonian soldiers are ending their part of the Coalition Forces mission.

The end of mission ceremony was "bittersweet" for Coalition Forces as this longtime

partner was closing a chapter on its partnership in Iraq.

"Around 450 troops have passed through this mission, and a lot of experience has been brought to the republic of Macedonia and the soldiers of Macedonia," said Col. Krume Velkov, director of the general staff of the armed forces of Republic of the Macedonia.

"This is certainly a very significant chapter of our history."

In the past five years, the Macedonian soldiers have fought side by side with the Coalition and have experienced the progress in Iraq.

"The Coalition has been very fortunate to have the dedicated support of nations like

the Republic of Macedonia. They have stood with the Coalition and with the Iraqi Security Forces over the past few years," said Marine Maj. Gen. Paul Lefebvre, deputy commanding general, Multi-National Corps – Iraq, a native of West Hartford, Conn.

see **Macedonian** Pg.10

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 CAB, 4th Inf. Div.
 2nd HBCT, 1st Inf. Div.
 2nd BCT, 1st Armored Div.
 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div.
 4th BCT, 10th Mtn. Div.
 8th MP Bde.
 926th Eng. Bde.

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Chaplain's Corner**Holiday Survival Tips****By Capt. Tim Meier**

Chaplain, MND-B

BAGHDAD – It is difficult to be away from loved ones through the holiday season as deployed Soldiers. However, we must remember that we are a part of a Family here as well.

Many people find November and December to be particularly difficult months. Some people might experience or be impacted by what is referred to as 'seasonal affective disorder.' The Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's time frame can present challenges to our tranquility in this time away from home.

Much of this, I suspect, is due to the intense excitement and hype that attaches to these observances. For me, feeding myself spiritually helps assist counter the hype and stay balanced throughout the holiday season.

A few suggestions for those of us who are deployed – and especially for our loved ones back home – then, for navigating our way through the coming days:

1. Expectations are premeditated resentments.

This does not mean you do not have expectations, but it does mean you do not allow those expectations to go overboard. Friends have been trying for years now to impress upon me how important it is to be aware of what expectations I'm harboring concerning an upcoming event or situation. This is especially true of the holidays or big Family celebrations.

For example, I always counsel soon-to-be-married couples to balance their expectations for their wedding as this will pay huge dividends in return. If you expect absolute perfection from manifestly imperfect human beings, you're setting yourself up for almost certain disappointment.

If, on the other hand, you prepare yourself against almost-certain 'disaster' – a Family relative having too much to drink, again, and doing a swan dive into the wedding cake – then you'd be relieved and consider it a wedding gift when your relative only collapses after the vows have been pronounced, leaving the cake unscathed. You're then fed spiritually by taking stock in the expectations.

2. What other people think of me is none of my business.

If I'm concerned that my guests will think less of me that there might be streaks on the windows at the peak of the cathedral ceiling in the room where I'm having Christmas dinner, there's something wrong.

If I'm afraid that they might think "my" Christmas tree isn't as big as theirs, that I'm serving the wrong drinks or that my outfit isn't 'designer' enough, there's reason to suspect I have no clue what Christmas is about in the first place.

Let's get one thing straight from the get-go here: Jesus was born in a barn. There were farm animals there. It smelled like there were farm animals there. Do you actually think Christ cares about the stuff that we can get ourselves upset over?

I'm fed spiritually when I get free from the tyranny of what others might be thinking.

3. What other people think, say or do is about them, not about me.

I do not have to let my self-worth hang in the balance of other people's actions and attitudes. Other people have the right to be wrong, after all. If I throw a party and they choose not to come, that's on them, not on me. It's about them and their choices, not about me and mine.

I'd like to 'think' that it is. After all, while I may not 'be' much, I 'am' all I ever think about. Other people have the right to be wrong.

If they're not going to show up for what I'm doing, perhaps I need to consider doing something else, inviting others or getting myself invited somewhere else. Life is about healthy compromise and about being fed. I try to do the best I can to make the best of whatever situation I find myself in.

I'm fed spiritually when I let go of the need to psychoanalyze the motivations and actions of others and concentrate on identifying what I need to be doing for myself in order to benefit from whatever's going on around me.

4. If I can't be with those I love most, I need to try to be of service to others.

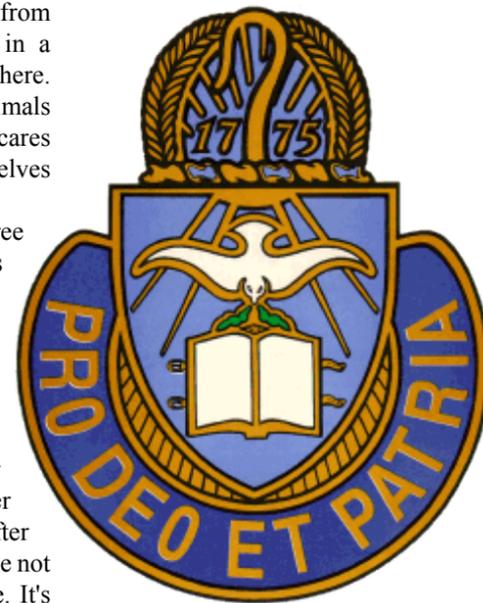
If I'm far away from those I love, it's important for me to grieve in a healthy way. One such manner is to get off my duff and go try to be of service to others, go to a soup kitchen, retirement home or a cancer ward.

Ask a local parish if there's someone who wants to go to religious services but has no way to get there, so you can give the person a ride. Go to a VA hospital and visit with some wounded warriors who have been there for many years, forgotten by others. Most importantly, get out and get busy. Be creative!

I'm fed spiritually by the act of being of service to others, so what better time of the year to do service than Thanksgiving or Christmas or New Years?

5. Spend some time in meditation, contemplation, prayer.

When all else fails, follow directions, right? Precisely – because the holiday season carries with it so many expectations, hype and conspicuous consumerism. Do yourself the favor of trying to improve your conscious contact with a power greater than yourself. I choose to



call that power "God."

If I'm in touch with something beyond the here-and-now if I'm making the effort to unite myself with all that is best and most life-giving. If I'm engaging in 'spiritual exercises' to remind myself that, ultimately, I'm not alone, even and especially if I'm feeling lonely in the moment, I'll feel more hopeful than if I don't. At least that's been my experience thus far! This is, of course, an obvious way of being spiritually fed, but one that is all too often overlooked I'm afraid.

6. Finally, don't psyche yourself out!

Whatever I feed grows. If I'm feeding fear and resentment and shame and regret and confusion and sadness, they'll just keep growing. One only need look around us in these last years to see this affecting whole societies and not just individuals.

If I keep telling myself, "I won't be able to get through the holidays; It's going to be really tough this year," or "If he doesn't call, write, or show up, it will ruin my day," all that bad stuff will just continue to grow and fester and get bigger and more overwhelming, and I'll see that prophecy fulfilled.

On the other hand, if I tell myself, "I have a God big enough to handle this situation," or "I've been blessed beyond measure for so long, that even the present sorrow, separation or situation cannot erase that fact," that stuff will grow and blossom.

Whatever I feed grows. If I'm feeding myself spiritually on what's good, true and holy, that is what will enable me to handle whatever life brings my way, even during the holidays.

On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: "Do not fear, O Zion; do not let your hands grow weak. The Lord, your God, is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory; he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love, he will exult over you with loud singing as on a day of festival," Zephaniah 3:16-18.

Commentary: Soldier's 1st advisory council meeting takes him back to U.S.



U.S. Army photo by Maj. Kone Faulkner, 2nd HBCT, 1st Inf. Div. PAO

A local Iraqi construction crew member pushes a wheel barrow to the site of a water line installation in the Mansour district of northwest Baghdad Nov. 19. Later in the day, local leaders discussed progress made in the area and ways to better fix existing problems in the community during a District Advisory Council meeting.

By Maj. Koné Faulkner
2nd HBCT PAO, 1st Inf. Div.

BAGHDAD – As I walked up to the building with a full complement of Soldiers in full body armor and weaponry, I was greeted by the Iraqi Security Forces guarding the facility where an upcoming district advisory council meeting was about to take place. I walked into the room. The initial Iraqis I met seemed overjoyed to introduce me to all others in attendance.

I was actually there to introduce myself as the media coordinator for the new unit in town and offer my assistance to get the word out on their behalf of the progress they have coordinated by regularly meeting like this to identify necessary service improvements for their respective beladiyahs (government works agencies).

Everyone was extremely friendly to me and, of course, offered me the customary cup

of hot Chi tea. Being the westerner I am, I immediately sought out the editor of the local publication who discussed what, I believed, would be key improvements to his publication. The gentleman then subtly reminded me of our unfamiliarity by getting me to discuss our Families as we got to know more about one another.

I found out he was a professor prior to Coalition Forces actions here. The only thing he knew in English was, "Abraham Lincoln was a great leader because he freed the slaves," and "the U.S. is a great nation." He said this as clearly as any other U.S. citizen and, I asked him about this. Through an interpreter he explained that these were important things his father taught him as a boy, much prior to the reign of Saddam Hussein. He said that they were practiced phrases he is proud to use when he encounters westerners.

We didn't get to discuss much more prior to

the start of the council meeting. Then the Iraqis services managers representing each of the beladiyahs throughout the district took their labeled seats.

Through the translator, I was told the council leader began the meeting with prior items discussed then moved into ongoing projects and then opened the floor to all others seated at the table. Issues with the current projects and requests for projects needed were brought up. Brought up is a nice way of saying it. Really, a back and forth argument ensued. Words flew so fast my translator could not keep track.

Then, three loud knocks filled the air as the leader of the group demanded and regained order. He then recognized one of the representatives seated. The gentleman gave details of faulty plumbing done by a contractor that made the original problem to be fixed worse.

Then it really hit me like Déjà vu. Just prior to deploying here, I, along with other

key members of my command, visited a local city council meeting in Kansas to give a presentation. There was a similar sequence of events there. Of course, in Kansas, there is the customary BBQ beef sandwiches and iced tea given to guests instead of hot Chi tea.

These people are just as our friends and neighbors back home. They are just trying to get back to a sense of normalcy. They may be frustrated with their situation, which most of the population had nothing to do with.

Witnessing this committee's interactions and knowing it as a weekly interaction made me proud to know that I, as a leader partnered with this Coalition trying to assist the Iraqi government, am helping to bring a safe and secure environment for Families represented in this meeting.

I'm proud to be a Soldier tasked to a simple mission statement – "Help the Iraqi population help themselves."

Word on the Street:

What is your favorite Family tradition around the holidays?

By Sgt. Whitney Houston
MND-B PAO



1st Lt. Stephanie Davison
Massillon, Ohio
SGS, 4th Inf. Div.

"We, as a Family, normally go on ski vacations every year. One year we went to Utah; we've been to Nevada, Colorado, British Columbia, Quebec, but I haven't been for a long time."



Spc. Scott Hughes
Marksville, La.
Co. C, 2nd Bn., 5th FA Regt.

"Everyone from around the neighborhood gets together to play a game of rugby, and everyone gets dirty no matter if it rains or whatever"



Staff Sgt. Craig Prouty
Anoka, Minn.
Co. C, DSTB, 4th Inf. Div.

"Sitting down to watch football and playing cards with the Family is my favorite thing to do during the holidays."



2nd Lt. Joseph Hall
Statesboro, Ga.
486th Theatre Support Command

"On Christmas Eve, we would always get to open one present. Also on Christmas Eve we would go to church as a Family."

News briefs

Soldiers seize cash, detain 6 suspects during hotel raid

4th BCT PAO, 10th Mtn. Div.

BAGHDAD – Acting on a local citizen's tip, Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers raided a criminal gang's meeting during which they seized more than \$100,000 and detained six criminal suspects in eastern Baghdad Nov. 28.

Soldiers assigned to 3rd Squadron, 89th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, conducted the raid in the Rusafa district of Baghdad. They confiscated nearly \$76,000 in U.S. currency and almost 40 million Iraqi dinar along with detaining the suspects.

"We commend this brave and loyal Iraqi citizen for coming forth with the knowledge of illegal activity," said Maj. Joey Sullinger, spokesman for 4th BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. "The money and criminal militants captured in the operation will prevent senseless killing and harming of innocent Iraqi citizens and the Iraqi Security Forces that protect them."

IA, MND-B Soldiers seize weapons, munitions

Multi-National Division – Baghdad PAO

BAGHDAD – Iraqi Army and Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers seized weapons caches throughout Baghdad Nov. 27

Soldiers of the Company A, 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment, 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, discovered a weapons cache in Nasr Wa Salam, west of Baghdad at approximately 12:15 p.m.

The cache consisted of four cases of 20mm anti-aircraft ammunition and three empty missile canisters.

The cache was collected by an explosive ordnance team and transported to a joint security station to be safely disposed of at a later time.

IA soldiers from 4th Battalion, 22nd Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, working with Soldiers from 5th Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, found a weapons cache in Southwest Kadamiyah at approximately 1:30 p.m.

The cache consisted of two 73mm Bulgarian-manufactured PG-9 HEAT rockets, four Russian-manufactured 57mm projectiles and 10 blocks of TNT.

"Iraqi Security Forces, with little assistance from Coalition Forces, are taking a stand against terrorist and extremist who wish to harm the Iraq people," said Lt. Col. Steve Stover, spokesman, MND-B and the 4th Infantry Division. "They continue to demonstrate their dedication and professionalism creating a secure Baghdad."



U.S. Army photo by Justin Carmack, 1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

Raiders train 9th IA bomb disposal technicians

FORWARD OPERATING BASE FALCON, Iraq – 1st Lt. Brad Lewis, explosive ordnance technician, assigned to the 752nd Explosive Ordnance Disposal Company, attached to the 1st Special Troops Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, shows fragmentation from a car bomb during an Iraqi Security Forces training exercise Nov. 16 near Forward Operating Base Falcon in southern Baghdad's Rashid district. The Soldiers detonated approximately 200 pounds of explosives for the 9th Iraqi Army Division Bomb Disposal Company to create a realistic scenario for post-blast analysis of the site.

Regulars discover, seize a mortar cache on Thanksgiving

1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

BAGHDAD – Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers discovered a mortar cache Nov. 27 in the Rashid district of southern Baghdad.

At approximately 8:45 p.m. in the Jihad community, Soldiers from Company A, 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, 1st Bri-

gade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, found and seized a cache consisting of two mortar tubes, a base plate, 10 60mm mortar rounds and six primers. An explosive ordnance disposal unit arrived to retrieve the munitions.

"Even on holidays, the dedicated infantry Soldiers from the 'Regulars' Battalion

conducted combat patrols and found an enemy mortar cache in the Rashid District of Baghdad," said Maj. Dave Olson, spokesman, 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div. "Our Soldiers are Steadfast and Loyal as they continue to support our Iraqi Security Forces partners in providing a safe and secure environment for the Iraqi people."

MND-B Soldiers detain 8 criminals throughout Baghdad

Multi-National Division – Baghdad PAO

BAGHDAD – Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers detained eight wanted criminals throughout Baghdad Nov. 27-28.

Soldiers from Company D, 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 68th Armor Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, detained five criminals in the Adhamiyah district of northern Baghdad Nov. 27 at approximately 9 a.m.

The five are suspected of involvement in a recent string of IED attacks and assassination attempts in eastern Baghdad.

Task Force 1st Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment, attached to 3rd Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, captured a criminal Nov. 27 after receiving a tip from an Iraqi citizen on a suspect's house located in Sadr City's Thawra neighborhood at approximately 1:30 a.m.

The detainee is an alleged member of a Special Groups organization, who had emplaced several improvised-explosive devices and participated in terrorist activities.

The capture of this criminal will likely provide valuable information on the remaining members of the Special Groups organization.

The detainee was transported to a joint security station in Sadr City and then later to Taji detainee holding area.

Members from the 2nd Platoon, Company C, 1st Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, arrested a known criminal in North Baghdad's Tarmiyah joint security station Nov. 28. The detainee is responsible for emplacing improvised-explosive devices on military routes.

At approximately 12:40 a.m. Nov. 28, the individual was detained and transported to Camp Taji for detention.

Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, detained a Special Groups operator at 11 a.m. in the West Rashid district of Baghdad. The detainee was taken to FOB Falcon to be processed.

"The detention of these individuals will severely disrupt the Special Groups criminals and extremist activities throughout the Baghdad area," said Lt. Col. Steve Stover, spokesman, MND-B and the 4th Infantry Division.

"Coalition Forces remain steadfast in bring those who cause harm to the Iraqi people to justice."

Mission – Soldier – Family – Team



IP, MND-B Soldiers provide humanitarian aid to those needing assistance in 9 Nissan



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Jeremy Todd, 4th BCT, 10th Mtn. Div.

An Iraqi woman carries a package of bottled water on her shoulder after Iraqi Police distributed the water and other items to 9 Nissan Families needing assistance in eastern Baghdad Nov. 20.

By Sgt. Jeremy Todd

4th BCT PAO, 10th Mtn. Div.

FORWARD OPERATING BASE RUSTAMIYAH, Iraq – Iraqi Police officers and Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers attached to 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, teamed up to distribute humanitarian aid to those who needed the assistance in eastern Baghdad Nov 20.

The IP and Soldiers from Company A, 1st Battalion, 66th Armor Regiment, 1st Brigade combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, attached to 4th BCT, 10th Mtn. Div., met in the morning to load two trucks: one of humanitarian-aid packages and the other with bottled water.

They headed to one of the poorest areas of the 9 Nissan district to hand out the goods. Each package contained rice, sugar and canned-food items packed in yellow knapsacks.

When the convoy arrived, the streets filled with men, women and children eager to greet the police and Soldiers, who distributed the knapsacks in less than half an hour, noted 1st Lt. Eric Chapman, a platoon leader for Company A, from Killeen, Texas. The Soldiers provided security as the IP officers distributed the aid packages and water to the people.

“My Soldiers have transitioned well from when we were in the lead to the Iraqis leading almost all of the missions – and that’s why we’re here,” explained Chapman. “(Our) 1st Platoon Soldiers have trained their counterparts diligently and now gladly step to the side, letting the Iraqi Police take the lead.”

The IP seemed to enjoy the reactions of the local citizens. In turn, the people were pleased to receive aid from the IP.

“No one was nervous to approach the IP,” said Pfc. Trevor Shields, of Newhall, Calif. “In fact, it was the opposite.”

One part of his mission was to monitor the peoples’ attitudes toward the IP who serve the citizens in the area, said 1st Lt. Trustin Varnado, who is from Killeen, Texas, and serves as an intelligence officer.

“We rode along, not only to provide security for the IPs but also to get a feel for the people of 9-Nissan,” commented Varnado. “And, as it seems, the attitude is a positive one. They received the Iraqi Police with open arms, literally.”

Along with the bottled water and canned goods, the IP handed out informational flyers about wanted criminals known to previously live and operate in the area.

Micro-grants help economic growth, support citizens in New Baghdad

4th BCT PAO, 10th Mtn. Div.

FORWARD OPERATING BASE LOYALTY, Iraq – During the past year, United States forces have helped to stimulate the Iraqi economy through issuing micro-grants to local eastern Baghdad businesses.

As of Nov. 16, Company C, 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, alone has processed 20 applications and handed out nearly \$395,000 in the New Baghdad district, said 1st Lt. Grant White, a Co. C platoon leader from Sugar Land, Texas. There are at least 25 more applications still going through the investigations process, he explained.

“With every micro-grant we are able to complete, you can see a difference. Shop owners walk a little taller in the street when they are able to support their Families properly and supply their neighbors with the merchandise they are demanding,” commented White. “When the shop owners come to FOB Loyalty to receive their cash after their applications are complete, they are a bit hesitant at first. Then once we explain what is happening and hand them the stack of hundred dollar bills, they are breathless and it takes a second to let what just happened set in; \$5,000 is a drop in the bucket to American business owners, but to a struggling Iraqi shop owner it is winning the lottery.”

Co. C Soldiers recently patrolled Muhallas 740 and 744 to check on business owners to whom they have issued micro-grants. These small businesses include pharmacies, fruit stands, carpentry shops, fabrication shops, generator repair shops, sandwich shops, photography shops, medical clinics, bakeries, hardware and corner stores.

White emphasized that some of these shop owners have been able to hire additional workers who were previously unemployed. In addition, they were able to buy more merchandise that was unavailable to meet public demand in the past. Once they began to turn a profit, they were able to open another shop in either the same location to supply a different service or in a different location, he explained.

“We are providing basic fundamentals to the Iraqi economy; supply and demand. People demand resources to provide for their survival. We simply facilitate the primer to the process,” said Sgt. Corious Thomas, a Co. C forward observer from Columbus, Ga. “Now when on patrol in a Muhalla, we don’t see as many people standing outside their homes because they are at their new jobs.”

Giving stability to residents who live near these shops creates a situation in which they are able to refuse support from the Special Groups criminals operating in the area, explained White.

The citizens of New Baghdad are under constant pressure from SG extremists to work for them by hiding caches, reporting Coalition Forces are in the area and supporting other criminal behaviors, he said.



U.S. Army courtesy photo from 4th BCT PAO, 10th Mtn. Div.

A female customer pays for food at a market in the New Baghdad district of eastern Baghdad, Nov. 10. Soldiers from Company C, 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, patrolled the area to check on small-business owners to whom they had issued micro-grants to support their enterprises and support economic stability.

“Being able to build a rapport with the local population is a valuable asset,” expressed White.

“The micro-grant process is working to discourage citizens from working for the enemy, showing them that there are alternative means of income other than helping those who are trying to harm them.”



1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

'Copperhead' troops increase area as 'surge' forces redeploy

MND-B Soldiers leave COP to ISF, move to JSS

Story and photos by
Sgt. 1st Class Brent Williams

1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

FORWARD OPERATING BASE FALCON, Iraq — As "surge" forces begin to redeploy, returning home after a 15-month deployment in support of Multi-National Division – Baghdad and Operation Iraqi Freedom, the units used to help bring security and stability to the Iraqi capital are not being replaced.

Consequentially, the 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, realigned battle space in early November, moving its companies across the Rashid district in southern Baghdad to assume more of the sector and assist Iraqi Security Forces enforcing the Rule of Law.

Picking up new muhallahs and areas of responsibility to patrol and secure is like starting all over again because every area of operations, every neighborhood is different, said Staff Sgt. Ryan Parker, a squad leader assigned to Company C, 1st Bn., 22nd Inf. Regt., 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

"We are ready for whatever we have to do," Parker assured. "Stay here and maintain this area, keep it peaceful or move to a different area. Whatever the mission needs, we're ready for it."

The Soldiers will use the experience that they have gained during more than seven months of patrolling and operating in western Rashid to control the area and maintain security, he explained.

"In the old muhallahs, we know the people, how they act, what they can expect from us and what we can expect of them," said Parker, who hails from San Antonio. "Now, it's like we just got out here again. We just have to learn the area, learn the people and see what they're up to in those areas."

Parker said that sooner or later, Coalition Forces will leave Iraq, and the Iraqis will take ownership of their country. And while ISF are patrolling the streets and securing the neighborhoods every day, he added, they still need to take additional steps for their forces to become self-sufficient.

The Iraqi Army is better trained and has learned a number of techniques and skills from Coalition Forces through years of training and mentorship on how to soldier, said 1st Sgt. Walter Navarro, Co. C., 1st Bn., 22nd Inf. Regt., 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

Looking at the combined effort of the ISF in the Rashid district, Navarro said that the IA and IP moved forward in developing their capabilities where conditions within the communities prevented progress in previous years.

"In order to secure their area, they are still going to need the resources," explained Navarro, who was born in Peru and moved to the United States at the age of 16. "We can't just say that it is just a matter of providing security or fighting an insurgency; the government has to be able to provide for their citizens, and in order to do that, they have to provide resources."

Navarro, who calls Washington home, said that his unit will undertake more combined patrols and operations with the ISF in ongoing efforts to prepare the Iraqi leaders to transition into independent operations and take over more responsibility through out the Rashid district.

Working in concerted efforts in the neighborhoods, businesses and communities, the company established an early rapport with the Iraqi citizens and the ISF in its eight organic muhallahs, said Navarro.

"I am not saying we took a radical approach to how

we conduct business ..., but we used all platoons to go out into sector and create a presence — not at the expense of force protection though."

Months prior to the move, Copperhead Co. cross-leveled personnel, attaching a platoon to the outgoing unit to gain knowledge about the area and help prepare the other platoons for the new area of operations, explained Navarro.

"The big challenge right now is getting the platoons familiar with the new battle space and getting the other platoons familiar with the old battle space," said Capt. Christopher Watkins, commander of Co. C, 1st Bn., 22nd Inf. Regt.

The Soldiers will continue to work, mentor and patrol with the Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police to increase proficiency and prepare the Iraqi Security Forces to take control of their neighborhoods and communities, said Watkins, an armor officer from New Orleans.

"We won't go into tactical over watch for months to come," he said.

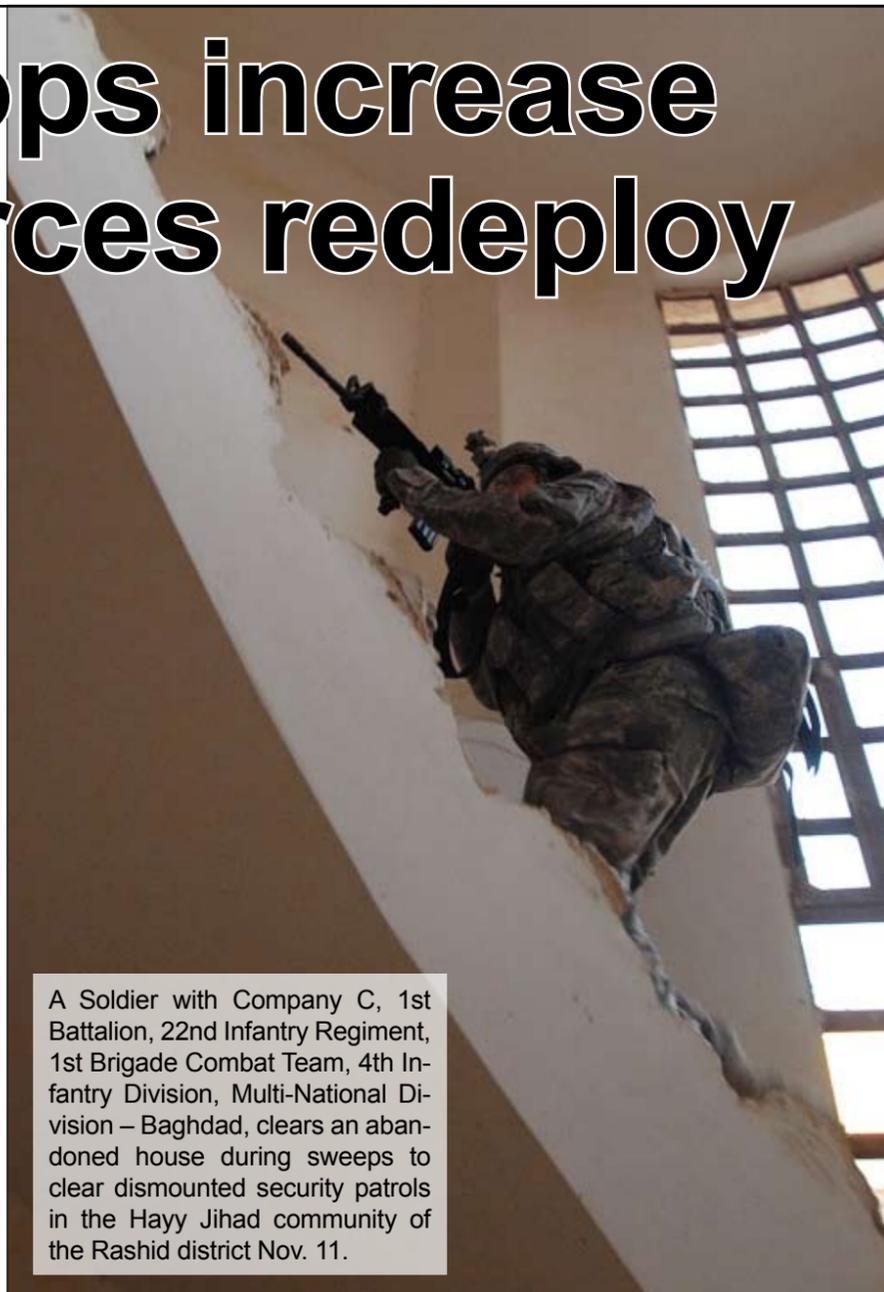
Leaving its former patrol base in the care and control of the Iraqi Police, the company signed over its combat outpost in West Rashid to the control of the Iraqi Police as Soldiers moved into a nearby joint security station, shared with the Iraqi Army soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 53rd Brigade, 14th IA Division, said Capt. Nathan Wilson, executive officer, Co. C, 1st Bn., 22nd Inf. Regt.

The unit left the COP in better condition than it found it, improving the quality of life for the IPs and providing generators, air conditioners and other supplies to the ISF.

"A lot of people did tasks that they wouldn't normally be doing," said Wilson, who was responsible for planning and organizing the move "They understood that there was a task that needed to be done, and they pulled together to make it happen."



Sgt. 1st Class Pedro Sotomayor, an armor crewmember from Bayamon, Puerto Rico, directs Iraqi Army soldiers from the 14th IA Division at a security checkpoint bordering the Hayy Shurta and Hayy Jihad communities Nov. 11.



A Soldier with Company C, 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, clears an abandoned house during sweeps to clear dismounted security patrols in the Hayy Jihad community of the Rashid district Nov. 11.

Wilson thanked his Soldiers, as well as members of Headquarters Platoon and Forward Support Company E, 1st Bn., 22nd Inf. Regt., for their tireless efforts in getting the job done.

The move meant long hours for the Soldiers, who maintained their patrols and operations in face of the move – even after they lost an organic platoon, which was attached to another unit, he explained.

The endeavor resulted in 12-hour patrols for the Soldiers, who would return to base to refit and then help pack and prepare the unit for the move, said Wilson.

The Soldiers inspect checkpoints to ensure that the IA, IP and Sons of Iraq forces are conducting proper inspections at traffic control points, properly searching vehicles and operating with the latest military intelligence and tactics, techniques and procedures, said Sgt. 1st Class Pedro Sotomayor, an armor crewmember from Bayamon, Puerto Rico, and platoon sergeant assigned to Co. C, 1st Bn., 22nd Inf. Regt.

Sotomayor said SoI and IA soldiers manning checkpoints and conducting patrols and operations together is a good formula for success.

"The two forces working together is a good thing. Every day, we stop at checkpoints and talk with the ISF, and having more people on the checkpoints ensures that everyone is searched," he explained. "I would rather have more people than less."

The checkpoint inspections also provide the Iraqis the opportunity to voice concerns and bring valid issues to the attention of the Coalition Forces, said 1st Lt. Jonathan Muir, a platoon leader from Pittsburgh, assigned to Co. C, 1st Bn., 22nd Inf. Regt.

"The Iraqi Army soldiers talked about pay issues," Muir said. "The U.S. commander addresses the issues with their command."

The armor company, part of a combined arms battalion, deployed to the Rashid district in southern Baghdad, increased its presence in the muhallahs and surrounding areas to disrupt potential enemy activity and plans to duplicate its efforts in the new battle space to ensure that the transition runs smoothly, said Muir.



Female IP recruits on target



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Jessika Malott, 8th MP Bde. PAO

Female Iraqi Police recruits, who are also former Sons of Iraq (Abna al-Iraq), are qualifying with their weapons at the al Furat Iraqi Police Training Center Nov. 25. The recruits are slated to graduate in December and will be members of the first all Sol IP training program.

By Staff Sgt. Jessika Malott
8th MP Bde. PAO

BAGHDAD – In the distance, behind the small clouds of dust rolling behind the formation of marching Iraqi Police recruits, there is a small group receiving information from their instructor Nov. 25.

The group of 19 are physically different from the other recruits in the yard yet what is visible in their hearts and efforts was that they carried the same pride, service and duty as their male counterparts.

The female recruits, who have come to train with other former Sons of Iraq (Abna al-Iraq), have again made the decision to continue to further serve their country by registering at the al Furat Iraqi Police Training Center, where now they are only a week from graduating as the first Sol graduating class of IP recruits.

Although they are not the first females to attend training at the center, their pride for their homeland and the light of hope gleaming from their faces assured onlookers that they too are prepared to do their part in protecting their country.

“It was my dream to be an IP since I was 12,” said Ammal, an Iraqi Police recruit and former Sol, through an interpreter. “I like to watch American movies. I watched Charlie’s Angels, and it gave me motivation to see other females

doing stuff and I thought that I can do it too.”

Ammal has also worked for the Iraqi Army, and after hearing about the opportunities with the IP training program, she said she had made up her mind.

“Enough is enough,” she said. “We want to prove to the western countries that we can do this – protect our country and help others.”

The class members were working on their marksmanship skills and fired their weapons at the training center’s range. Many of the recruits have had previous training so that the tasks that were presented during class have improved their knowledge and skill sets.

“Before, we used to get some females in training,” said Maj. Rozak, commander of the training center. “The Sons of Iraq are well trained. they know many things, and they have more opportunity in the future. They are very well educated militarily wise.”

Many of the females said they are happy to be part of the forces that will shape their communities and country.

“We (females) want to prove to the western countries that we can do this to help others,” said Ammal. “We did not have an opportunity during Saddam Hussein’s regime. Now, we have that opportunity. We will handle suicide bombers and (improvised-explosive devices). It is only a matter of time before we clean up Iraq again.”

926th Eng. Bde.



Engineers move forward with Operation Peace for Iraqi Children

By 1st. Lt. Angel Richardson
926th Eng. Bde. PAO

BAGHDAD – Students of the Al Kifah Girls School in the Rusafa district of Baghdad received much needed school supplies, toys and clothing Nov. 18 from Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers.

Lt. Col. Carlton Fisher, chaplain, 926th Engineer Brigade, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, Awatef Fadel, the school principal, and Mohamed Abd Al Rahman, mayor of Rusafa, coordinated the school supply donation. The entire 926th Engineer Brigade Family Readiness Group and Families had a hand in organizing the Al Kifah School donation.

“When I got in country, I discovered that several of us were soliciting donations from the 926th Family Readiness Groups, Soldiers’ Families and churches and organizations back home,” said Fisher. “I got together with our chief of staff and Sgt. (Amy) Lehman.

“We consolidated our efforts into one mission entitled: “Operation Peace for Iraqi Children.” We changed our priority to school supplies and focused on locating a specific school,” he added.

Fisher received clothing from various churches throughout Alabama, North Carolina, Georgia and Illinois. In addition to receiving supplies, 420 backpacks were donated.

Along with Fisher’s organization, Sgt. Amy Lehman, executive noncommissioned officer, and Sgt. 1st Class Jason



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jason Lehman, 926th Eng. Bde.

Students show their appreciation by giving high-fives and blowing kisses Nov. 18 after Multi-National Division – Baghdad gave backpacks to the students of the Al Kifah School in the Rusafa district of Baghdad. Family Readiness Group members, 926th Engineer Brigade and 890th Engineer Battalion Families and friends donated most of the school supplies.

Lehman, S2 noncommissioned officer in charge, 926th Eng. Bde., developed “Every Child Counts.”

Lehman received more than 150 boxes of supplies, toys and clothing.

“Clothing, shoes, hygiene items, toys and snacks were donated by the Lehman, Girard, Phillips and Kelsey Families,

over eight different churches and numerous organizations and companies,” said Lehman.

Planning started in April 2008 for “Operation Peace for Iraqi Children.”

“The mission began back at Camp Shelby when Brig. Gen. (Jeffrey) Talley encouraged us to send soccer paraphernalia and toys for Iraqi kids,” said Fisher.

Fisher and his team of volunteers organized, inventoried and packed all of the donations. The 46th Engineer Combat Battalion, out of Fort Polk, La., provided additional support by identifying the school site.

The 890th Engineer Battalion, out of Gulf Port, Miss., received donated items which added to the Al Kifah donation.

Lehman said she felt it was extremely important to give to the children of Iraq.

“It is important to give to the children of Iraq for two reasons,” said Lehman. “One, these children are the future of Iraq, and they will be the leaders of tomorrow. Two, they didn’t ask for the life styles they have, and if we can help them out in any little way to comfort them or show the children we care, maybe they will look back as the grow older and remember the good the American Soldiers did.”

Fisher saw donating the items to the Al Kifah School as a type of reconciliation.

“We saw the mission as an opportunity to give to needy children in Baghdad and build relationships between Iraqi citizens and Coalition Forces.”

The event also broadened Iraqi citizens’ support from U.S.-based churches and organizations to engender a free republic in Iraq, said Fisher.

The 926th plans to organize another school donation before they leave.



2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div.

Blackjack Soldiers reopen pool, enrich neighborhood



U.S. Army photo courtesy 4th Sqdn., 10th Cav. Regt., attached to 2nd HBCT, 1st Inf. Div.

Local Ameriyah boys dive into the Ameriyah Pool during a grand reopening celebration Nov. 22. Soldiers from the 4th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, operationally attached to the 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, worked for more than a year with local citizens and the Government of Iraq to reopen the pool.

By Sgt. Brian Tierce

2nd HBCT PAO, 1st Inf. Div.

BAGHDAD – In many American communities, the neighborhood pool is a place to meet up with friends and have some fun while trying to beat the hot summer days.

In the spirit of summer, though a little after the season, the citizens of the Ameriyah neighborhood of northwest Baghdad received a welcome gift when they reopened the Ameriyah pool Nov. 22.

The pool has been closed since 2003. According to Shihad Ahmed Abdullah, the lead contractor for the project, the area has seen a number of terrorist attacks and the pool itself has been vandalized and stripped of all necessary resources to maintain a functioning pool.

The fortunes of the neighborhood pool took a drastic turn for the best when Soldiers from the 4th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, which is based out of Fort Carson, and operationally attached to the 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, made renovating the pool one of its top priorities.

“It’s really about working together with the community,” said Capt. Kelly Lanphere, 4-10th Cav. fire support officer. “We pooled our resources together to work with the local community and local government to reopen this pool and now, today, we are reopening

the Ameriyah pool.”

The reconstruction project did not just call for the pool to be rebuilt but also the pool house in the complex which added a new air-conditioning system.

“This is another place where people can come and enjoy themselves,” said Shihad Ahmed Abdullah. “Thanks to the air-conditioning system, local citizens can now host computer training, catered events as well as wedding parties.”

With improved security and the quality of life on the rise in Baghdad, Blackjack Soldiers said they knew they had a golden opportunity to provide a boost to the morale of the local citizens and they took full advantage of the chance.

“I think this pool’s great; it’s a great project,” said Lanphere. “More than anything, it represents hope. Ameriyah was a very bad place for a long time, and today is really a sign of hope of things to come.”

Once the ribbons were cut, children from the community had the chance to take a quick dip into the pool. Although the cold of November was in the air, the warming sense of pride in their new pool could be seen all over their faces and that sense of pride was shared by the Soldiers of 4-10th Cav.

“We’re making progress one day at a time,” said Lanphere. “All the projects we’re doing, they’re making an impact for the people.”

6th IA Div. logistics leader bears witness to importance of diagnostics

By Capt. Kevin Bentz

299th BSB, 2nd HBCT, 1st Inf. Div.

AL MUTHANA, IRAQ – A team of mechanics from the 299th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, conducted a training visit Nov. 20 to the 6th Iraqi Army Division to provide a class on proper maintenance procedures for IA vehicles.

During this visit, Col. Saleem, the Iraqi Army 6th Division’s logistics leader, observed first hand as the maintenance team demonstrated the importance of proper maintenance diagnostic equipment.

Saleem’s vehicle was being prepared to be sent to the Taji Maintenance Facility for a new transmission. Staff Sgt. David Strong, one of 299th BSB’s maintenance instructors, used the vehicle to perform hands-on training and a demonstration of the capabilities of the transmission diagnostic system.

The Iraqi Soldiers quickly hooked the diagnostic system up to the vehicle and were able to run a check on the transmission. Strong helped with the translation of the codes the diagnostic system displayed.

“The Iraqi mechanics are knowledgeable in how to use the diagnostic equipment,” Strong said. “The problem is the quantity of diagnostic systems and understanding the codes they produce.”

Once the codes were translated, the Iraqi mechanics quickly worked to test for potential faulty parts. They identified and confirmed one of the parts was faulty and could be replaced. This precluded sending the vehicle to the facility for an en-

tirely new transmission.

Currently, the process of obtaining a new transmission for a humvee takes between 4-12 months for the parts to be ordered and installed before the vehicle is returned from the maintenance facility.

On this day however, the part required for Saleem’s vehicle was available and quickly replaced.

“(With) a quick five minute class and a little guidance, the Iraqi mechanics were able to fix the vehicle,” said Strong.

Saleem said he was very impressed with the time that was saved by properly knowing how to diagnose the problem at the lowest level possible. He also noted that using diagnostic equipment and properly identifying faults can save large amounts of money by just replacing a small part and not an entire major item like a transmission.

Saleem thanked the maintenance instructors for their demonstration and commented on how he will have all his brigades order the diagnostic equipment.

“I have every confidence that the Iraqi Army will continue to improve their capabilities as they begin to utilize the digital systems, along with their already proven skill and work ethic,” said 1st Lt. Jim Getts, an Iraqi Security Force liaison, with the 299th BSB, who added that he is very enthused about the progress that can be made by the Iraqi Army.

The training on the digital diagnostic systems will ultimately contribute to the Iraqi Army being self-reliant and able to maintain its vehicles independent from Coalition Forces.



U.S. Army photo by 1st Sgt. Robert Hobson, Co. B, 299th BSB, 2nd HBCT, 1st Inf. Div.

A 6th Iraqi Army Division mechanic performs diagnostic checks on an engine during maintenance training provided by the Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers from 299th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division.

Renovations, improvements in Sadr City brighten hopes

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

BAGHDAD – More than \$55 million in both U.S. and Iraqi funds have been pumped into Sadr City to improve the quality of life for residents there since the end of major combat operations this past spring.

In a combined effort between both Iraqi and American forces, the people of Sadr City have benefited from renovated and re-opened schools, new parks, improved medical facilities, more consistent electricity and better trash removal services.

The area where these improvements have occurred is referred to as Operational Environment Gold, named after the infamous wall that separates the southern third of this northeastern Baghdad district and provides a security buffer.

“It also had an impact on the Government of Iraq as they have watched our support to the local government down here in the south part of Sadr City (we can) also start to see some progress in the northern parts or the parts beyond the Gold Wall as we call it,” said Col. John Hort, commander of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

Since May, when the Muqtada al-Sadr-enforced cease fire took effect, more than 100 projects have been completed with assistance from the 926th Engineer Brigade. Additionally, the Striker Brigade and the 926th Eng. Bde., who work jointly in OE Gold, have handed out more than \$3 million in microgrants to local businesses.

These improvements to the area have not gone

unappreciated. In addition to the increased revenue in the area, there has also been an increased desire for similar projects to take hold in areas north of the infamous wall.

“Unfortunately, reconstruction north of the Gold Wall is going slow. However, I know Dr. Sumad (Chairman of the Gol's Sadr City Reconstruction Committee) is committed to success. It is my hope that soon all the citizens of Sadr City may experience the improved security and economic blessings of OE Gold,” said Brig. Gen. Jeffrey Talley, commander of 926th Engineer Brigade, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

Cooperation has been paramount to success in OE Gold between American forces as well as the Iraqi contractors and workers who complete the projects.

“The assistance and reconstruction efforts in OE Gold by (3rd BCT, 4th Inf. Div.) and TF Gold have dramatically improved the quality of life for local residents. OE Gold residents are saying ‘NO’ to the militia and the old ways of Sadr City and ‘YES’ to progress,” said Talley, a South Bend, Ind., native.

Sadr City, with the addition of these projects and the impact of the monies pushed into the local economy, has experienced wholesale improvements in this once impoverished region. But, there are still many other areas where advances can still be made.

“We’re very encouraged with what we see inside Sadr City that we were not able to see last year and as early as March of this year,” said Hort, a Fayetteville, N.C., native.



U.S. Army photo by Maj. Michael Humphreys, 3rd BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div. Col. John Hort, a Fayetteville, N.C., native, walks with an Iraqi child in the Sadr City district of Baghdad's Jamilla Market during a patrol there Oct. 30. Hort commands the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

MND-B Soldiers reach out to local businesses after market bombing

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

COMBAT OUTPOST APACHE, Iraq – Ziyad Kareem was standing in the kitchen of his restaurant in Baghdad's Adhamiyah district, talking to his chef on the morning of Nov. 10., as three customers ate in the dining area.

Then a nearby car bomb exploded.

“Two of my customers were killed and one of my workers were killed (in the attack),” said Kareem.

There were five civilians killed and 37 injured that day; many businesses were damaged, and Kareem's restaurant was one of the businesses that was destroyed.

Kareem, along with other business owners, went to Combat Outpost Apache to request a microgrant from Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers Nov. 18 to help them rebuild their businesses.

“If we can help the businesses get back to normal, return a sense of normalcy to the population and help them get back on their feet after these cowards come and blew up their businesses ... it will help improve the security here in Adhamiyah and progress here in Baghdad,” said Capt. Patrick Soule, commander of Company D, 2nd Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, which is currently attached to 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division.

The microgrant program is funded by the Coalition Forces with the aim of helping local businesses prosper by giving them up to \$5,000 in capital to improve their businesses.

“Some businesses obviously had more damage than others. Not everybody will be getting the same amount of money,” said Soule, a native of Pearland, Texas, told the assembled crowd. “I understand for the businesses that were severely damaged it may not be enough to completely cover your loss.”

One by one, the businessmen came forward, signed the necessary paperwork and received their grants.

For 13 years, Abu Ahmed owned and operated a restaurant near Kareem's and employed 15 people; it too was also destroyed by the blast. He said he intends to use his grant to help him rebuild.

“I have to,” said Ahmed. “It's the only job (I have) to feed my Family.”

In addition to having his business destroyed, Ahmed's parent's house was also damaged in the attack.

“This attack, the terrorists did it. They destroyed our country, our people,” said Ahmed. “The people work hard to make some money for his Family.”

When it was Kareem's turn to sign the paperwork, he was visibly grateful.

“(We) understand that you guys didn't have to do that (the microgrant),” said Kareem, shaking Soule's hand. “We appreciate it.”



U.S. Army photo by 1st Lt. Timothy Duffin, 4th BCT, 10th Mtn. Div., attached to 3rd BCT, 4th Inf. Div. ▲ A view of Ziyad Kareem's destroyed restaurant after a car bomb detonated in Baghdad's Adhamiyah District Nov. 10.



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Jerry Saslav, 3rd BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

◀ Ziyad Kareem, whose restaurant was destroyed in a car bomb explosion Nov. 10 in Baghdad's Adhamiyah district, thanks and shakes the hand of Capt. Patrick Soule, commander, Company D, 2nd Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, attached to 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division—Baghdad, when he went to sign the final paperwork for a microgrant at Combat Outpost Apache in Baghdad's Adhamiyah district Nov. 18.



2nd BCT, 25th Inf. Div.

'Ace High' Soldiers strike gold during cache sweep



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class James Buchanan, 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div.

Heavy Machine Guns with barrels unearthed during a cache sweep in Dhabtiya, a village northwest of Baghdad lie in line during an inventory of the items Nov. 23. Soldiers from Troop A "Ace High," 2nd Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment "Strykehorse," 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team "Warrior," 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, conducted a cache sweep along the Grand Canal and seized 11 cache's over the two-day period.

By Sgt. 1st Class Brian Addis
2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div.

JOINT SECURITY STATION SHEIK AMIR, Iraq – Soldiers from Troop A "Ace High," 2nd Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment "Strykehorse," 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team "Warrior," 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, conducted a cache sweep in Dhabtiya, a village northwest of Baghdad, Nov. 24-25.

The two-day operation resulted in eleven cache finds.

Platoons from Ace High Troop, with the help of approximately 50 Sons of Iraq (Abna al-Iraq) and Iraqi Army Soldiers conducted a deliberate east-to-west search along the north side of the Grand Canal Nov. 24. The search initially turned up an unknown type rocket and a 60mm mortar. An ensuing search resulted in four additional separate caches. The cache find was expected, but the size and contents of some of these caches were surprising.

"The size of the heavy weapons caches was not what we had expected," said Capt. Matt Clark, commander, Ace High Troop, who is a native of Tucson, Ariz. "The discovery of the SA-13 missile (Strella) pod was definitely not something we had envisioned in the beginning."

The first cache consisted of two AK-47s with magazines, an FAL rifle with magazines, three DSHKA barrels, a hand grenade, 100 meters of time fuse, a SA7 anti-aircraft missile, 120 links of 7.62mm rounds, a .30-caliber Machine Gun, four Italian Anti-Tank mines and a 120mm mortar tube.

The second cache consisted of four 155mm artillery rounds, five 130mm rockets with serviceable warheads and two 130mm rocket warheads. The third cache contained a 155mm artillery round and three 105mm projectiles.

The items found in the fourth cache were unserviceable due to corrosion and was much older than the other three. Items found were a flare pistol, four mortar bipods, five .50-caliber machine gun receivers, 10 12.7mm HMG receivers, 30 HMG barrels of various types and calibers with one being unknown, and a light machine gun receiver.

"I believe these caches were the property of AQI cell that had a large influence in the area historically," Clark said.

Once all items were inventoried, EOD was called to the site and all unexploded ordnance/explosive cache items were reduced on site. All other serviceable and unserviceable weapons were turned over to the Iraqi Army.

The second day of "Operation Gold Digger" began at approximately 10 a.m. Nov. 25 with Soldiers from Ace High Troop once again patrolling the flat lands of Dhabtiya along the Grand Canal. The sweep would complete the north side of the canal and push the search 200-300 meters south of the canal as well. The Soldiers discovered almost twice the number of caches than the previous day as seven caches were unearthed, inventoried and destroyed. Amongst the items found were 27 82mm mortars, five heavy machine guns, four 120mm mortars and six anti-aircraft guns.

The combined efforts of Iraqi Security and Coalition Forces during the two-day event culminated in a successful reduction and erosion of enemy capabilities.

"The Iraqi Army and Sons of Iraq were able to work together and contribute a great deal, which is beneficial in the progress towards a safer and more secure area," Clark said.

"General intelligence allowed us to focus the time and man power effectively and the success of the operation was a direct result of that."

Warriors bid farewell to Macedonian brothers in arms

from **Macedonian Pg. 1**

"Because of your efforts over the past five years, the security condition for thousands of Iraqi citizens has greatly improved," he continued.

The Macedonian-Coalition partnerships grew and provided teamwork that furthered every aspect of the mission in northwest Baghdad.

"We are witnesses of the outstanding achievements of the Macedonian platoons and close this chapter on our partnership here in Iraq," said Col. Todd McCaffrey, commander, 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, who is a native of Hudson, Ohio. "The partnership of soldiers like the outstanding Macedonians will be sorely missed."

The Macedonian force consists of two platoons: an infantry security platoon and a ranger platoon.

Most recently, the infantry platoon provided security controlling entry points into Combined Operating Base Taji while partnered with 2nd Battalion, 11th Field Artillery Regiment. They manned gates and entry points that screened more than 4,000 persons and several thousand vehicles.

"The Macedonian platoon was an invaluable asset to our mission. They performed superbly and were truly a combat multipli-

er," said Lt.Col. Joseph Gleichenhaus, commander 2nd Bn., 11th FA Regt., who is a native of Honolulu. "More importantly, our partnership allowed by Soldiers to learn firsthand how to work with Coalition Forces. They gained knowledge of another culture and country and built friendships that will last a lifetime.

"Our Soldiers have a better understanding of what it means to carry the flag of their home country on their shoulder and will always strive to represent the United States Army as well as their Macedonian brothers represented theirs."

The Macedonian Rangers spent their tour with the 1st Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment "Golden Dragons", 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div.

"While partnered with the Macedonian Ranger platoons, they were absolutely spectacular," said Maj. Todd Woodruff, executive officer, 1st Bn. 14th Inf. Regt., who is a native of Bowlingbrook, Ill. "Our partnership could not have been closer. Golden Dragon Soldiers and the Macedonian soldiers have



U.S. Army photo by Maj. Al Hing, 2nd SBCT PAO, 25th Inf. Div.

Marine Maj. Gen. Paul Lefebvre (center left) and Macedonian soldiers come together one last time to commemorate an end of mission ceremony at the Schoolcraft Pavilion Nov. 26. The Macedonian soldiers will return home following the end of the eleventh and last rotation in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

lived together, fought together and improved security over the Tarmiyah area."

The Macedonian accomplishments are far reaching, beyond the time spent with the Coalition Forces.

"They can go home knowing the (Iraqi) people have security and a great future. The

people of Tarmiyah owe much of their security to the Macedonian Rangers. We will greatly miss them and their relationship as partners," said Woodruff.

The Coalition Forces leaders and Macedonian leaders exchanged gifts, smiles and handshakes during the ceremony.

2nd BCT, 1st Armor Div.



Salman Pak refurbished school opens for students



By Lt. Col. Wayne Marotto
2nd BCT PAO, 1st Armored Div.

BAGHDAD – Wurwood Kindergarten School officially reopened its doors Nov. 21 in the Rasheed neighborhood of Salman Pak after a two-month long refurbishing period.

The school has 350 students enrolled, aged four to five years old, and six class rooms. Prior to the refurbishment, the school could only hold 60 students. The school employs eight teachers, a director and an assistant.

“The neighborhood Families feel safe sending their kids to the school,” said Nawad Abid Alaziz, the school’s headmistress, adding that the refurbishment flows in synch with the improved security in the area.

Capt. William Richardson, the commander of Company C, Task Force 2nd Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, along with his Soldiers, attended the building dedication ceremony. His unit assisted the Iraqi Army, local Sheiks and contractors in achieving their success at the school.

“The increased professionalism of the Iraqi Army has made the area more secure,” Richardson said.

The brightly painted and orderly school contrasts to what the building’s condition was a short time ago. Much of the building had been hit by gunfire and was strewn with garbage.

Alaziz led Richardson, along with Iraqi Army officers and local Sheiks on a tour of the school.

Alaziz said she was pleased with the \$80,000 refurbishment and that she watches television and sees American kindergarten schools and dreams of having schools like that in Iraq to educate their children.

“We need more rugs, a hot water heater, space heaters for the classrooms and more furniture,” Alaziz told the group.

Richardson said he felt improving education opportunities for the children requires efforts from all those involved.

“Yes, that’s very important because the kids are the fu-

ture, and with the help of the IA, Sheiks and neighborhood, we can make the school better,” said Richardson.

The kindergarten project is a micro part of a larger macro program in the neighborhood. The overall objective of the Disarmament, Disbandment, and Reintegration is to pump \$5.6 million in the area to stimulate the economy and provide employment and vocational skills for lasting employability.

The money will be spent on seven construction projects, which will include two more kindergarten schools in the neighborhood, a land registration office, roads, a clinic, new fire trucks and new ambulances.

Mr. Razaq, a Civil Service Corps contractor, whose students refurbished the school, also attended the opening. Eighty-seven of his students worked on the Wurwood kindergarten. His vocational program trains students on carpentry, masonry, electrical, crane operators and laying asphalt.

“The program provides good paying jobs for the members of the community,” said Razaq.

The DDR program provided nine local Sheiks the opportunity to nominate people from their tribes to enter the program.

“Before the program, there were no job opportunities in the area. It’s good because it provides jobs and gives positive alternatives for the young,” said Sheik Hussein.

Lt. Col. Michael ShROUT, commander of TF 2-6, who is partnered with the 9th Iraqi Army Division in the area, was asked by the Iraqis to cut the ribbon to signify the opening.

“Thank you for your gracious offer,” said ShROUT, “but this school was built by Iraqi workers for Iraqi children with the support of the Iraqi Army maintaining security. We (Coalition Forces) are just your fans to cheer you on.”

Col. Muhammad Ali, who serves with 1st Battalion, 35th Brigade, 9th IA Div., took the honor of cutting the ribbon to signify the official opening.

Two more schools are planned to open in the neighborhood in the near future.

U.S. Army photo by Lt. Col. Wayne Marotto, 2nd BCT PAO, 1st Armored Div. Iraqi Army Col. Muhammad Ali, 1st Battalion, 35th Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division, sits below a poster of Iraqi children in the Wurwood Kindergarten Nov. 21 in Salman Pak.

Combat Avn. Bde., 4th Inf. Div.



‘Gambler Gun’ company first to make CAB reenlistment mission

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

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – With only 42 days into fiscal 2009, the first company from the Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, made the reenlistment mission at Camp Taji Nov. 17.

Company E, 4th Battalion, 4th Aviation Regiment, wrapped-up the year’s mission requirements by reenlisting three more Soldiers while deployed to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

“It is an honor to reenlist Sgt. (Jose) Cruz, (fueler from Juncos, Puerto Rico), Sgt. (Samuel) Terry, (ammunition specialist from Greenville, Ky.) and Spc. (Cory) Bounds (ammunition specialist from Springfield, Ill.),” said Capt. Romaine Aguon, commander of the company from Merizo, Guam. “This is a significant event because we have already made the fiscal year 2009 mission. We are setting the standard for the rest of the brigade, and we challenge everyone else to meet this standard.”

To make the reenlistment mission, units are given a number of Soldiers they must reenlist before the end of the fiscal year based-off a percentage of eligible Soldiers. Eligible Soldiers are broken down into three categories – initial, mid-career and career.

Soldiers considered initial are on their first

enlistment and have never reenlisted before. Mid-career Soldiers have reenlisted at least once during their Army careers and have less than ten years of active federal service. Career Soldiers have more than ten years of service.

Depending on their situations, Soldiers are provided a variety of options, which can include bonuses, choice of duty station and change of military occupational specialty. At times, Soldiers can also be offered the civilian school option as an incentive for reenlisting.

The school option allows Soldiers to attend a college of their choice while still receiving full compensation and benefits from the Army. Essentially, Soldiers get paid to go to college.

For the three “Gambler Guns” who reenlisted with Co. E, Cruz received a \$14,000 bonus, Terry received an \$11,000 bonus and Bounds opted for a \$9,500 bonus with a two-semester school option.

To date, the CAB has handed out more than \$1.25 million in bonuses for Soldiers reenlisting during this fiscal year.

“Reenlisting out here is great because you get the tax-free bonus and the school option,” said Bounds. “I really wanted the school option. When I get back from this deployment, I am going to start my first two semesters of college. Getting paid while I am in school is great – it couldn’t get any better.”



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Brent Hunt, CAB PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

Spc. Cory Bounds, ammunition specialist, Company E, 4th Battalion, 4th Aviation Regiment, Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, who hails from Springfield, Ill., reenlisted for six more years in the Army at Camp Taji Nov. 17. Co. E was the first company in the CAB to make the fiscal year 2009 reenlistment mission.

HAPPY THANKSGIVING

FEASTS!



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. David Hodge, 1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div. Soldiers from the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, fill the Raider Café Dining Facility Nov. 27 during the Thanksgiving Day meal at Forward Operating Base Falcon in southern Baghdad's Rashid district.

MND-B Soldiers celebrate day of thanks with fellow comrades

from Turkey Day Pg.1

ters Battery, 2nd Battalion, 44th Air Defense Artillery Regiment, attached to 4th Inf. Div., submitted three recipes made by her mother-in-law: "Alabama Slamma" twice-baked potatoes, sweet potato casserole and "Not Your Ordinary Stuffing."

"My mother-in-law was so excited when I asked her for the recipes. I can't wait to tell her what people say about them," said Douglas, who asked her mother-in-law for the recipes as a way of bringing a piece of home to Iraq for the holidays.

"For right now, this is our home, and instead of thinking about what I could be eating for Thanksgiving dinner, I decided it would be better to just eat it here."

Sgt. Matt Crabill, a native of Garrett, Ind., who serves as a radar mechanic with Battery C, 2nd Battalion, 5th Field Artillery Regiment, attached to 4th Inf. Div., submitted his grandmother's macaroni and cheese recipe.

"There is no macaroni and cheese that tastes like my Grandma's baked macaroni and cheese. Having them make it here reminds me of being at home," he said.

Those who feasted on the recipes and the other dishes prepared by the DFAC staff were complimentary of the food.

"This food is excellent," said Spc. Travis Stansbury, a native of Turlock, Calif., who serves as a human resource specialist with 510th Human Resources Company, 10th Sustainment Brigade, 30th Expeditionary Sustainment Command, MND-B, as he ate the twice-baked potatoes.

"Not quite as good as home but certainly a morale booster. They've succeeded in making it feel like a touch of home," he said.

This Thanksgiving is Stansbury's first away from home, and while he would love for nothing more than to spend this day with his wife and son, he said he also believes that celebrating Thanksgiving here in Iraq is important for Soldiers and builds camaraderie.

"It helps us keep in touch with who we are and where we come from," he said. "These guys aren't as cute as my wife –



U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Lyndsey Dransfield, MND-B PAO Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers and Airmen wait in line outside the Ironhorse Oasis Dining Facility for their chance to eat the Thanksgiving Day feast that awaits them inside Nov. 27.

but they're my Family – just a different kind of Family."

Thanksgiving decorations were strung throughout the DFAC; the 4th Inf. Div. Band played music throughout the meal; and to top it off, two Soldiers dressed up in Thanksgiving-themed costumes and ambled about greeting Soldiers and posing for pictures.

"Our first sergeant asked for help, and we volunteered," said Spc. Christopher Robins, who was dressed as a giant red and orange turkey. Robins is a native of Ashtabula, Ohio, and serves as a mechanic with DSTB, 4th Inf. Div. "Things can be stressful around here, and this costume makes people laugh. It's Thanksgiving. People are missing their Families, and if I can make them laugh, then we all feel better."

As Soldiers gathered at the dinner tables, laughing and talking with their friends throughout the day, all seemed to forget the fact they were far from home, Family and friends, and enjoyed their Thanksgiving meal for simply what it was: a great feast among their closest friends and comrades – their Ironhorse Family.



Pvt. Jessica Cicotte, a food service specialist from Fergus Falls, Minn., assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Special Troops Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, and Pfc. Joanne Guiles, a food service specialist assigned to HHC, 4th Support Battalion, 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B, dressed in pilgrim outfits to celebrate Thanksgiving Day Nov. 27 at the Raider Café Dining Facility in the Rashid district of southern Baghdad.



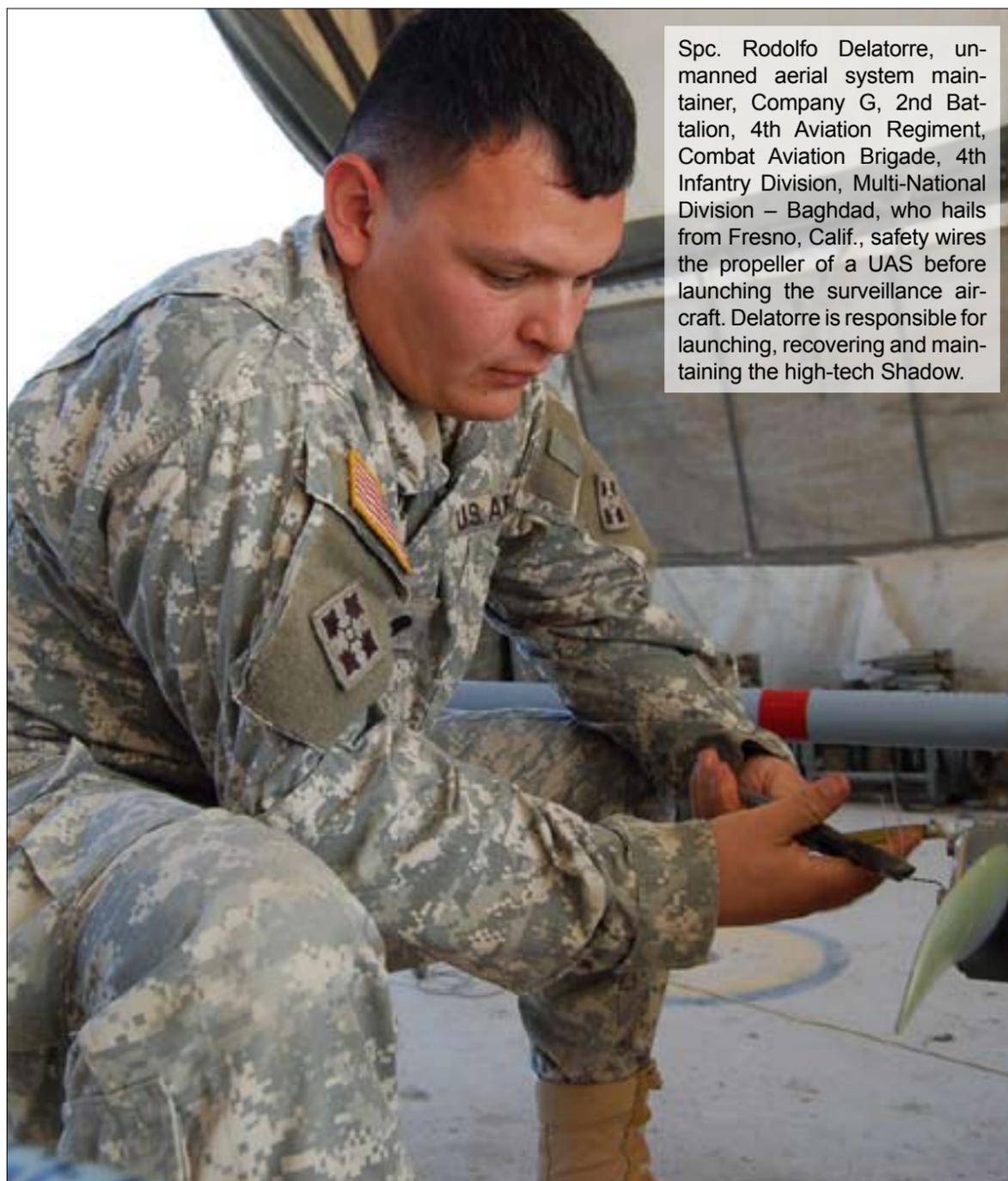
U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Lyndsey Dransfield, MND-B PAO Thanksgiving decorations served to greet the diners at the Ironhorse Oasis Dining Facility as Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers celebrated Thanksgiving with a feast Nov. 27.



U.S. Army photo by Maj. Al Hing, 2nd SBCT PAO, 25th Inf. Div. Maj. Ross Coffey, operations officer, 1st Battalion, 14th Infantry "Golden Dragons," 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad serves turkey to Soldiers during the Thanksgiving meal. The field grade officers from the battalion served the Soldiers to give the cooks a break after preparing the special meal.

Day in the life ...

Shadow maintainer ensures MND-B's eyes soar in sky



Spc. Rodolfo Delatorre, unmanned aerial system maintainer, Company G, 2nd Battalion, 4th Aviation Regiment, Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, who hails from Fresno, Calif., safety wires the propeller of a UAS before launching the surveillance aircraft. Delatorre is responsible for launching, recovering and maintaining the high-tech Shadow.

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

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – As Multi-National Division – Baghdad operations ensue both on the ground and in the air, each Soldier contributes to the continued success of Iraqi Security and Coalition Forces.

From the commanders on the ground to the Soldiers working on the flight line, each owns a part of the MND-B mission.

For one Soldier with the 4th Infantry Division's Combat Aviation Brigade, his mission is to keep Unmanned Aerial System Shadows maintained and in flight so troops on the ground have an "eye in the sky."

"I launch, recover and maintain the Shadow," said Spc. Rodolfo Delatorre, UAS maintainer, Company G, 2nd Battalion, 4th Aviation Regiment, who hails from Fresno, Calif. "I refuel, add oil, change spark plugs and change filters. I perform services on the Shadow to ensure it stays in the air."

Delatorre is attached from the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, as a member of the "Iron Eagle" company, which launches and recovers the Shadow surveillance vehicles day and night.

Shadow maintainers perform takeoff and landing procedures from the facility. The company uses a pneumatic launcher for takeoffs. The Soldiers recover the vehicles by using an arresting hook and cable system similar to the ones used on U.S. Navy aircraft carriers.

To keep the fleet of surveillance aircraft in the air, maintenance, quality control and production control are of high priority. Double checking and triple checking all maintenance procedures is commonplace.

"Once one (UAS) is launched, there is another one coming down. Once it has landed, we do maintenance on it," said Delatorre. "I like this job because it is a lot of hands-on. I like to work with my hands. It gives me a lot of satisfaction when everything is launching well and there are no problems with the UAS."

The Shadow provides commanders on the ground the ability to quite literally see the entire battlefield with its high-tech cameras and communications equipment

Since the inception of unmanned surveillance aircraft more than ten years ago, the "eyes in the sky" asset have become an intricate part of the modern battlefield. As commanders have come to depend on the Shadow's ability to give them surveillance footage from the sky, maintainers ensure the "overhead edge" continues on the battlefield for MND-B troops.

"His job is extremely important to the overall mission," said Staff Sgt. Daniel Lovell, Delatorre's supervisor at the UAS company. "We have a high (operational tempo), and if it wasn't for guys like Delatorre, we couldn't support the overhead mission for MND-B."

"He is a stellar Soldier, and I tell other Soldiers to emulate him," said Lovell. "He is one of those Soldiers who make my job a lot easier."



Spc. Rodolfo Delatorre, unmanned aerial system maintainer, Company G, 2nd Battalion, 4th Aviation Regiment, Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, who hails from Fresno, Calif., recovers a UAS after a surveillance mission on Camp Taji Nov. 26.

'Rule of Law' team strikes balance

By Maj. Lorraine Januzelli
MND-B PAO

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – The legacy befits a nation within the cradle of civilization: Iraq's legal system stretches back more than 3,500 years.

The tradition survived these millennia through the Code of Hammurabi, a legal compilation inscribed into basalt tablets dating back to approximately 1792 B.C.

The ancient tablets are permanently displayed in the Near East Antiquities Collection at The Louvre in Paris. They describe, in elaborate detail, the prevailing criminal and civil laws of ancient Babylonia covering slavery, professional, commercial, agricultural and administrative law and family law. Since Babylonian society centered on the family, the longest entries concern issues such as engagement, marriage and divorce, adultery and incest, children, adoption and inheritance, even the duties of children's nannies.

Despite eons of social and political change, Iraq's legal system remains largely rooted in the Code of Hammurabi, said Capt. William Obringer and Capt. Keith Schellack, lawyers assigned to the Rule of Law team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

Most recently, Iraq's legal system languished during Saddam Hussein's reign; however, it is being restored and updated by the Government of Iraq with the assistance from the Provincial Reconstruction Team – Baghdad and with support from MND-B's Rule of Law team. Progress is already visible.

"As the security situation improved, it allowed the GoI to shift focus toward its legal issues and infrastructure," explained Schellack.

According to Obringer and Schellack, improving the legal status quo reaps numerous benefits that reinforce the increasing stability within Baghdad – a primary goal of MND-B's mission here.

"A more efficient legal system reduces overcrowding in detention facilities, diminishes unnecessarily long detainee processing, increases lawful arrests – actions which, in turn, build trust and confidence within the populace," said Schellack.

Helping the GoI move forward on these efforts can be daunting, especially as it continues to combat deteriorating, albeit deadly, extremist violence. Mindful of the inherent complexities, PRT-B and MND-B carefully defined their mission concerning the Rule of Law in the June 2008 "Joint Common Plan," which is to "facilitate an equitable, efficient and transparent criminal and civil justice system that is respected by Iraqi society."

The key, both Obringer and Schellack said, is to assist with modernizing so that it is a sustainable part of the current legal infrastructure, respects the historical context, and is accepted by the culture.

"We're striking a balance," said Obringer, "between modern legal norms and widely accepted and respected tradition."

Such a balancing act requires a keen understanding of where each partner can materially contribute. PRT-B has taken the lead on long-term legal capacity building, such as physical infrastructure and curriculum development, while MND-B priorities center more on immediate activities.

"Our role is primarily concerned with the initial stages in the legal process," said Schellack.

As such, the Rule of Law team is involved with judicial security and coordination with local judicial investigators to ensure the basic elements of Iraqi due process are followed as evidence or suspects enter the legal systems. Much of the modernization implied in these goals centers on the indispensable underpinnings of justice, such as recordkeeping, tracking and establishing proper and equitable procedures.

Obringer and Schellack said they are encouraged by the improvements they have seen in the Iraqi legal system since they arrived in Baghdad with the division in late 2007. The pivotal moment took place in April at the conclusion of the

fight for Sadr City, after which violence took a precipitous drop from previous norms, noted Obringer.

"After April, the government was better able to focus on the rule of law and legal system. Recently, I've visited a number of courthouses in Baghdad – both civil and criminal – and they are very busy places," he said.

The rebuilding of the Iraqi legal system has resulted in a positive trickle-down effect.

"Overcrowding in some detention facilities is visibly reduced,

and a new policy was issued requiring warrants before any arrest," noted Schellack.

The Rule of Law movement in Iraq received a boost with the opening of the Rusafa Rule of Law Compound in early September 2008. Built in partnership with the GoI, MND-B and PRT-B, the compound provides a safe environment for judicial employees to practice and implement the law without fear of retribution from extremist violence. Security for the complex is provided by the Federal Security Service, and families are housed within the compound to insulate judicial authorities from intimidation.

The compound was deliberately designed to facilitate legal processes and is located adjacent to both the Rusafa detention facility and Ministry of Interior office building. Similar compounds are being constructed in other high-density communities within Baghdad and across Iraq.

The successes are not without challenges for the two attorneys assigned to the MND-B Rule of Law team. Progress in Iraq's legal system is unhurried and can be frustrating. The slow tempo is compounded by the vastly different legal systems found in both the U.S. and Iraq.

The U.S. uses the common law system in which judges act as referees, precedents (past court decisions) bind future decisions, and the accused is innocent until proven guilty.

By contrast, Iraq employs the civil law system, which predominates in the rest of the world. In this system, judges interpret laws and codes individually, take an active role in investigations, and confessions are the primary form of evidence.

Though the civil law system may unsettle American sensibilities, Schellack noted that Iraqis are very comfortable with their brand of justice.

"It may seem complicated to us, but Iraqis love their system and have full confidence in it," said Schellack.

Challenges aside, Obringer and Schellack – both relatively recent graduates from law school – recognize that their role on the Rule of Law team is a rare opportunity.

"The Rule of Law is a massive concept that's hard to wrap your head around," said Obringer. "Even so, I find the work personally rewarding. To be able to help shape a nation's legal system is pretty amazing – even more so when I compare my work here to my peers back in the states."

Obringer's reference to a "massive concept" acknowledges how deeply and fundamentally a nation's legal infrastructure affects its citizens. In Iraq, it is further punctuated by the resiliency of the ancient Code of Hammurabi which, perhaps, illustrates the enduring human need for justice itself.

"The Rule of Law is a massive concept that's hard to wrap your head around. Even so, I find the work personally rewarding. To be able to help shape a nation's legal system is pretty amazing – even more so when I compare my work here to my peers back in the states."

Capt. William Obringer
lawyer
Rule of Law team, MND-B



U.S. Army photo by Maj. Lorraine Januzelli, MND-B PAO

Capt. William Obringer (left) and Capt. Keith Schellack are Army lawyers assigned to the Rule of Law Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad. The Rule of Law team supports the Government of Iraq and Provincial Reconstruction Team – Baghdad with modernizing the Iraqi legal system so that it is a sustainable part of the current legal infrastructure, respects the historical context, and is accepted by the culture.

Ivy Soldier dedicates life to country

By Sgt. David Hodge

1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

FORWARD OPERATING BASE FALCON, Iraq – A Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldier carried the seven Army Values with him everywhere he went, to include his household.

Staff Sgt. Jason Young, a wheeled-vehicle mechanic assigned to Company B, 4th Support Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, serves as the moral compass for his Family and role model to two other service-members.

A 15-year Army veteran, Young adopted his wife's three children after arriving at Fort Hood, Texas, more than nine years ago.

"When I met Susan, I always tried to instill the Army Values in the household," said Young, who hails from Plymouth, Ind.

Balancing the military and his Family was not always easy for the veteran of three deployments, and Young confesses that taking care of them was always a joint effort with his wife, Susan.

"It can become stressful trying to balance career and Family," Young explained. "The kids noticed my hard work and dedication, and I always stopped what I was doing for them."

Susan is a school teacher and a member of the Family Readiness Group program since 2001.

"Susan is the backbone of the Family," Young admitted. "If there is anything going on while I am away, she handles it."

Young seized an opportunity to fly from his base, Forward Operating Base Falcon in southern Baghdad, to attend his son's reenlistment ceremony.

Young's son, Cpl. Jason Young, extended his service to his country for another six years during a ceremony Nov. 14 at Camp Taji, north of Baghdad.

"It's really good to have my dad at my reenlistment," said Cpl. Young, a veteran of approximately 4.5 years.

"It was fun getting to show him where I work."

Cpl. Young, a U.S. Army AH-64 attack helicopter repairer with Company B, 1st Battalion, 4th Aviation Regiment, Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Inf. Div., said he takes pleasure in the opportunity to continue fixing aircraft.

"I am pretty happy," Cpl. Young stated. "I get to continue with what I want to do – fix Apaches."

He said he enjoys the Army life because it is structured, and his camaraderie between friends is special.

"I've been looking forward to serving in the Army ever since I was a kid, so I hope to make it another 20 years," said Cpl. Young, a native of Temple, Texas.

He also said he appreciates time spent with his dad, whether it's at the 4th Inf. Div.'s home in Fort Hood, Texas, or deployed.

"I don't get to hang out with him very often," the junior Young explained. "Back in the rear, we get weekends off and sometimes I pick up my son and hang out at my parent's house."

Cpl. Young said that he truly believes he is defining a better life for his Family and his son by serving his country.

"My son will be able to take pride and say, 'my dad's a Soldier,'" Cpl. Young said.

Staff Sgt. Young also has a 17-year-old daughter entering the Army as a CH-47 crew member after she graduates high school.

"My girl has always looked up to me," Young explained. "That makes me feel proud."

He recently signed a waiver form for Jordan to enter before her 18th birthday.

"I think my kids realized everything they needed was provided to them while they were growing up," Young said. "The military is a good living."

The Youngs are currently serving a combat deployment with the 4th Inf. Div., in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. David Hodge, 1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

Staff Sgt. Jason Young (left) shakes the hand of his son, Cpl. Jason Young, after his reenlistment at Camp Taji, Iraq, Nov. 14. Staff Sgt. Young is a wheeled-vehicle mechanic assigned to Company B, 4th Support Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, serving at Forward Operating Base Falcon in southern Baghdad's Rashid district. Cpl. Young is an AH-64 attack helicopter repairer assigned to Company B, 1st Battalion, 4th Aviation Regiment, Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Inf. Div. He reenlisted for six years and calls Temple, Texas, his home. Staff Sgt. Young is a 15-year veteran and hails from Plymouth, Ind.

1SG believes American Soldier represents goodness in many lives

By Sgt. 1st Class Brent Hunt

CAB PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – For one Multi-National Division – Baghdad senior enlisted Soldier, serving as an American Soldier represents the only goodness a lot of people around the world will ever know.

First Sgt. Albert Rodriguez, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th Battalion, 4th Aviation Regiment, Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, is proud of what he and his Soldiers personify around the world.

"For a lot of people in the world, American Soldiers are the only goodness a lot of people will ever know, the only bible a lot of people will never read, and the only example of America and freedom a lot of people will ever see," said the Oxnard, Calif., native, currently on his second deployment to Iraq.

"I am proud to serve because as a member of the U.S. Army, I am part of a long line of Soldiers who have fought and died for our freedom. In particular, I have had two uncles who gave their lives during World War II and the Vietnam conflict.

"When I reflect on what their experiences must have been like, I immediately appreciate all that is good in my life. I believe all Soldiers should be proud of who they are and what they are doing, regardless of their job. They have all sacrificed so much for our country and our freedom."

Rodriguez currently serves as the first sergeant for the "Gambler Guns" headquarters company. Many of his Sol-

diers are directly involved in the planning, operation and execution of the Apache helicopter battalion's mission around the greater Baghdad region.

His job is to coach, mentor and take care of Soldiers as they conduct their daily tasks in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. His company, currently deployed just north of the Iraqi capital on Camp Taji, uses the attack helicopters to directly affect the fight by protecting Soldiers on the ground with aerial support.

Although the job may seem overwhelming, many of Rodriguez's young Soldiers are performing like seasoned veterans.

"Every 15 minutes, I get a (situation report), so I can inform the commander on the mission. I am at the center of the information flow," said Cpl.

Jack Condon, 24, aviation operations specialist, who works in the battalion's tactical operations center. He hails from Catoosa, Okla.

Why I Serve



1st Sgt. Albert Rodriguez,
HHC, 4th Bn., 4th Avn. Regt.,
CAB, 4th Inf. Div.

"I ask for guidance from senior NCOs about what to do with a Soldier or a situation because every Soldier and situation is different," he said.

"That's how my NCOs are here, and I want to be the same."

As many Soldiers try to emulate their first sergeants, Rodriguez instills in them that taking care of Soldiers is an NCOs top priority. How Soldiers live while deployed reflects directly on their morale, the mission and esprit de corps.

"Clearly, one of the most positive changes I have seen since my last deployment is the quality of life for our Soldiers, who definitely deserve it," said Rodriguez, who was part of the initial invasion in March 2003.

"The standard of living has been raised so high that we can never go back to the way it used to be. I only hope these young guys and girls appreciate what they have because trying

to describe to a young Soldier what it is like to live on a cot for six months is like trying to describe the days without the Internet – unimaginable."

4th-ranked Gators send #4 Jersey to their #1 fan in 4th Inf. Div.

By **Spc. Douglas York**

MND-B PAO

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – Loyalty, some people argue, can be as fleeting as the wind or as firm as a high-reaching mountain, depending on the situation and all of the mitigating circumstances involved.

One such aspect that can try anyone's loyalty is a great physical distance dividing that person from that which they are trying to be loyal to.

Serious as the subject is in the realm of collegiate athletics, loyalties and team rivalries can be fierce. The 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, is known to be a division dedicated to college football and is full of fierce fans, perhaps none more so than one particular fan of the Florida Gators.

“Go Gators!” said an enthusiastic Sgt. 1st Class Harry Faust, a native of Belle Glade, Fla., who serves as the senior network controller and battle noncommissioned officer for the division's Network Operations Section, assigned to Company C, Division Special Troops Battalion, 4th Infantry Division and Multi-National Division – Baghdad. “We have the 'Gator Chomp' going on all the way in Baghdad,” he said, making the hand and arm gestures that fans and students of the University of Florida Gators do when attending football games in Gainesville.

Faust is a 22-year Army veteran, the last three of those years having been with the Ironhorse Division's NETOPS Section, and considers himself as the Gators' biggest fan in all of MND-B. As a result, he felt it necessary to do his part to “enhance” the division's headquarters building where various schools' jerseys with the number four on them line the walls.

“With me being an avid Florida Gators fan and looking at all of the jerseys that are on the wall here, I didn't see any jerseys from Florida,” Faust said. “Florida is probably the best football team there is out there in the country right now, and I thought that it was only fair that they should be represented by the best division there is in the United States Army.”



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Whitney Houston, MND-B PAO

Sgt. 1st Class Harry Faust (right), a native of Belle Glade, Fla., stands next to Maj. Gen. Jeffery Hammond, a former quarterback for the Southern Miss. Golden Eagles, holding a University of Florida jersey Nov. 21.

Wanting to solve this “problem,” he took matters into his own hands and decided to start sending e-mails to the people who could help solve the dilemma.

“I wrote to the school requesting a jersey from them so that it could be placed on the wall here at the division headquarters,” Faust said. “I wrote directly to the head coach, Urban Meyer, and his administrator responded back to me at first saying that the coach only has two number four jerseys and that he's going to need both of those but that ‘as soon as the season is over with, we will get a jersey out to you,’” he added.

With the football season not ending until the first week in January, Faust's idea was seemingly not going to pan out, given the short timeframe the division has until it returns home in the early part of 2009. However, as luck and a little extra effort would have it, all was not lost.

“Shortly after that though, I was e-mailed by the director of athletics equipment,” Faust said. “He said that he did find a jersey for me and to give him my mailing address and he would

mail it out to me.”

With the jersey safely in hand, Faust knew that for his school's jersey to have any chance of being displayed he would have to write an email directly to the division's most noteworthy college football fan and a former Southern Mississippi University quarterback, Maj. Gen. Jeffery Hammond, a native of Hattiesburg, Miss., commanding general of 4th Inf. Div. and MND-B.

The response he received from the division's “QB” was like a sweet pass on a crossing-route over the middle of the field.

“I knew with (Maj. Gen. Hammond) being a big college football fan that he would understand where I was coming from,” Faust said, of his decision to email Hammond directly. “I don't think anybody else would have understood where I was coming from except the ‘man’ himself.”

Scoring a touchdown of sorts, Hammond responded to Faust's e-mail immediately and praised him for the gesture, promising to facilitate the request with all due diligence. In fact, as it turns out, the former “Golden Eagle” is also a Gators' fan – or at very least an admirer.

“I really do (think they're a good team),” Hammond said to Faust. “I don't think there's a better team in college football.”

Faust naturally agreed with Hammond on this point and elaborated further.

“The thing with the Gators is that they believe in taking it all the way, and I believe they're going to take it all the way,” Faust said, of the team's national championship aspirations. “I don't think there's a team out there right now that competes with them on the field.”

With the gift being graciously accepted by Hammond, another situation arose and unfortunately it is one that cannot be remedied until the division is safely home.

“Unfortunately, because of time restrictions, there isn't enough time to send the jersey back to the states to get it framed to be put on the wall here (in Iraq),” Faust said.

However, Hammond was quick to reassure Faust that the gift would be displayed with full honor back home.

Combat-tested infantryman maintains positive outlook

By **2nd Lt. Jack Pinney**

Co. A, 2nd Bn., 30th Inf. Regt., 4th BCT, 10th Mtn. Div.

FORWARD OPERATING BASE LOYALTY, Iraq – Through two deployments and multiple enemy engagements, one infantryman has maintained his positive outlook as one of the longest tenured 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division Soldiers.

Spc. Kevin Randall, a team leader from Oklahoma City, assigned to Company A, 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, has seen his share of Fort Polk, La., and the Middle East since the birth of the Patriot brigade in 2004. During his time as a 2nd Bn., 30th Inf. Regt. “Wild Boar” Soldier, he has participated in numerous Joint Readiness Training Center rotations and deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq.

Though he has been involved in multiple enemy engagements, including small-arms fire, improvised-explosive device attacks and explosively formed penetrator attacks, Randall has maintained a cheery disposition and constant positive outlook in every situation. His platoon has a running joke about the fear of riding with him, Soldiers would never suspect his many enemy encounters through his chipper attitude and unwavering smile.

Randall's attitude extends beyond staying cheerful. The Oklahoma City native has gained the respect of not only the members in his own platoon, but also with Soldiers throughout the entire company.

“He's an outstanding worker” and “one of the hardest working Soldiers in the company.” Said Staff Sgt. David Rocheleau, of Monroe, Mich.

Even though Rocheleau has never been in the same platoon as Randall, he said he knows him well through Randall's charming reputation.

“In the worst situations he is always smiling,” said Rocheleau.

Throughout the more than four years he has spent in Co. A, Randall has remained a source of light heartedness within his platoon. His squad leader, Staff Sgt. Justin Miller from London, Ky., expressed bafflement about Randall remaining upbeat in light of the amount of adversity he has faced.

“He's stop-lossed (involuntarily extended past his expiration of term of service),” said Miller, adding that even though Randall has faced numerous dangerous situations throughout his deployment time: “He's still smiling.”

‘Mr. Fix It’ keeps JSS Adil operational

“This is how I get up in the morning. I take sincere pride in the fact that this JSS is considered one of the best in Iraq.”

Spc. Guy Monighetti
Suffield, Conn.

2nd HBCT PAO, 1st Inf. Div.

JSS ADIL, Iraq – His is a well-known name to his fellow Soldiers living in an abandoned five-story Iraqi mall called Joint Security Station Adil in northwest Baghdad.

Known for his handy work and ability to fix pretty much anything from plumbing to electrical outlets, Spc. Guy Monighetti, from Suffield, Conn., is the man for the job no matter what needs to be fixed.

“Not only does he keep this place running, but he really enjoys keeping all Soldiers at JSS Adil content,” said 2nd Lt. Christopher Fields, 4th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, attached to the 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

Monighetti said he enjoys taking care of his fellow troops.

“I just care about the little things – the things that no one back home thinks about, said Monighetti. “I try and keep these Soldiers happy; that's all.”

No job is too little or too big, from fixing air-conditioner units to fixing rusted corroding pipes, light fixtures to shower trailers, Monighetti will solve the problem.

A 12-year Army veteran with a six year break in service, he spent his time as a forward observer for artillery fire; now, Monighetti keeps busy in Iraq by building shelves and tables.

Taking the positions of three Soldiers, Monighetti

makes up the entire repairs and utilities section.

“This is how I get up in the morning. I take sincere pride in the fact that this JSS is considered one of the best in Iraq,” said Monighetti.

Sure, he does not see all the action or get all the glory, but Monighetti directly supports those who do. One can say he is similar to an offensive lineman: everyone knows they are there but very few pay attention to them. He does the behind the scenes job up in some dark corner, covered in dirt and spider webs, trying to run electrical wires to offices and rooms. There is never a shortage of work for him.

Very few times is Monighetti seen without a ladder or a tool bag in the JSS. He said his pride comes from the comfort the Soldiers have when they return from missions and come back to hot meals, hot showers, cool rooms and working utilities. His knowledge that Soldiers come to him for help with their broken doors, busted lights and little upgrades to their rooms keeps him motivated.

Prior to his arrival at JSS Adil Monighetti, he admits he didn't know half of what he knows now about electrical work or plumbing. Although there are some jobs that require a higher skill set than he possesses, he is right there beside the contractors when they come to tackle these tasks – providing whatever assistance he can and improving his knowledge base for “next time.”

“It is my job to keep this place running – and run it shall,” said Monighetti.

4th Inf. Div. expresses thanks to Families during Town Hall meeting

By Pfc. Lyndsey Dransfield
MND-B PAO

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – Soldiers and leaders of the 4th Infantry Division and Multi-National Division – Baghdad gathered at the Media Operations Center on Camp Liberty for the monthly 4th Inf. Div. Town Hall meeting Nov. 26.

Maj. Gen. Jeffery Hammond, a Hattiesburg, Miss., native, commanding general of 4th Inf. Div. and MND-B, along with co-hosts Col. Butch Kievenaar, commander of 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Inf. Div.; Lt. Col. Dave Hill, commander of 1st Special Troops Battalion, 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div.; and Command Sgt. Maj. Archie Davis, senior enlisted leader of 4th Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Inf. Div., talked to Soldiers and Families at Fort Hood, Texas, and Fort Carson, Colo., through a live broadcast themed around the Thanksgiving holiday.

“This month, the month of Thanksgiving, as we think about Family and those we care about, let’s not forget what we are doing here,” Hammond stated in his opening comments. “We are moving along quite well and succeeding, but it has come at a cost – the lives of 88 men, one (woman), and over 600 wounded (Soldiers).”

“But each day is one step forward, and we are fighting this fight with fire in our belly. I couldn’t be more proud of this group. This is the best it gets in terms of people and quality, right here in the 4th Inf. Div.”

Along with Hammond, all who spoke expressed their thanks to the Soldiers who choose to serve and what it means to serve with support of Family back home.

“The thing I am most thankful for are the Families; they are the true heroes of this war.” Kievenaar explained to the viewers. “You are the ones that share all the burdens and make all the sacrifices. We can never repay you for the sacrifices you make but we can thank you every chance we get.”

The first group of guest speakers during the Town Hall Meeting included a father and son team, along with two married couples, all currently deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Staff Sgt. Jason Young, a native of Plymouth, Ind., who serves as the noncommissioned officer in charge of entry control point expansion with Company B, 4th Support Battalion, 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div., spoke about the ongoing support of his Family.

“(My wife) was put on this Earth to be a military spouse and has been the backbone of my career. She has spent countless hours at the kids’ sporting events, band concerts and ROTC functions without my presence. She’s always said to me that I should bleed Ivy green,” he said with a smile.

Young’s son, Cpl. Jason Young, of Temple, Texas, who serves as an Apache maintenance NCO with Co. B, 1st Attack Reconnaissance Bn., 4th Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Inf. Div., explained how he followed his father’s footsteps to pursue a life-long fascination with Apache helicopters and has performed his job over the course of two deployments to Iraq.

The next guests who spoke were Staff Sgt. Robert Dominguez, a Tucson, Ariz., native, who serves as an avia-

tion troop medical clinic shift leader with Headquarters Support Co., 404th Air Support Bn., 4th CAB, and his wife Sgt. Jamiell Dominguez, of Seattle, who serves as medical section NCOIC with Headquarters Co., 2nd General Support Bn., 4th CAB. Both are also serving their second tour in Iraq.

“We are spending our first year of marriage in Iraq. We consider it to be a very long honeymoon,” Jamiell said. “We realize how lucky we are to be together during the holidays, and we count our blessings each day that we have each other.”

“Thanksgiving is a time to reflect on what we are grateful for in our lives,” added Robert. “We are grateful for the freedoms we’re granted as citizens of the United States of America, and we’re grateful to work with our nation’s finest Soldiers. As a Family, we’re committed to serving side-by-side to take care of our United States Army’s Soldiers and their Families.”

The last couple to speak was Sgt. 1st Class Julie Burgin, a native of Almelund, Minn., who serves as maintenance supervisor with HSC, Division Special Troops Battalion, 4th Inf. Div., and her husband, Sgt. 1st Class Kevin Burgin, of Atlanta, Texas, who serves as NCOIC of the administrative section, division operations section, 4th Inf. Div.

“We feel very fortunate to be here together. Due to the prior assignments – both as drill sergeants and recruiters – it is nice to be able to actually spend time together, almost like getting to know each other all over again,” said Julie.

Although they have faced some challenges, they said that everything has fallen into place and seems to be working out so far.

“Being here together has made us stronger as a couple,” said Kevin. “We know that we are fortunate to be here together compared to most Soldiers that are separated from their loved ones, which makes all of the things that we have to deal with here, and back home, a very small price to pay.”

Following their words, Sgt. 1st Class Mack Julien, a New Orleans native, who serves as an enlisted advisor to Hammond, and Al Abdelazim, of Fort Hood, Texas, who serves as Hammond’s cultural advisor, walked the viewers through a traditional Iraqi feast of thanks, presenting them with original Iraqi dishes and the history behind Iraq’s holiday similar to Thanksgiving, known as the Great Feast.

“When the Families get together, they have amazing cuisines that are prepared for 30-40 people,” explained Al.

After learning the Arabic names for salad, turkey, pita bread and several other dishes, Chief Warrant Officer 4 Sharon McCray, of Fort Worth, Texas, who serves as the food advisor with 4th Inf. Div. and MND-B, reassured the Soldier’s Families that while their loved ones may be far from home, they won’t be far from abundant amounts of food.

“We required roughly fifty 40-foot semi trailers to deliver Thanksgiving Day decorations and food items from Kuwait,” McCray said. “I have to break it down to give you an idea of the amount of food items that have been shipped to Iraq to ensure your spouse receives the best Thanksgiving meal available.”

The last guest speaker was Cpt. Charley Mahle, who serves as company commander for HSC, DSTB, 4th Inf. Div. She spoke to the viewers about the opening of the new section in the Ironhorse Oasis dining facility that will be able to seat



U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Lyndsey Dransfield, MND-B PAO

Al Abdelazim (left), who serves as a cultural advisor to Maj. Gen. Jeffery Hammond, commander of 4th Infantry Division and Multi-National Division – Baghdad, and Sgt. 1st Class Mack Julien, a New Orleans native, who serves as an enlisted advisor to Hammond, walked the viewers through a traditional Iraqi feast of thanks, presenting them with original Iraqi dishes and the history behind Iraq’s holiday similar to Thanksgiving, known as the Great Feast, during the monthly 4th Inf. Div. Town Hall Meeting Nov. 26.

more than 300 more Soldiers. The expansion will provide additional space as well as two specialty rooms that can be reserved for events.

“The final room is what we’ve named our “Steadfast and Loyal Remembrance Room,” Mahle said. “This room will be dedicated tomorrow (Nov. 26) to three of our fallen Soldiers and will serve as a constant reminder to us of the sacrifices they made for our freedoms.”

After all the speakers finished, the floor was opened to questions from the Soldiers and Families back in the States.

Many topics of discussion were presented, such as the move to Fort Carson, Colo., post deployment concerns, the progress of security in Baghdad, and the response Iraq has had with the U.S. presidential elections.

Hammond concluded the meeting by expressing his gratitude to the Families and his pride in their strength along with the strength and unity of the Ironhorse Soldiers.

“It’s hard being at war. It’s harder being a Family with a Soldier at war, and it’s harder being a Family with a Soldier at war during times like Thanksgiving,” he said. “I would love to be in Mississippi with my Family right now, but to be honest, this year I think we would rather be here with each other, shoulder to shoulder, back to back.”

As the success of the meeting settled in the minds of all who tuned in, the 4th Inf. Div. Band played the Division March and the participants sang along with pride.



U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Lyndsey Dransfield, MND-B PAO

Newlyweds Staff Sgt. Robert Dominguez and Sgt. Jamiell Dominguez, both serving with the Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, speak to viewers about their experience spending their first year of marriage as deployed Soldiers in Iraq

Brothers reunite for reenlistment

Younger sibling renews commitment days before Thanksgiving

By Sgt. Brian Tierce

2nd HBCT, 1st Inf. Div. PAO

BAGHDAD – Philadelphia is considered the city of brotherly love.

And although it is approximately 6,074 miles as the crow flies from Philadelphia to Baghdad, that didn't stop two brothers from joining together to commemorate their commitment to service.

Such was the case Nov. 25 as Capt. Gerald Rebeschini, reunited with his younger brother, Cpl. Ken Potenga, and presided over his reenlistment Nov. 25 at Camp Liberty.

Rebeschini, a native of Grosse Point, Mich., serves as an information operations officer with 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad. Cpl. Ken Potenga, his younger brother who also calls Grosse Point his home, serves with Company C, 1st Battalion, 125th Infantry Regiment, which is a Michigan Army National Guard unit currently attached to Task Force Ramadi of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force.

Their deployment marks the first time in their careers that the two have been deployed to the same theater of operations. When Ken made the decision to reenlist, he knew just the right person for the job.

"When I originally talked about it with my first sergeant, I thought it was something that only happened in movies," said Potenga. "But now that it actually happened, it feels really good. I wouldn't have it any other way."

The ceremony was conducted right inside of Entry Control Point four on Camp Liberty was a far reach from other lavish places many Soldiers choose for their oath of enlistment. But for these brothers in arms, it's not about



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Brian Tierce, 2nd HBCT, 1st Inf. Div. PAO

Capt. Gerald Rebeschini, (right) a native of Grosse Point, Mich., who serves as an information operations officer with 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, meets up with his younger brother, Cpl. Ken Potenga, who also calls Grosse Point his home, serves with Company C, 1st Battalion, 125th Infantry Regiment, which is a Michigan Army National Guard unit currently attached to Task Force Ramadi of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force. Rebeschini conducted a reenlistment ceremony Nov. 25 for his younger brother just inside Entry Control Point Four on Camp Liberty.

where you are but rather who you share the moment with.

"Reenlisting my brother in Iraq is a unique opportunity that doesn't happen every day," said Rebeschini. "This is defiantly a picture that will be up on mom's mantle for quite a while."

For Potenga, the moment couldn't have come at a better time since his tour of duty in

Iraq will soon be over. He said he already has a short list of things planned upon his return to the states.

"We'll be back just in time for Christmas," said Potenga, "I'll get in the holiday spirit, have Christmas and then take a vacation."

For the elder brother, who is just getting his 12-month tour underway, he said going home is the farthest thing from his mind but

the pride of knowing his brother is making a commitment to stay Army Strong is one he won't soon forget.

"He's made a big choice. There is a lot of pride about serving together in Iraq," said Rebeschini.

"It's a unique opportunity that doesn't come by every day and I'm glad I could be here to do the reenlistment for him."

Twins proudly serve, defend country with Iraqi army

By Sgt. Zach Mott

3rd BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

JOINT SECURITY STATION UR, Iraq – They stand an imposing presence in a sparsely decorated containerized housing unit. That image grows more ominous as they don their protective gear for another mission.

Then, just as quickly as the fear crept in, it's gone. One simple gesture eases all nervousness: a smile. And that smile fills the room.

For Privates Kareem and Munir Khameel Obid, who both stand nearly six-and-a-half feet tall and weigh more than 225 pounds, serving in the Iraqi Army is a chance to protect the people they saw being victimized by terrorists.

"At that time, we hated (the terrorists) because we saw them killing the innocent people without a reason," said Kareem, who serves alongside his brother in the Iraqi Army's 5th Company, 2nd Battalion, 44th Brigade, 11th Division. "We are very lucky because now we are working here against the (terrorists) and with the Coalition Forces."

The brothers, who hail from al Hillah, worked various jobs following the invasion in 2003 before joining the Iraqi Army earlier this year.

"I tried to join the Army before that but my parents wouldn't let me because they were scared of the bad people," Kareem said.

Now, after training together in Taji and

working with Coalition Forces in Bayji, Kar-eem and Munir work as bodyguards for Capt. Sa'ad Khamel Abdul Sitar, their company commander.

"When we have any order, they do it without discussion," Sa'ad said of the twins' dedication to their duty.

The 5th Company is based out of Joint Security Station Ur in northeastern Baghdad and works to contain Special Groups in the Sadr City area.

"I like to do missions because I don't like to sit around. I can't stay here for a day. I need to go on missions every day," said Munir.

The brothers both said they have seen progress in placating the violence that once plagued this part of the capital. They're both hopeful for a bright future for the country they proudly call home.

"The situation in Iraq is getting better because the people on the streets are talking to us and they are approaching us," Munir said. "They are honest with us. The situation in my country is getting better every day."

Standing proudly next to each other, the brothers are nearly impossible to differentiate. Both flash the same bright smile and both have the same, fill a doorway physique. Master Sgt. Nassar, the Soldiers' enlisted leader, offers one suggestion.

"I have an order for them: somebody has to grow a mustache," Nassar said.



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Zach Mott, 3rd BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

Twin brothers, Privates Kareem (left) and Munir Khameel Obid, who serve as part of the security detachment for 5th Company, 2nd Battalion, 44th Brigade, 11th Iraqi Army Division, pose near a humvee between missions at Joint Security Station Ur in northeastern Baghdad.



Spc. Douglas York

By Spc. Douglas York
MND-B PAO

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – “Yesterday, December 7th, 1941 – a date which will live in infamy – the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan,” said our nation’s 32nd president, Franklin D. Roosevelt, during his famous speech the day after the horrific attacks on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

Since that day, many things have occurred, many wars and skirmishes have transpired and many films about those wars have been made. Yet for most people, particularly servicemembers, few war films evoke sneers and jeers as much as one film, released nearly 60 years after the infamous events transpired.

I, of course, am talking about “Pearl Harbor,” the 2001 historical war-fiction film, distributed by Touchstone Pictures, directed by Michael Bay and starring a large ensemble cast, including actors Ben Affleck (Lt. Rafe McCawley), Josh Hartnett (Lt. Danny Walker), and actress Kate Beckinsale (Navy nurse Lt. Evelyn Johnson) in one of her first major roles.

The film also co-stars Academy Award winning actors Cuba Gooding Jr. (Sailor Doris Miller) and Jon Voight (President Franklin D. Roosevelt), as well as Alec Baldwin (Lt. Col. Jimmy Doolittle) and actress Jennifer Garner (Navy nurse Sandra), who was also making her first noteworthy appearance. Actor Dan Aykroyd also makes a brief appearance as Capt. Thurman from the Office of Naval Intelligence.

Including its noteworthy cast, the film was produced by director Michael Bay and Jerry Bruckheimer, who had previously worked together on the summer blockbusters “Armageddon” and “The Rock.”

The beginning of the film centers on McCawley and Walker circa late-1930s, best friends and first lieutenants in the U.S. Army Air Corps.

They are stationed together at a training field commanded by Doolittle, who was a major at the time. Instantly we can tell that McCawley is confident and brash, and we watch as he and the more reluctant Walker do a particularly dangerous stunt – a game of chicken – that almost kills both of them and almost damages their aircraft. As a result, the two are called into Doolittle’s office, where they are reprimanded.

Doolittle, however, is actually quite impressed with McCawley’s talents and moments later proudly tells McCawley that he has been accepted to go to Britain and join the Eagle Squadron, a unit of volunteer American pilots serving with the British Royal Air Force in its fight against Nazi Germany.

America had not entered World War II at this time, and since the assignment was strictly voluntary, Doolittle tells McCawley that it’s his duty to talk him out of it. McCawley then asks Doolittle what he would do, and Doolittle says in no uncertain terms that he would go and serve, to which McCawley agrees.

Prior to McCawley leaving, however, there is a big military ball in New York City where several Navy nurses will be attending. On the way to the ball, one of them, Johnson (Beckinsale), is telling a story to the other nurses of how she first met McCawley while assessing his fitness to fly.

According to Johnson, McCawley is dyslexic and has difficulty reading the letters on an eye-test chart and would have failed the vision test had Johnson not felt sorry for and provided him with a passing score anyway.

Using the connection they shared during the, ahem, examinations, McCawley convinces the reluctant Johnson to go out with him and she tells her traveling companions that the two have been together now for four weeks and two days.

Shifting to the dance, McCawley tells Johnson that in the



Doug's 'dig' on Hollywood:

Bad ‘Pearl’ finds value via memories it harbors



morning he will be leaving for England. They share a tearful good-bye at night’s end after which he ships off.

Meanwhile, Johnson, Walker and other featured officers get transferred to safe and actionless Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

The movie then shifts its focus to Japan. From this point we see Japanese Navy Admiral Yamamoto planning the attack on Pearl Harbor by sending fake codes to confuse U.S. intelligence and showing his staff the new torpedo invention their aircraft would use during the attack.

With the attack on Pearl Harbor now imminent, the movie bounces back to McCawley in England.

His squadron is alerted and asked to ward off a Nazi air strike, and McCawley shows off his flying skills by helping his comrades partially blow up one German aircraft and shoot down two others.

Moments later though, McCawley is shot down. With his cockpit in flames, he tries to ditch his plane in the Atlantic. He attempts to bail out only to become stuck when the canopy jams. Back in Hawaii, Walker and Johnson are informed that McCawley is presumed killed in action and the news leaves both of them heartbroken, particularly Johnson, as her love-interest may be deceased.

Three months later while separately attending the same movie, Walker and Johnson see a newsreel that shows British fighters being shot down by the Nazis. Thinking of McCawley, they both coincidentally leave the theater and accidentally run into each other out front of the building. They strike up a friendship again, which eventually leads to a romantic after-hours flight.

From here many twists and turns unfold, including ignored warnings by Capt. Thurman (Aykroyd) and radar stations left unmanned, culminating with the dreadful attack. It is during the attack that we see the non-fictional character Seaman Miller (Gooding Jr.) make his brief but heroic appearance attempting to save his buddies.

Their relatively easy duty assignment now in full chaos, Johnson and the other nurses, including Sandra (Garner), are working frantically with masses of incoming casualties, having to prioritize which lives can be saved and who receives priority care.

Walker and a few of the pilots who survived the initial strike make it to their Army auxiliary airfield and manage to get their aircraft moving and try to fend off the Japanese Zeroes. Eventually they succeed, and though the remaining

Japanese aircraft retreat, several of Walker’s friends are killed in action.

The next day, President Roosevelt gives his famous speech and war is declared on Japan – and subsequently on Germany. Although it will be several months before the United States is a factor in World War II, President Roosevelt wants to send a message to the Japanese that their homeland is not immune from bombing.

Walker (now a Capt.) is assigned to Doolittle (now promoted to Lt. Col.) for a top-secret mission. Johnson, meanwhile, reveals a “top secret” of her own to a friend but has not yet told the secret to Walker. Before he leaves though, Johnson and Walker kiss and she tells him that she loves him and that she will be waiting for him.

“Doolittle’s Raid,” as the top-secret mission would come to be called, involved the Army Air Corps using streamlined and scaled-down B-25 Mitchell bombers loaded onto the aircraft carrier USS Hornet. It was intended to bomb Tokyo and land in Allied-friendly China.

If you’ve seen this film, you already know the details I’m choosing to leave out for obvious reasons, and as you’ve come to know by now, I never reveal a movie’s twists, turns or endings. I like to give just enough to entice.

“Pearl Harbor” was lauded for its special effects and editing at Oscar time. However, the performances of its stars (except Baldwin), its plot and historical accuracy were and have been attacked, loathed and hated by critics and movie watchers around the nation.

Like any historical drama, the film takes its artistic liberties and often goes over-board – pun-intended – to evoke emotions from the audience. That being said, it is those attempts to inspire thought and emotion which provided the film its saving grace for me.

Negating the often silly performances, I think the most important aspect of this or any attempt at making a film in this genre is that it makes the viewer remember the sacrifices, the blood, the sweat and tears that have been shed to provide the freedoms many of us take for granted.

McCawley, Walker and the rest may be fictional characters but their heroism and what they represent about “America’s Finest” should be enough to make me or any of my modern-day brothers- and sisters-in-arms want to serve with folks like them. In turn, the valor of fictional characters like these should be enough to remind those of us in uniform of what we represent.

Looking back now, seven years later, I distinctly remember seeing this film after coming home from advanced individual training. Despite the film’s many cheesy moments, I left the theater feeling proud of the decision that I had made to join the ranks and stand side-by-side with many fantastic individuals.

Films like “Pearl Harbor” may be works of fiction, but the events of Pearl Harbor, 9/11, the Alamo, Gettysburg, Vietnam and others happened.

“World War II, for us, began at Pearl Harbor and 1,177 men still lie entombed in the battleship Arizona,” Johnson says in a voice-over just before the credits roll.

“America suffered, but America grew stronger. The times tried our souls, and through the trial, we overcame,” she finishes.

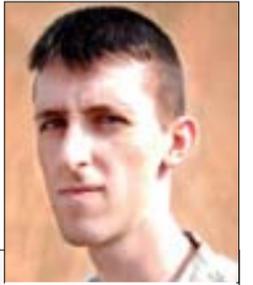
However, the “real” President Roosevelt said it best on that December day, sixty-seven years ago.

“With confidence in our armed forces, with the unbounding determination of our people, we will gain the inevitable triumph, so help us God.”

Keeping that confidence, that spirit and that determination in mind, perhaps many of you will understand why I give this film – despite its many shortcomings – three chevrons and two rockers.

If you would like me to consider a movie for future review or to give feedback on these films or these reviews, feel free to email me at mndb_pao@yahoo.com.

Hot Titles! Top 5 best games of 2008



Sgt. Jason Thompson

By Sgt. Jason Thompson
MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – Last issue I discussed five video games for all buyers to beware of while shopping for Christmas gifts this season. Now I would like to help those who are searching for the absolute perfect titles that I believe should be a part of every video game library.

This was a difficult task to narrow down the best of the best for this year as there were many really good games released in 2008.

1 Fallout 3



Fallout 3 is a special videogame. It's an open-world role-playing game that delivers an experience unlike anything on the market right now. It's a gripping and expansive showcase of how much depth and excitement can be packed into one videogame, and it does justice to the Fallout franchise. This sequel is the first made by Bethesda, the developers responsible for The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion. You don't need to play any of their past games or any previous Fallout games to enjoy this one. It stands on its own as a memorable and well-crafted videogame.

It's rare that a game can hit the mark in so many different and often conflicting areas. Fallout 3 offers freedom without sacrificing a focused story. It delivers fantastic combat without forgoing a deep role-playing system. The characters you meet are engaging and oftentimes hilarious without feeling out of place in this harsh world. The game has a few flaws, most of them technical, but it's a case where the whole is greater than the sum. It's a fantastic game with incredible atmosphere that offers fun in so many different ways that you're almost sure to get hooked.

2 Gears of War 2



Epic Games clearly has huge act to follow with Gears of War 2. The original wasn't just a stunning example of visual fidelity on Xbox 360, it also set a number of gameplay benchmarks for future shooters to follow; the cover system shifted up standard shooter gameplay, while co-op as standard was also an important inclusion. Neither of these were new, of course, but Gears of War made them effortless and absolutely integral to the experience.

With Gears 2, Epic didn't set out to re-invent the wheel, so there's definitely the potential for the ravenous hordes (including myself) to feel a sense of game-play déjà vu. On the other hand, Epic really doesn't need to shift things up dramatically.

Gears of War 2 is quite a ride, and once you're done with the single player story you've still got the new Horde mode to play, not to mention a wealth of options in multiplayer. It's well worth the price of admission, in other words; just don't expect the perfect shooter. Epic made a lot of good calls with Gears 2, but one can't help but think that the team is still honing its level design, its pacing, its combat and its storytelling. Should be one hell of a third installment.

3 Rock Band 2



Harmonix launched music games into a whole new arena with the release of Rock Band last year. No longer did music games have to be about just playing the drums or the guitar or singing. All three elements were merged together into a cohesive and thoroughly enjoyable package. But while Rock Band was a breath of fresh air, it did have some issues. With the release of Rock Band 2 less than a year after the original, Harmonix addresses many of the past concerns and adds an awesome new online mode, certain to keep gamers rockin' for another year.

Rock Band 2 improves in several areas over the original. The track list is better, the difficulty has been bumped up, it's more accessible, all previously released DLC works from the get-go, and Battle of the Bands is a brilliant online mode.

That said, music game fans would be absolutely crazy not to buy Rock Band 2. Even if you hate a few of the songs on disc, you are still getting an incredible deal. It's less than a dollar a song, with an extra 20 available downloadable free online. That's just too good to pass up.

4 Call of Duty: World at War

War never changes. While the weapons and tactics may differ, it's still about chaos and fear and the overwhelming of the senses as adrenaline surges through your veins. That's a hard experience to capture on a screen, but the Call of Duty series comes close thanks to its constant redefinition of what "11" is in terms of intensity for first-person shooters.

Last year's Call of Duty: Modern Warfare delivered an awesome and varied single-player experience that was matched with an even better multiplayer suite, and it made for some really big shoes for Call of Duty: World at War to fill.

It's easy to be jaded about World War II shooters, but this game made a convincing argument to stay excited. The game is packed with a deep amount of gameplay to appeal to every type of player, from those who want to experience a gritty single-player campaign to those who like to play with their friends to those who just like to play multiplayer. This is a solid, confident shooter with plenty to offer the casual and hardcore alike.

And the number one game of the year comes with a strong warning, "This game is not for the younger crowds and parents should use caution when purchasing for their children." With that being said ...



Grand Theft Auto IV

Criminals are an ugly, cowardly lot more worthy of pity and disdain than admiration. This is what you'll learn playing through the single-player campaign in Rockstar's Grand Theft Auto IV. The series cheered (and criticized) for glorifying violence has taken an unexpected turn: it's gone legit. Oh sure, you'll still blow up cop cars, run down innocent civilians, bang hookers, assist drug dealers and lowlifes and do many, many other bad deeds, but at a cost to main character Niko Bellic's very soul. GTA IV gives us characters and a world with a level of depth previously unseen in gaming and elevates its story from a mere shoot-em-up to an Oscar-caliber drama. Every facet of Rockstar's new masterpiece is worthy of applause. Without question, Grand Theft Auto IV is the best game since Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time.

Grand Theft Auto III was a revolutionary title, one that inspired a whole new generation of 3D action games. Grand Theft Auto IV is just as big a leap forward, though perhaps in subtler ways, and sets a new benchmark for open-world games. Everything in GTA IV works in harmony. The story would be nothing without the city; the city gains realism from the physics engine; the physics complement the improved AI; the AI would make no sense without the new cover system. And on and on. There is no one major weak aspect.

A perfect "10" is not a score I'd give out very often. A 10 doesn't mean a game is perfect – it means a game is pushing boundaries, expanding a genre, and doing many things to a level so far above and beyond its competitors that they overshadow any flaws. Certainly, GTA IV has some issues, the most noticeable being the occasional flaw in the cover system, but there are many more pieces of GTA IV that are better than anything I've seen from a game in the past decade. I don't give perfect scores often – just to games that merit the score.

I could go on and on about why Grand Theft Auto IV is one of the best games I've ever seen and why even folks who are easily offended should play it, but that would be pointless. The only thing you need to know is that you have to play this game. Period.

Other top games of the year that just missed the list:

- ♦ Guitar Hero World Tour, Mercenaries, Madden and NCAA Football 09, Mario Kart Wii, Grid and Pure.

Small grass patch brings touch of home to Strikers

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE WAR EAGLE, Iraq – It was a Sunday and approximately 15 Soldiers of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, gathered on a small patch of grass at Forward Operating Base War Eagle – ready for battle. The Soldiers split into the blue and green squads; they had their mission and their goal was in sight.

The green squad kicked off the action.

“It’s football. It’s about as American as it gets,” said Sgt. Justin Buck, a native of Wilson, Okla., who serves as a brigade fire support non-commissioned officer with Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 3rd BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

Toward the end of September, a small patch of grass was installed at the FOB; shortly afterward, the Soldiers started playing ball.

“Sundays ... a lot of people have down time; there’s nothing to break up that monotony. It’s such a small FOB – it’s not like you can escape anything and get out of the usual areas,” said Staff Sgt. Keith Reiss, a native of Colorado Springs, Colo., who serves in the supply section, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Special Troops Battalion, 3rd BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

Reiss and others tried to start a flag football league; they had all the necessary equipment; unfortunately, the operational tempo made it impossible. Instead, a small core group of players meet every Sunday – walk-ons are always welcome – and play for a few hours, until it becomes too dark to see the ball. They have only missed a few weeks.

This week’s game began like all the rest; two captains picking players at random.

Blue received the kickoff and proceeded to drive down the short field for a touchdown. Green, on its first possession, drove down the field and tied the score.

Five minutes of game time had passed.

Blue received the kickoff and proceeded to drive down the field, only to have a pass intercepted. Green capitalized on this for a second score.

The game then turned ugly for Blue. Green proceeded to hold Blue scoreless while racking up 5 unanswered touchdowns in 15 minutes.

After 20 minutes of playing time, it was over. Final score Green 6, Blue 1.

New teams were picked and the Soldiers started playing again.

“It’s something normal,” said Buck. “It’s a couple hours out of the week that I can feel like I’m back home.”

Pfc. Taimak Moore, a native of Camden, N.J., who serves as a generator mechanic, Company B, 3rd Special Troops Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, runs towards the end zone after receiving a handoff during a weekly football game at Forward Operating Base War Eagle. The brigade installed a small grass field for recreational purposes. Since then, the Soldiers have held a weekly football game – operational tempo permitting.



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Jerry Saslav, 3rd BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

Diners at Ironhorse Oasis dining facility welcome new expansion

By Sgt. Whitney Houston
MND-B PAO

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – Soldiers and leaders of the 4th Infantry Division and Multi-National Division – Baghdad, along with civilian contractors, gathered at the Ironhorse Oasis dining facility on Camp Liberty to participate in the grand opening and dedication of the facility’s newly completed expansion Nov. 26.

The Ironhorse Oasis is frequented by thousands of Soldiers and civilian contractors every meal; and as time passed, it became necessary to expand the DFAC to meet the demands of feeding so many.

“This expansion was basically built for an overflow for the main DFAC because as of right now, we’re feeding about 2,700 Soldiers at every meal, and we could only hold up to a 1,000 at a time,” said Sgt. 1st Class Kevin Chism, a native of Toone, Tenn., who serves as the senior food operations sergeant with Division Special Troops Battalion, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B. “This expansion will allow us to hold about 1,500 to 2,000 at any given time.”

Along with the new expansion, more options of food will be available as well as two specialty rooms that will provide a change of scenery for Soldiers and as places groups can reserve for private functions.

“The new dining area is equipped with four specialty areas: one wing corner, a concession food corner, the health food corner and the soft serve ice cream station. All of these specialty bars came as recommendations from our own Soldiers and will continue to be improved upon based on Soldier recommendations,” said Capt. Charley Mahle, a native of Kingsport, Tenn., who serves as commander of Headquarters Support Company, 4th Inf. Div.

“The expansion is also outfitted with two specialty rooms. One room has been named the ‘Oasis Cinema’ and is outfitted with a 46-inch plasma TV and DVD player that will play DVDs during all meals. It also has a concession-style popcorn maker and drink machine. The second room, the ‘Steadfast and Loyal Remembrance Room,’ is also outfitted with a 46-inch plasma TV and will be available for private functions.”

As new units come and go, so does the name of the DFAC along with the decorations that represent each unit; but with the grand opening, pictures of three MND-B fallen comrades were permanently hung on a wall in the “Steadfast and Loyal

Room,” preserving their memory for Soldiers to look upon for years to come.

The fallen 4th Inf. Div. Soldiers honored were Maj. Mark Rosenburg, a native of Florida, who served as team chief with the 3rd Battalion, 42nd Brigade, 11th Iraqi Army Division Military Transition Team; Chief Warrant Officer 3 Robert Hammett, a native of Fort Myers, Fla., who served as the Air Defense Airspace Management Cell technician, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Inf. Div.; and Staff Sgt. Victor Cota, a native of Florence, Ariz., who served as a truck commander on the Personal Security Detachment for one of the division’s deputy commanding generals.

“Remembering these Soldiers will help everyone to remember that we’re not just here going through our routines again and again for nothing,” Mahle said. “It helps us to realize that we’re still here and people are still dying – and those people are still just as important today as they were day one of the war.”

The new addition to the DFAC also provided a way for the division to say thanks to people from the Fort Hood and central Texas communities, who have shown the division an extraordinary amount of support.

“We have a group of people in Killeen who are super, super strong supporters of the division,” said Mahle. “What we did in the DFAC was we took their names and made street signs out of them.”

The signs now hang on the walls and from the ceiling of the new addition as a way of saying thanks to those supporters.

“They’re really great people and (Maj. Gen. Hammond) loves them. They’d do just about anything for a Soldier.”

The names of the street signs created in recognition of those staunch Ivy Div. supporters are: Doc McNaney Blvd., Ivor McKay Drive, T.J. Mills Blvd., Jeanne Isdale Way, Terry Tuggle Drive, and Bill and Jean Shine Circle.

In addition to those signs, Mahle said that they also had actual street signs from the Killeen area brought in for a little touch of home. The signs read East Centex Expressway, West Centex Expressway, Rancier Drive, BUS 190 and W.S. Young Road.

“They are the main roads that our Soldiers travel on every day. It’s just a little reminder of Texas in the dining facility.”

With the facility’s new addition finished and properly ded-



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Whitney Houston, MND-B PAO

Sgt. Maj. Duane Harb, a native of El Paso, Texas, who serves as the noncommissioned officer in charge of maintenance with the division supply and logistics section, assigned to Company B, Division Special Troops Battalion, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, serves himself a piece of cake after the dedication of the newly completed expansion of the Ironhorse Oasis Dining Facility at Camp Liberty Nov. 26.

icated, the masses of Soldiers and civilians who eat in the Ironhorse Oasis will not only be able to more fully enjoy their meals but will also have additional “room” to remember a few of their fallen comrades.

Mol's Wide World of Sports

Christmas season is a good one for sports

By Staff Sgt. Michael Molinaro
MND-B PAO

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq— Besides Family, food and time off from work, the holiday season also conjures up memories of bowl games, NFL playoff pushes, NBA Christmas Day games and other viewing options for the sports fan.

Let's take a look at what this holiday season has to offer.

College Bowls

All of the madness begins Dec. 20 with four bowl games and ends on Jan. 8 in Miami with the BCS Championship game.

The bowl season is one of my favorites of the year. I know there is a big push for a playoff system, which I agree with, but I think the bowls needs to be incorporated into it.

This year, 34 bowls will be played; and if I were home, I'd try to watch every single one of them. I love how teams that never get a chance to play each other get that opportunity for their final game.

The bowl season is a huge spotlight for stars to emerge and make a name for themselves, whether its seniors preparing to attend the NFL scouting combine or for the underclassmen looking ahead to the following season.

The peak of the bowl season is on New Year's Day, when we are treated to a buffet of games to choose from, including the oldest bowl game of them all, the Rose Bowl.

There is nothing like killing off a hangover by eating all day and watching good football.

This year's BCS Championship game should be a classic, with teams from the SEC and Big 12 favorite to play for college football's championship and Ohio State nowhere in sight.

It seems every year that college football creeps up on us and then all of the sudden we have the bowl games and the season is over, so I always make sure to see as many as I can.

NFL

The final push to the playoffs always makes December the best month in the NFL. The first three months of the season weeds out the pretenders and now it's coming down to the final three or four weeks. The New York Giants and Arizona Cardinals in the NFC and the Tennessee Titans in the AFC are the only teams that have locked up their berths in the playoffs. The leaves nine spots remaining before the playoffs begin in January.

In the AFC North, Pittsburgh and Baltimore should duke it out until the last week. The two hated rivals meet in Baltimore, Week 16, in a must win for both teams but more so for the Ravens, considering that they lost to the Steelers already. The Steelers will have to travel to Nashville the following week and Baltimore will travel to Dallas, so the winner of their game will have the upper hand in deciding the division title and a possible first-round bye.

The AFC East is up for grabs between all four teams. The Jets face Buffalo in Week 15 and Miami in Week 17. Wins in both of those games could wrap up the division for them. But the Patriots don't have plans of giving up their belts and take on Buffalo in Week 17 that could determine the division or a wild card berth. Denver and San Diego will square off in Week 17 in an AFC West showdown. The Chargers will need a perfect December and the Broncos to have some stumbles for that game to have meaning. The Chargers are one of football's most disappointing teams this season and may run out of time before this tilt on their home turf.

In the NFC South, Tampa and Carolina have been trading the top spot all season long and will undoubtedly take it to the final week to determine the division winner.

Tampa has an easier schedule on paper, but that doesn't mean anything on the field. Atlanta, one of the top surprises this year, will be a factor and meet Tampa Week 15. New Orleans has a load of talent and we'll see if some early season losses come back to haunt the Saints.

The NFC North is a mess, with none of the three teams in contention doing



Staff Sgt. Michael 'Mol' Molinaro

anything to wrest control from the others. Chicago and Green Bay meet in Week 16 and that could be for the division. Minnesota has a treacherous schedule down the stretch, facing Arizona, Atlanta and the Giants, all playoff contenders. But if Minnesota makes it through those three games unscathed and into the playoffs, they could be one of the dark horses in the playoffs.

Dallas and Washington will be playing for one or both of the wild card berths. Dallas has a very tough schedule, facing Pittsburgh, Baltimore and Philadelphia to close out their season. A team with all of this talent, and looking from the outside at the playoffs, shows how fantastic the NFL regular season is every year.

NBA

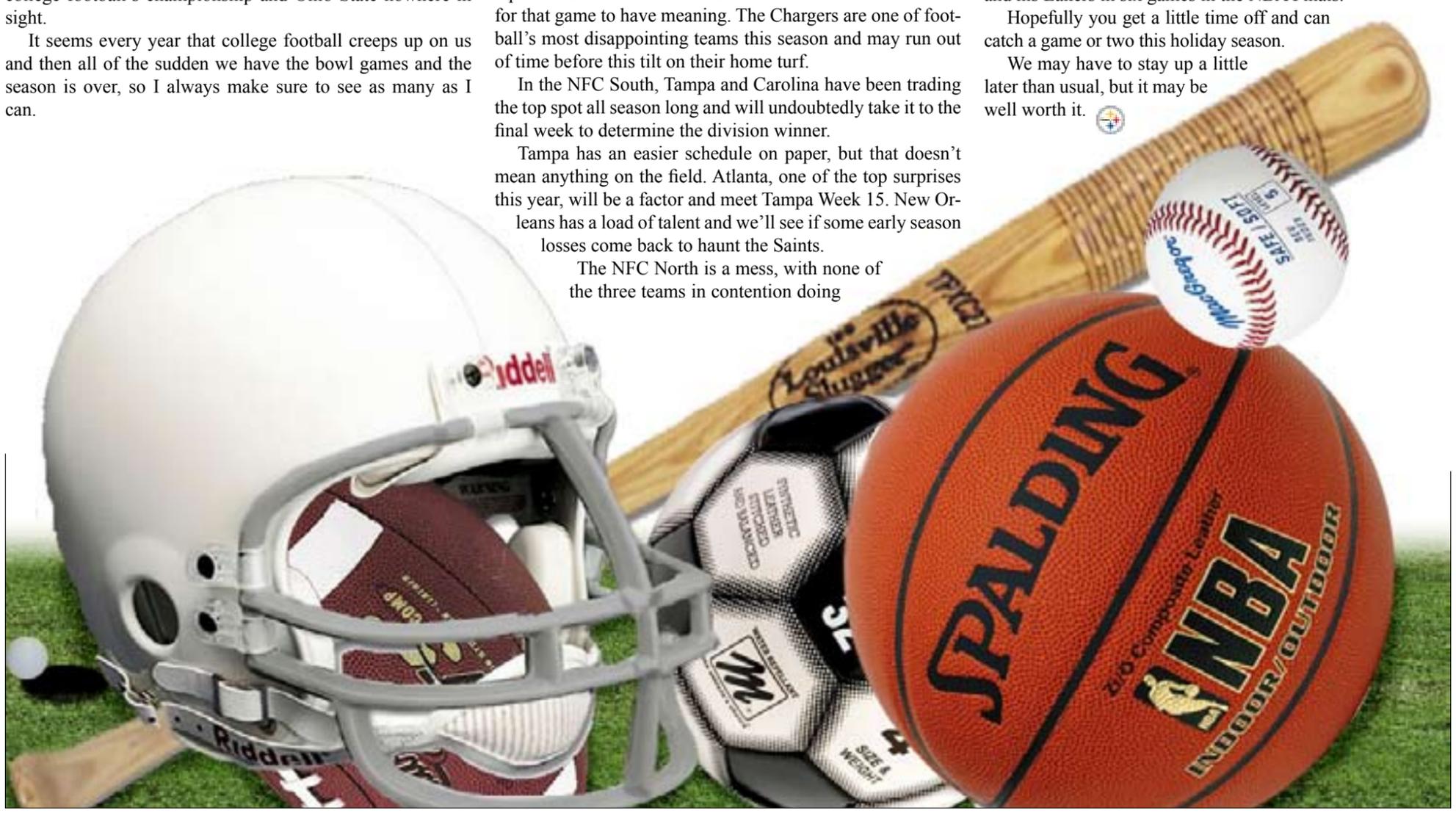
The NBA always takes over the tube on Christmas Day, showcasing its biggest stars as it prepares for football to wind down and take over the national scene along with college hoops. This year, for the first time ever, five games will be on national television for fans to feast on.

The league will highlight LeBron James, Chris Paul, Dwight Howard, Shaq, Tim Duncan, Amare Stoudemire, Steve Nash, Greg Oden and Dirk Nowitzki. So many stars are playing that day that those who aren't playing may be looking in the mirror wondering why they aren't on the NBA's biggest stage other than the playoffs.

The headliner of the day is the defending champion Boston Celtics heading out west to Hollywood to take on the Los Angeles Lakers. KG, Ray Allen and Paul Pierce look to repeat their performance from June when they took out Kobe and his Lakers in six games in the NBA Finals.

Hopefully you get a little time off and can catch a game or two this holiday season.

We may have to stay up a little later than usual, but it may be well worth it.





Band members Helall, Hala, and Hazzar Bassam play traditional Iraqi music Nov. 26 at the Doura Art and Culture Show in the Rashid district of southern Baghdad. The family members are musicians and instructors at the Baghdad School of Music and Ballet.

U.S. Army photo by Maj. Dave Olson, 1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

Art, culture show opens in Doura community



U.S. Army photo by Maj. Dave Olson, 1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

An Iraqi artist displays his painting Nov. 26 at the Doura Art and Culture Show in the Rashid district of southern Baghdad. Soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment, attached to the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, worked closely with Iraqi artists, community leaders and members of the Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team to facilitate the art show, a five-day event that consisted of approximately 20 artists and 100 pieces of paintings and sculptures.

Zaith al-Tark, an Iraqi sculptor, displays his al-Battaani art piece Nov. 26 at the Doura Art and Culture Show in the Rashid district of southern Baghdad. The statue is dedicated to the 1,000-year memorial of Battaani, who is widely known as an Islamic philosopher.



U.S. Army photo by Maj. Dave Olson, 1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

Sgt. David Hodge

1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

FORWARD OPERATING BASE FALCON, Iraq – Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers joined artists, musicians and Iraqi citizens to celebrate the premier of an art exhibition Nov. 26 in the Rashid district of southern Baghdad.

The Iraq artists assembled more than 100 artworks at the Doura Technical College to showcase their ability in the local community, an epicenter of commerce for the eastern Rashid area.

Community leaders and local patrons filled rooms prepared with paintings, sculptures and photographs portraying the exhibition's theme: "New Life, New Culture."

Doura, a neighborhood with a notorious reputation for its intense sectarian violence, saw credible progress since the arrival of the 2nd Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment, in November 2007, said Lt. Col. Timothy Watson, commander of the "Warrior" Battalion, attached to the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division.

"We think the event shows incredible work by the people of Doura to bring the community back to life," stated Watson, a San Diego native. "We are hopeful the progress here will continue."

Watson described the art show as the pinnacle of social events in his area of operations.

"Thanks to the hard efforts of Capt. Brett Walker and cooperation with the 1st BCT Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team, we've been working towards this in Doura for the last 12 months," said Watson.

The EPRT team played a crucial role in identifying important details of the show, said Walker, an infantry officer assigned to the 2nd Bn., 4th Inf. Regt, who serves as the information operations officer. The Soldiers offered their assistance to facilitate the five-day event; however, it remains an Iraqi-led event.

"The people of Rashid are ready for art; they are ready for a sophisticated reputation," added Walker, who hails from Mill Valley, Calif. "It's a new national identity that will endure for ages."

Faruq Fu'ad Rafiq Hamdani, a featured artist and event organizer, said he believes everybody continually worked hard to set up for the art and culture show.

It took Hamdani 20 days to prepare supplies and artwork for the show. He said he credits the exhibition to the true efforts of both Iraqis and Coalition Forces, adding that the Iraqi people are in need of a place to relieve stress and tiredness.

"These places need to be full of color, exhibition, and true happiness," he explained.

Hashem Mahmood, the deputy chairman of the Rashid District Counsel, said the variety of artwork served as a canvas for the Iraqi people's concerns.

"This is what Iraqis are all about," explained Mahmood. "We have security, so we can have the art show."

The Doura Art and Culture Show is scheduled to remain open for five days, and buyers can purchase the artwork on the last day of the event.