

# The Ivy Leaf

Established in 1917 to honor those who serve



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MULTI-NATIONAL DIVISION - BAGHDAD

"STEADFAST AND LOYAL"

JANUARY 5, 2009

## MND-B selects Soldier, NCO of the Year



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

Sgt. Thomas El Far, a native of Bruceville, Texas, who serves as a petroleum supply specialist with Company E, 1st Battalion, 4th Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, positions himself in front of eight MND-B command sergeants major and answers questions to the best of his knowledge during MND-B's annual Soldier and Noncommissioned Officer of the Year competition held at the Freedom Rest in Baghdad's "International Zone" Dec. 18.

**By Pfc. Lyndsey Dransfield**  
MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – Multi-National Division – Baghdad's finest Soldiers gathered together at Freedom Rest in Baghdad's "International Zone" Dec. 18 to compete in the Division's annual Soldier and Noncommissioned Officer of the Year competition.

The competition was the culmination of a busy day for the Soldiers and their leaders; prior to the competition, the contestants bore witness as 40 of their fellow Multi-National Division – Baghdad noncommissioned officers were inducted into the Sergeant Audie Murphy Club.

To compete in MND-B's Soldier/NCO of the year competition, each Soldier had earlier claimed

top honors during the Soldier/NCO of the Month and Soldier/NCO of the Quarter competitions at the company, battalion and brigade levels.

"The task at hand today is to identify the best of the best," said Command Sgt. Maj. John Gioia, a native of Buffalo, N.Y., the senior enlisted leader of MND-B and the 4th Infantry Division and MND-B, as he welcomed the 16 Soldiers selected to compete.

"We are looking for the best Soldier and noncommissioned officer to represent MND-B. You're all great Soldiers, otherwise you wouldn't be sitting here right now, but we're going to take it to the next level."

see **Board** Pg.16

## 'Warriors' say farewell to Baghdad's Rashid District

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

1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

FORWARD OPERATING BASE FALCON, Iraq – The 2nd Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment, part of the 10th Mountain Division's 4th Brigade Combat Team, stationed at Fort Polk, La., deployed to Doura in southern Baghdad late November 2007 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Upon arriving at Forward Operating Base Falcon, the 2nd Bn., 4th Inf. Regt., was attached under operational control to the 4th Inf. BCT, 1st Inf. Div.; and later in April 2008, became part of the 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div., as part of Multi-National Division – Baghdad's main effort to provide support, stability and security for the people of the Doura community in the Rashid district.

Led by Lt. Col. Tim Watson, Jr., and Command Sgt. Maj. Brendan McIntyre, the 2nd "Warriors" Bn. of the 4th Inf. Regt., commanded four infantry companies, a forward support company, and headquarters company, taking control of approximately 750 Soldiers and more than 170 armored vehicles to secure 23 muhallahs, or neighborhoods, that were once marred by intense sectarian violence and insurgent activity.

Through a series of offensive operations under the 1st Inf. Div.'s 4th "Dragon" Brigade, the 2nd Bn., 4th Inf. Regt., a light infantry battalion with a prestigious history fighting in America's wars that dates back to the War of 1812, handily defeated Al Qaeda in Iraq terrorists, Special Groups criminals and other anti-coalition forces where they lived and operated in Doura, said Watson.

"Doura was in a precarious position for both security and services after very heavy fighting throughout 2007," Watson said. "The Warriors needed to maintain the hard won security while demonstrating progress in other lines of operations."

The companies maintained a 24-hour presence, operating from combat outposts and joint security stations in the markets and neighborhoods to assist local Iraqi Security Forces providing security for the people of Doura.

During the next 13 months, the 2nd Bn., 4th Inf. Regt., served to protect the people of Doura, developing the 7th "Lightning" Bde., 2nd National Police Div., into a legitimate and professional force, while simultaneously working to improve both the local governance and services for the people of the Rashid district, he explained.

"When we first arrived to Doura, you could sense the tense security conditions," Watson said. "People were still not sure that security would last."

With more than a year of lasting security in the community, which is home to the Rashid District Council, the Iraqi citizens are rebuilding their homes and businesses in Doura and the greater Rashid district, he said.

"The Soldiers, sergeants and lieutenants on patrol every day made a huge impact by treating the people of Doura with dignity and respect," said Watson, a native of Atkinson, N.H. "The Warriors won the trust of the population and that has enabled us to make great progress through the cooperation of local Iraqis."

"Our overall mission was to create a more stable and secure situation in Doura," said McIntyre, a native of Amarillo, Texas. "It was our intent to do so

see **Farewell** Pg.6

## SMA Preston visits 4th Inf. Div., MND-B Soldiers, servicemembers

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

BAGHDAD – As the throng of 4th Infantry Division Soldiers and their partnered troops stood tall in formation Dec. 20 outside the Combat Aviation Brigade's hangar on Camp Taji, north of Baghdad, two helicopters swooped down from the sky while the vehicle's occupants eyed the proud troops.

As the birds settled onto the tarmac fol-

lowing yet another perfect landing by the brigade's aviators, the moment they had all awaited arrived as Sgt. Maj. of the Army Kenneth Preston, accompanied by Multi-National Force's Iraq's Command Sgt. Maj. Larry Wilson and Multi-National Division – Baghdad and the 4th Infantry Division's own Command Sgt. Maj. John Gioia, appreciatively assessed the troops as they approached.

Following an introduction by Command Sgt. Maj. Archie Davis, the CAB's senior enlisted leader, Preston called the troops to attention and then had them fall out and gather around so he could meet with them and share his views on what is happening with the Army today and how it will affect them.

The scene was repeated again at two additional packed houses at Camp Taji before moving on to Forward Operating Base War

Eagle in Adhamiyah, which is located in northern Baghdad, when he visited the Soldiers of 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Inf. Div., and their partner units, at a packed Rosenberg Café.

Preston said his annual trip to Iraq during the holiday season with the USO Tour is important because it provides him the opportu-

see **SMA** Pg.22

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 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div.  
 3rd BCT, 4th Inf. Div.  
 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****Endurance during war****By Maj. Trenton Lewis***Chaplain, 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div.*

BAGHDAD – The strength to endure deployments is achieved by having a healthy sense of self, a strong sense of mission, a heap of unit cohesiveness, and a spirit of professionalism – all undergirded by a solid spiritual base.

One of the most significant things this deployment has taught me is maintaining the strength to endure the challenges of deployment can be a formidable foe. In many instances, this foe is as deadly as any IED, incoming mortar round or the insurgents we are here to defeat.

Soldiers often find themselves entangled in a web of emotions gone wild after only a short period in this combat zone. Many times this occurs when the extreme momentum to engage and defeat the enemy is met by the reality of the less than glamorous support operations that many Soldiers are relegated to because of mission requirements, and mission requirements are often dictated by the ever changing tempo of combat operations.

Soldiers long forget the sage advice that their deployment is a marathon and not a sprint. We are here for the long haul and we should act in concert with the mind of a marathon runner.

Scripture supports the idea of a marathon not only in war but in life, "... the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong ..." (Ecclesiastes 9:11b).

To successfully survive the challenges inherent in a combat environment requires pacing oneself and resisting the tendency to long for a speedy return to home station – a healthy sense of self and the fulfillment that comes from completing ones mission is paramount.

I can recall the days when we were not in a major war. The Soldiers in my unit often complained of not doing what they enlisted in the Army to do. No longer is that the case and neither will it be so for the foreseeable future. However, in today's Army, the opposite is the case. Too many deployments

where doing what one enlisted in the Army for is the norm.

Now, Soldiers engaged in what they came into the Army to do is a reality and quite a few are now longing for the days when such was not the case. Yet a strong sense of mission helps Soldiers endure the challenges of monotony often associated with reduced engagements with enemy forces.

I encourage Soldiers to remember that no matter the role they perform in current operations they are performing a vital part of achieving the mission of stability operations here in Iraq.

In doing so, they help usher in the day when all our forces can re-deploy home without the need to return to ensure civil order.

In addition to a strong sense of mission, it is, perhaps more so than not, unit cohesiveness that yields the greatest benefit to successfully enduring deployments. Not only is having your buddy's back on the battlefield essential to your survival and endurance, but watching out for your buddy in non-combat situations is just as important.

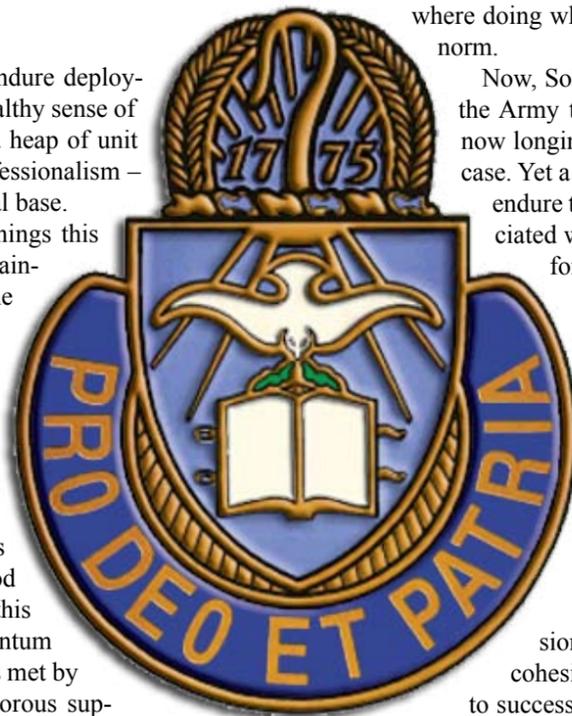
Curtailed and prevention of suicides, fratricide, and preventable injuries are the hallmark of never leaving a fallen comrade.

A healthy sense of self, a strong sense of mission, and unit cohesiveness all aid in the development of the professional Soldier. As such, the profession of arms maintains its elite status juxtaposed with the professions found among the American citizenry.

In the end, it is crucial to note that without a solid spiritual base undergirding a Soldier's motivation to serve, the profession of arms would lose its elite status.

Without a sense of something bigger than self, whether it is your God or national patriotism, one cannot endure the challenges of deployments.

Whether you serve to ensure freedom for foreigners or the American citizenry, it is that solid spiritual base which empowers you to endure to the end.

**U.S. expands Special Immigration Visa**

BAGHDAD – A dramatic change, now in effect, has greatly expanded the United States' Special Immigration Visa program for linguists and interpreters. The SIV program allows individuals who have worked for the United States Government in Iraq and Afghanistan, as interpreters to immigrate to the United States.

The new program, in order to qualify, requires the "articulation or experience of a threat" as a result of their employment. The major change with the new program is that there are now 5,000 slots available for Iraq, as opposed to the previous program having only 50 slots.

There are changes to the application process for the SIV as well. The major change is the elimination of a letter of recommendation from a general officer, but rather a recommendation from the U.S. Ambassador, Chief of Mission in Iraq is now required.

The first step for visa processing is now through the Embassy and not the military chain of command. Other minor changes include allowing the use of

email for applicant's letters of recommendation, statements regarding threats faced because of their coalition force employment and the submission of a basic biographical data sheet, DS 157, directly to the Embassy.

Once approved by the chief of mission, the entire packet including copies of their native country passport is submitted to Immigration Services in Nebraska. Other than this streamlined application process, there are few changes to how the packets are actually processed.

The old program which requires a letter of recommendation from a general officer actually still exists; however only 50 visas will be granted to applicants from both Afghanistan and Iraq, using this program. Multi-National Division - Baghdad has already granted more than 15 general officer letters of recommendation this fiscal year to applicants, thus, applicants should consider the new program because of an increased chance to get one of these coveted visas.

The same basic qualifications of all

applicants are as follows:

- 1) Applicants must be a national of Iraq.
- 2) Applicants must have been employed by, or on behalf of the U.S. Government in Iraq, on or after March 20, 2003, for at least 1 year.
- 3) Applicants must have provided faithful and valuable service to the U.S. Government, which is documented in a letter of recommendation from the employee's supervisor and is approved by the chief of mission.
- 4) Applicants must clear a background check and appropriate screening as determined by the Department of Homeland Security.

Spouses and minor unmarried children of the principle applicant may also receive a visa but do not count against the 5,000 available visas.

For further information regarding the SIV program, please visit the state department page at [http://www.travel.state.gov/visa/immigrants/info/info\\_4172.html](http://www.travel.state.gov/visa/immigrants/info/info_4172.html), or contact Sgt. Moyer, G9 at DSN: 318 847 2046 or [elizabeth.moyer@mnd-b.army.mil](mailto:elizabeth.moyer@mnd-b.army.mil).

# Patriots reflect on progress in eastern Baghdad

**By Staff Sgt. Matt Meadows**

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE LOYALTY, Iraq – As 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, deployment nears an end, leaders reflect upon the progress made during the past 14 months in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

“Patriot Brigade Soldiers selflessly served in Iraq during a defining moment in their country’s history,” said Maj. Gen. Jeffery Hammond, commanding general, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, from Hattiesburg, Miss. “They leave Baghdad and its people a much better place than when they arrived; and more importantly, they gave the city residents hope for a brighter future.”

Patriot Brigade’s operating environment in eastern Baghdad encompassed the three political districts of Rusafa, Karadah and 9 Nissan. When the brigade arrived in Baghdad in December 2007, training Iraqi Security Forces and maintaining security were their primary missions.

These missions remained at the forefront of all Patriot Brigade operations. In time; however, increased security enhanced the brigade’s ability to foster a return to normalcy through conducting humanitarian-aid missions, providing improved essential services and promoting economic growth within its OE. In addition, Patriot Brigade Military Transition Teams and National Police Transition Teams responsible for training ISF representatives reverted to over watch roles as ISF took the lead in planning and conducting operations.

The Patriot Brigade witnessed a 50 percent reduction in attacks within its OE since last December. In contrast, ISF units became more robust in addition to becoming more proficient. Within the three districts of 4th BCT’s OE, there are nearly 15,000 IA soldiers, NPs and Iraqi policemen.

In October, the Government of Iraq incorporated community protection forces called Sons of Iraq (Abna al-Iraq) into ISF and other government positions to augment GoI security and stability. Initially, about 1,300 SoI operated independently in neighborhoods within the Patriot OE. The GoI transitioned more than 400 SoI into IP service and recruited more than 300 more SoI members to begin IP training by the end of January 2009.

Working with their ISF partners, Patriot Brigade Soldiers assisted in 267 arrests and detained 641 suspects. They conducted combined clearance operations leading to the seizure of 155 weapons caches.

In addition, route-clearance teams actively kept eastern Baghdad streets safe for Iraqi residents and maneuver security forces alike. Task Force Patriot Soldiers conducted more

than 2,000 route-clearance missions, finding a combination of more than 50 improvised explosive devices and explosively formed penetrators. These Soldiers performed in excess of 50,000 Soldier hours in protecting the people of eastern Baghdad, ISF and their comrades from enemy attacks.

While providing security and working hand in hand with their ISF counterparts, local governments and GoI partners, TF Patriot Soldiers and civilians assisted in bringing social and economic stability to eastern Baghdad. Since December 2007, Iraqi officials within the Patriot OE conducted numerous missions to bring medicine, food and hygiene items to some of eastern Baghdad’s poorest communities. In addition, they opened 28 new schools; installed 19 micro-power generators, with nearly 40 more in progress; and completed five swimming pool renovation projects.

“The accomplishments of this team have been nothing short of remarkable,” expressed Command Sgt. Maj. Christopher Greca, brigade command sergeant major for 4th BCT, 10th Mtn. Div., from Grayslake, Ill. “The men and women of this brigade have met each and every challenge head on and have accomplished their mission with a sense of professionalism I have rarely seen over the course of my 22-year career. I could not be prouder than to be associated with this team and to be called a Patriot.”

These accomplishments brought a renewed sense of a more normal life for citizens of eastern Baghdad. This year more than 2,057 displaced Families who left their homes because of safety concerns returned home.

Additional signs of improved essential services and economic growth in eastern Baghdad were visible during Patriot Brigades deployment, to include the reopening of a water park, co-sponsoring trade shows, constructing water-distribution sites and issuing micro-grants.

The 4th BCT assisted Iraqi officials in establishing three water distribution sites in eastern Baghdad, one each in Baghdad Al Jadida, Shawra Wa Ra Um Jadir and Al Khansa. Dubbed Patriot H2O, the project provided sites for Baghdad Water Authority officials to fill trucks with purified water and distribute the potable water to eastern Baghdad residents in their own neighborhoods. Also, residents could fill small containers with purified water at these sites.

“When I came to this country in 2007, my first dream was to give people drinking water,” said Sam, a project engineer and bilingual, bicultural advisor working for 4th BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. “If I give one person drinking water, (then) that is a big bonus. I’m giving (water to) a million and a half. (For these residents), it’s a dream to have drinking water in the desert.”

In conjunction with “Karadah Day,” Iraqi officials reopened a refurbished, 400,000 square meters Jadriya Lake Park complex. Before the park closed for the winter season, thousands of Iraqi citizens visited Jadriya Lake Park weekly to participate in recreational and social activities.

On the economic front, the brigade’s embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team sponsored successful trade expositions and conferences in Rusafa, Karadah and New Baghdad. More than 260 businesses, government officials and non-government organizations participated in the trade shows and about 6,000 people visited the three economic events.

“Helping stimulate local business growth is one of our most important priorities. If we can help grow small and medium-sized businesses, we can help generate real economic growth,” said Anthony Swalhah, e-PRT engineer and city planner advisor from Charleston, S.C., after the Rusafa expo. “Economic growth will affect every citizen positively and help improve security and stability for all Iraqis.”

As 4th BCT Soldiers prepare to head home to their Families and friends and hand over their responsibilities in eastern Baghdad to another brigade, they can look back with pride at the progress and sacrifices the Patriot Brigade made in eastern Baghdad.

“When these Soldiers of character and moral courage return home, they return to Families who sacrificed and lent their Soldiers to their nation,” said Hammond. “Take care of your Army Families. They are one and all, true American heroes - Mission, Soldier, Family and Team.”

A deployment, even a successful one, and the training leading up to it do not occur without the commitment, dedication and sacrifice of Soldiers and their Families. No one is more aware of this than Col. Mark Dewhurst, brigade commander, 4th BCT, 10th Mtn. Div., as his brigade, a brigade “Forged for War,” prepares to return home, Dewhurst has message for the Patriot Brigade Family.

“First and foremost, I want to say that I am proud of the Soldiers and their Families. Thank you for the incredible challenges, sacrifices and hardships you endured in the service of our country,” expressed Dewhurst. “I know many of you have endured frequent separations during training and deployment in support of our missions during your time in the Patriot Brigade and in the Army.

“As such, I am especially appreciative of those Families within the Patriot Brigade who have had to face multiple separations,” he continued. “I recognize that deployments have an impact on the entire Family, so I am equally grateful to the spouses, children and Soldiers of each military Family.”

## Word on the Street: What are your New Year's resolutions?

**By Sgt. Jason Thompson**  
*MND-B PAO*



**Sgt. Eli Esparza**  
*Beeville, Texas*  
*FEC, DSTB, 4th Inf. Div.*

“I would like to take more college classes to help further myself professionally.”



**Spc. Cara Roberts**  
*Sitka, Alaska*  
*G1, DSTB, 4th Inf. Div.*

“I want to drink less energy drinks – those things are too addictive.”



**Staff Sgt. Jonathan Brookover**  
*Allentown, Penn.*  
*G7, DSTB, 4th Inf. Div.*

“I want to quit smoking.”



**Spc. Brian Cayo**  
*Santa Monica, Calif.*  
*G3, DSTB, 4th Inf. Div.*

“I am dedicating 2009 to myself and my Family. I want to grow to be a better person both at home and work.”



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Benjamin Crane, MND-B PAO

## Greetings from Commander in Chief

BAGHDAD – President George W. Bush meets and greets the assembled Soldiers, Airmen, Sailors and Marines who gathered at the Al Faw Palace Dec. 14 for the opportunity to hear from their commander in chief. Bush told the troops “Thank You” for their service and wished them a Merry Christmas and happy holidays. His trip marks his final visit to deployed troops as the President of the United States. After his speech, he met with the service members, shaking their hands, posing for pictures and signing autographs.

## Resettled family reports munitions found inside home

1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

BAGHDAD – An Iraqi family approached Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers at a combat outpost in the Rashid district of southern Baghdad to report finding munitions in their home Dec. 26.

At approximately 2 p.m. in the Saha community, Soldiers from Troop C, 7th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, MND-B, partnered with 1st Battalion, 3rd Abu Risha National Police Brigade, searched the house and discovered a 52mm rocket.

A Coalition Forces explosive ordnance disposal unit transported the rocket to a nearby forward operating base for proper disposal.

“Thanks to the continuing efforts of Baghdad’s citizens and Iraqi Security Forces, the 1st ‘Raider’ Brigade continues to keep the enemy on the run,” said Maj. Dave Olson, spokesperson, 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div. “Partnered with the ISF, we continue to maintain a steady presence in the muhallas, towns and communities within the Rashid district to make it a safe and secure environment for the Iraqi people.”

## IA clear neighborhood of machine guns, rifles, detain 5 criminals in Rashid

1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

BAGHDAD – Iraqi Army soldiers found a sizeable amount of weapons and detained five criminals with outstanding warrants in Baghdad’s Rashid district during an early morning combined operation Dec 23.

At approximately 9:45 a.m., Iraqi Army soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 24th Brigade, 6th IA Division, conducted a combined neighborhood clearing operation with Soldiers from Company B, 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, seizing 153 AK-47 assault rifles, two sub-

machine guns, two rifles and two pistols in the Saydiyah community to enforce Iraq’s Rule of Law.

The IA soldiers also detained five suspected criminals with outstanding warrants.

“The Iraqi Army soldiers are doing an outstanding job patrolling the neighborhoods of southern Baghdad to provide a safe and secure environment in the Rashid district,” said Maj. Dave Olson, spokesman, 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B.

“It’s because of their efforts that the people of Baghdad can sleep better at night.”

## ISF, MND-B Soldiers seize weapons cache

Multi-National Division – Baghdad PAO

BAGHDAD – Iraqi soldiers, Iraqi policemen and Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers seized weapons caches in throughout Baghdad Dec. 25.

After serving a warrant for arrest, Policemen serving with 2nd Brigade, 1st Iraqi National Police Division, uncovered a large weapons cache at approximately 11 a.m. north of Baghdad. The munitions seized included 45 82mm mortars, 13 60mm mortars, 31 120mm mortars, four 122mm artillery projectiles, a 155mm projectile, a

rocket launcher, a case of 23mm ammunition, a 120mm mortar system, a 82mm mortar system and a jet rocket. The munitions were hidden in three refrigerators.

Iraqi Army soldiers serving with 55th Brigade, 17th IA Division seized a munitions cache containing two 94mm high-explosive anti-tank rounds, two 81mm high-explosive rockets, two rocket-propelled grenade charges, three RPGs and an undetermined amount of 7.62mm and 14.5mm ammunition, south of Baghdad at approximately 11 a.m.

## News briefs

### Tips lead IA, NP, MND-B Soldiers to seize weapons

Multi-National Division – Baghdad PAO

BAGHDAD – Tips led Iraqi Army and Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers to weapons caches in Baghdad Dec 22.

A tip from a concerned citizen led to the seizure of a munitions cache by Soldiers serving with Company C, 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment, 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, MND-B, at approximately 3 p.m. west of Baghdad. The munitions included a home-made rocket and three fuses.

A tip from another concerned citizen led the Soldiers serving with 2nd Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, MND-B, and Iraqi Army soldiers serving with 2nd Battalion 53rd Brigade, 6th Division, to a cache at approximately 10 a.m. northwest of Baghdad. The cache contained three Chinese 60mm mortars and a Soviet high-explosive projectile.

Policemen with the 1st Battalion, 7th Brigade, 2nd National Police Division along with an Iraqi explosive ordnance disposal team removed four 60mm Russian-manufactured mortars at approximately 6 p.m. in southern Baghdad. The NPs were alerted to the area by an Iraqi citizen.

### ISF, MND-B Soldiers detain suspected bomb-maker after explosion

1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

BAGHDAD – Iraqi Security Forces and Multi-National Division Baghdad – Soldiers arrested a suspected terrorist in connection with an explosion Dec. 26 in the Masafee community of the Rashid district of southern Baghdad.

At approximately 4:30 p.m., Soldiers of Company B, 2nd Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment, attached to the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, MND-B, joined Iraqi National Police of the 2nd Bn., 7th Bde., 2nd NP Div., investigating an explosion in an Iraqi neighborhood.

Upon arriving at the damaged house on 29th Street, the combined forces found the bomb-maker killed while mixing homemade explosives which prematurely detonated.

The NP then detained another suspected bomb-maker on site.

“Capturing known criminals and getting them off the streets demonstrates the capabilities of the Iraqi Security Forces and the Coalition Forces to provide a safe and secure environment,” said Maj. Dave Olson, 1st BCT Spokesman, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B. “The ISF are stepping up their efforts of securing their country and providing security for the people of Iraq as Coalition Forces continue to teach, coach and mentor them.”



# Mission – Soldier – Family – Team



# ROUTINE PATROL ...

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

BAGHDAD – It was supposed to be a quick patrol for the two M1A2 SEP Abrams tanks from 1st platoon as they left Combat Outpost Ford in Baghdad’s Sadr City district Dec. 17.

It wasn’t quick at all.

The tanks of Company C “Team Steel,” 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 68th Armor Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, were conducting a route-disruption patrol, a random patrol designed to make it harder for terrorists to have the time to plant an Improvised Explosive Device or Explosively Formed Projectile.

The patrol route this day was over an area regularly traveled by Coalition Forces.

“Historically ... it’s probably the densest concentration of EFPs that we’ve seen,” said Capt. Todd Allison, who serves as the platoon leader for 1st platoon, Co. C, 1-68 AR.

In the beginning, it was a quiet patrol; there were not many vehicles on the road, and no one wanted to be in the way of the tanks, so the patrol was making good time.

“It’s normal; we’ve done this several times,” said Allison, a native of Austin, Texas.

As the tanks drove down the road, they began to acquire a following: Iraqi drivers were following the path cleared by the tanks, similar to the way Americans might follow a fire engine. The turret of the second tank, Allison’s tank, swiveled its main gun to the rear to remind the Iraqi drivers to keep their distance.

Approximately thirty minutes into mission, the patrol passed by an Iraqi National Police checkpoint. On the left, there was a vehicle pulled to the side of the road.

Capt. Allison was crouching down in the tank’s turret in an area he said was a dangerous stretch of road.

In the lead tank, Staff Sgt. Joshua Everett, a native of Romney, W.Va., was also crouching in the turret and scanning the road for possible IEDs.

“I saw the IED go off approximately 50 meters in front of us,” said Pvt. William

Dawson, a native of Dayton, Ohio, the driver of Allison’s tank.

“I initially heard the blast,” said Everett, who serves as a section Sgt. with 1st Platoon, Co. C.

The IED, buried next to a light pole in the median of the road, detonated less than 30 feet in front of Everett’s tank.

Initially, there was confusion in Allison’s tank as the Soldiers speculated about what happened, if anyone was hurt and, finally, what the damage was.

“We’ve been hit by an IED,” Allison said.

The blast wave was powerful enough to be felt by the Soldiers inside Allison’s tank.

“Suddenly, a big dust cloud burst up in the air, a big boom followed it, lots of debris ... shrapnel ... stuff like that came off of it,” said Dawson. This was his first encounter with an IED.

For Allison and the rest of the section, this was not their first encounter with an IED and their training kicked in.

“I saw the mushroom cloud,” said Everett, who quickly checked on his crew. “I sent a report back to (Allison), no casualties, no BDA (battle damage).”

“Immediately, when something goes off like that, you begin to try to put the pieces together,” said Allison. “What side of the road was it on?”

“I heard the bang and then felt the concussion,” said Sgt. Michael Emmons, a native of Eureka, Calif., who serves as the gunner in Allison’s tank. “I immediately traversed (the tank’s turret) to the sides to try to find the triggerman.”

Allison radioed his headquarters and told them what had happened. Company C dispatched its quick reaction force and a nearby explosive ordinance detachment was sent out to the scene to look for any secondary devices that may be there and to collect evidence.

As this was going on, an airborne asset reported seeing some men acting suspiciously in the yard of what appeared to be a junkyard just before the attack. The junkyard is right next to the scene of the attack. After the explosion, the men entered a building on the property. The QRF headed to that location.



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

The M1A2 SEP Abrams tank of Staff Sgt. Joshua Everett, a native of Romney, W. Va., who serves as the section sergeant for Section A, 1st platoon Company C “Team Steel,” 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 68th Armor Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, sits on a road in Baghdad’s Sadr City district Dec. 17 after an IED detonated in front of it.

The EOD team arrived on the scene and, upon determining that there was no secondary device waiting to be detonated, investigated the scene.

When the QRF team arrived, the Soldiers found the men they were looking for. After a search of the area, the Soldiers found enough

evidence to take two men into custody.

A little over two hours after the IED exploded, Allison and his men were able to clear the scene and continue their “quick patrol.”

“It’s a little unnerving,” said Allison. “I’m just glad no one got hurt. That’s the main thing.”

## Aden Street reopens in Adhamiyah



U.S. Army photo by Scott Flenner, 3rd BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

Maj. Gen. Muzir, commanding general of 11th Iraqi Army Division, cuts a ceremonial ribbon to mark the opening of Aden Street in the Sha’ab neighborhood of the Adhamiyah district of Baghdad Dec. 21. The road was closed following a string of deadly car bombings in 2007.

**By Scott Flenner**  
3rd BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

SHA’AB, Iraq – Aden Street was once a desolate place, blocked on all sides, where businesses struggled to make ends meet. Now, the street in the Adhamiyah district reopened with the ceremonial ribbon cutting Dec. 21.

Aden Street splits the Shalal Market in northeastern Baghdad. It fell victim to multiple car bombs in 2007 that killed numerous civilians and damaged various storefronts. Following these events, the Iraqi National Police and Coalition Forces decided to block off and close the street to local traffic, making it a safe market to help protect and ensure the safety of the people.

Now, with the added security and reduction in violence that is fostering throughout the country, and especially in the Adhamiyah district, the decision was made to open the street once again.

“We have been trying since August to get this street open,” said Capt. Kevin Kahre, commander, Company

D, 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 68th Armor Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, Multi-National Division – Baghdad. “It is safe here now; we are opening up the street.”

The street opening not only shows security progress in the area, but it also will bring much needed commerce into the area and stimulate the economy due to the increased ease of access to Shalal Market.

“Opening this street will provide improvement in traffic flow and access to the market,” said Kahre, a native of Evansville, Ind.

Opening Aden Street was an important event for all of Iraq, and especially for the National Policemen from 3rd Battalion, 4th Brigade, 1st NP Division, who have been providing security on Aden Street for the past year.

“I want everyone to know about the opening of this street,” said Maj. Gen. Muzir, who commands the 11th Iraqi Army Division and cut the ceremonial ribbon marking the opening of Aden Street.



1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

# 'Warriors' say farewell to Rashid

## Regiment leaves Doura on path to durable peace

see **Farewell** Pg. 1

by ensuring security to the people, as well as increasing the proficiency of the local security forces and governance representatives."

McIntyre said the Soldiers of 2nd Bn., 4th Inf. Regt., demonstrated discipline and resolve while soldiering in the face of a long, intense deployment; and, he added, the battalion, whose motto is "Don't Tread on Me," owes much of its success to developing a partnership with the Iraq National Police.

"The Warrior Bn. had to adapt to accomplish many portions of our mission here in Baghdad," McIntyre said. "We had to provide security in the traditional sense, but we also had to assist in the training of the Iraqi Security Forces and devise solutions to complex civil development problems."

Inheriting the once volatile area of operations, McIntyre said the threat posed by Special Groups criminals and extremists attacking American forces, ISF and Iraqi citizens remained in what was once a stronghold for the insurgency in Baghdad.

The Warrior Soldiers focused their efforts on the 7th Bde., 2nd NP Div., partnering with the ISF to perform thousands of combined security patrols 24 hours-per-day, coaching, training and mentoring the National Policemen to maintain a constant presence in the communities and transition into the lead for security operations in Doura.

"Our battalion has applied such thorough pressure, and such unrelenting dedication to the mission, that the vast majority of enemy combatants have been expelled from Doura and instances of attacks have been greatly reduced," he said.

Reconciliation between the Sons of Iraq and the 7th Bde., 2nd NP Div., also contributed greatly to the improvement of security operations in the area, said Maj. Jose Polanco, executive officer of the 2nd Bn., 4th Inf. Regt., attached to the 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B.

With the added security, the Warriors contributed to the improvement and growth of economic and essential services for the citizens of Doura, said Polanco, who hails from New York City.

Approving more than 800 microgrants, one-time grants for small business owners and vendors, the Warriors paid out nearly \$500,000 to help rebuild Iraq's local economy and stimulate growth in the neighborhoods and communities, he said.

The efforts to rebuild the Doura Market Complex, the main center of commerce for southern Baghdad, using grants and a modernization project, increased the number of shops and vendors from 319 to more than 1,100 businesses, said Polanco.

"The effective use of targeted microgrants by the Warrior Battalion made it the first unit in all of Baghdad to serve as the conduit through which a leveraged grant pilot program was conducted," Polanco said. "The previous effective use of microgrants made Doura the most logical place to make the transition of microgrants to microloans."

The battalion's mission also encompassed a micro-generation program for local citizens increasing the number of hours



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Brent Williams, 1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div. 2nd Lt. Kyle Fitchner, a platoon leader from Broken Arrow, Okla., assigned to Company D, 2nd Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment, and attached to the 1st Bn., 22nd Inf. Regt., 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, touches base with 1st Lt. Allaa, a National Police platoon leader assigned to 2nd Bn., 5th Bde., 2nd NP Div., before a combined security patrol Oct. 7 in the Aamel community of southern Baghdad's Rashid district.

for electricity in the area to as much as 8 to 12 hours-a-day, he said.

The battalion was also directly responsible for the renovation of more than 40 schools in the 23 muhallahs and the opening of the Rashid Bank in the Doura Market Complex, added Polanco.

As INP and SoI built upon the ongoing security in Doura's northern communities, the residents established a dependable Neighborhood and District Council for the Jaza'ir, Jazeera and Massafee districts, as their elected officials took ownership for their communities and worked to improve the lives of their constituents, he said.

"One year ago, Doura was still burdened with the stigma of violence and danger," said McIntyre. "That perception has since dissipated thanks largely to the commitment and competence of those leaders."

"With the added security, North Doura also saw the return of displaced Families that had fled Baghdad's violence," Polanco said.

"More than 1,350 Families have resettled in Doura, since the battalion's transfer of authority."

Watson said that the battalion's single greatest achievement is evident in the accomplishments of Doura's Lightning Brigade, as it takes authority for Doura.

"Throughout the 14-month deployment, the Soldiers of the Warriors Battalion have displayed the utmost professional-

ism, courage and resolve in protecting the people of Doura," Watson said. "Their commitment to the citizens of Doura is a testament of their dedication to standing for all that is noble and just in the ideals of our Nation; and they have communicated this commitment through their kindness, willingness to listen, and protection of those that cannot defend themselves."

Spending countless hours working alongside the National Police, the NP Training Teams taught the ISF "what right looks like," said Watson.

While working side-by-side with the Warriors, the NP forces developed confident junior Iraqi officers and NCOs, who mirrored Coalition Forces operations, he said.

"The Warrior Bn. has performed admirably through the ever-present and 'hands-on' leadership of its officer and non-commissioned officers," McIntyre said. "The Soldiers of this battalion gave every mission 100 percent of their effort and embodied the unit's motto, 'Don't Tread on Me,' in protecting the citizens of Doura in Baghdad."

The 2nd Bn., 4th Inf. Regt. will begin to redeploy in late December, returning to Fort Polk, La. by early next year.

The 1st Bn., "Panthers" of the 505th Parachute Inf. Regt., 82nd Airborne Div., stationed at Fort Bragg, N.C., and deployed to Forward Operating Base Falcon, in southern Baghdad, will replace the Warriors for a 12-month tour in support of OIF.



4th BCT, 10th Mtn. Div.

# Gol payments to Sons, Daughters of Iraq in New Baghdad = success

**By Sgt. Jeremy Todd**

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE RUSTAMIYAH, Iraq – Government of Iraq officials made monthly salary payments Dec. 18 to 110 Sons of Iraq and Daughters of Iraq for the second consecutive month at two sites in New Baghdad.

The SoI and DoI, who provide security and assist Iraqi Security Forces at checkpoints within their communities, each received 354,000 Iraqi dinars, which is the equivalent to \$300 in U.S. currency.

The GoI accepted responsibility for paying SoI and DoI salaries Oct. 1 when they began integrating the community security forces into ISF and GoI civil service.

Before GoI began paying the monthly salaries in October, Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers paid the SoI and DoI forces to provide security in their local communities. Now however, MND-B Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 66th Armor Regiment attached to 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, merely observed as GoI officials paid SoI and DoI members in New Baghdad.

“The Government of Iraq obviously has this under control,” said Capt. Ben Culver, a native of Troutdale, Ore., who serves as the battalion fires and effects coordinator for 1-66 AR. “The SoI continues to provide valuable checkpoint security throughout the city of Baghdad.”

The SoI and DoI are proud to serve their communities. In addition to pride, however, it is good to have the support of the GoI and earn a salary at the same time.

“It makes me happy to know that I am earning my money while keeping my neighborhood safe,” expressed Kammraa, one of a handful of DoI operating in New Baghdad. “I do not have a husband to care for me, and this employment allows me to care for myself (financially).”

Mohammed Abdul Hassan, whose main responsibility is to document and redistribute seized weapons, was on hand to assure those receiving SoI and DoI payments had valid and updated identity cards. He said he appreciates support the Coalition Forces offered SoI and DoI in the past but believes the GoI’s time has come.

“The U.S. Forces implemented these citizen soldiers and paid their salaries for a long time, and we thank them for that contribution,” expressed Hassan. “But now, it is our responsibility, and I am here to make sure it is done properly.”

Hassan matched each identification card to a name and photo list, meticulously checking for possible forgeries or alterations.

“Yes, it is a somewhat bothersome process, but I understand why they do it,” said Alaa Mohammed Salin, an SoI member who added that he hopes one day to work as an Iraqi Policeman. “They (GoI) have to make sure the person getting money is the right one.”



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

Kassam, a Sons of Iraq member in eastern Baghdad, shows his identification card and marks his thumbprint next to his signature before receiving 354,000 Iraqi dinars as his monthly salary from a National Police officer in New Baghdad Dec. 18.

8th MP Bde.



# Eagle eyes eliminate threat against Soldiers, Iraqi citizens

**By Ray McNulty**

8th MP Bde. PAO

BAGHDAD – The threat of improvised-explosive devices placed by Special Groups criminals can be in a myriad of locations along Iraqi roads and highways.

This was the case in two recent incidents on two highly traveled routes in November, where IEDs resulted in the tragic death and injury to Coalition Forces Soldiers.

Soldiers of 2nd Squad, 1st Platoon, 191st Military Police Company, 8th MP Brigade, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, almost relived a similar incident.

If it had not been for the keen observation of Sgt. Justin Lindteigen, a native of Fargo, N.D., Spc. Michael Jordheim, a native of Thompson, N.D., and Spc. Justin Valenti, a native of Fargo, N.D., they could have met the same fate Dec. 3. The Soldiers knew all too well what the consequences could have been.

As the squad members returned to Forward Operating Base Shield from Police Transition Team training in the Sadr City district in northern Baghdad, they noticed a foreign object. The object was not there earlier that day when they left the base for their mission. The Soldiers immediately took action and stopped the convoy to get a second look.

After inspecting the object from a distance, a call was made to Soldiers of 1st Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division and an explosive ordnance disposal team was dispatched to the scene. With the help of two squads and the Iraqi Army, the area was



U.S. Army courtesy photo

Soldiers of 2nd Squad, 1st Platoon, 191st Military Police Co., 91st MP Battalion, 8th MP Brigade, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, from left to right: Spc. Justin Valenti of Fargo, N.D., Sgt. Justin Lindteigen, a native of Fargo, N.D., and Spc. Michael Jordheim from Thompson, N.D., recall events on Dec. 3, where they identified and eliminated the threat of an improvised explosive device.

cordoned off.

The EOD team removed the object from the top of the T-wall and used a charge to render it safe through a controlled detonation.

“Situational awareness was paramount here – the result of good training and sharp instincts,” said Lt. Col. Michael Thomas, a native of Taunton, Mass., and commander, Task Force 91 MP Battalion.

“This squad’s attention to detail and its quick reaction may have saved the lives of Coalition Forces Soldiers and Iraqi citizens,” said Col. Byron Freeman, 8th MP Bde commander who is a native of Norfolk, Va.

“They are to be commended for their actions,” said Freeman. “They knew what to do – and they did it, cancelling out the plans of the bad guys. Sgt. Lindteigen, Spc. Jordheim, and Spc. Valenti all live the ‘Watchdog’ spirit.”



## 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div.

# Iraqi Security Forces showcase readiness during northwest Baghdad operation

**By Sgt. Brian Tierce**

*2nd HBCT, 1st Inf. Div. PAO*

BAGHDAD – Iraqi Security Forces, with the assistance of Coalition Forces, conducted Operation “Foul Dagger” Dec. 20 in the Ghazaliyah and Ameriyah districts of northwest Baghdad.

The purpose of the mission was to deter a recent uptick in grenade attacks in the area and establish a relationship with the local citizens.

In the early morning hours Soldiers from the 4th Battalion, 22nd Brigade and 4th Battalion, 54th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, partnered with the Troopers from the 5th Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, and 4th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, to execute the mission.

“This was a great Iraqi planned, resourced and executed operation,” said Lt. Col. Monty Willoughby, commander, 4th Sqdn. 10th Cav. Regt., who is a native of Clever, Mo. “The ISF continue to exert pressure on the insurgency to protect the populace.”

The daylong operation led to numerous discoveries of weapons caches in both districts.

Another result of the operation was the interaction with the local populace to show not only a presence in the area but also to show the citizens that the ISF are in the lead and fully capable.

“The Soldiers of the 4th Iraqi Army Battalion showed great commitment to providing a safe environment in Ameriyah and building relationship with local leaders,” said Maj. David Benton, operations officer, 4th Sqdn. 10th Cav. Regt., who hails from Colorado Springs, Colo.

Throughout the mission, ISF and MND-B Soldiers spread out throughout the area to meet with local citizens and search historic cache sites. The Soldiers knocked on residents’ doors and spoke with the citizens, rather than having to force the issue.

That was just fine for the Soldiers on the ground.

“The muhallahs throughout the area were effectively



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

Iraqi Soldiers from the 4th Battalion, 54th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, prepare to conduct an operation alongside Soldiers from the 4th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, operationally attached to the 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, in the Ameriyah district of northwest Baghdad Dec. 20.

searched, and any illegal weapons we discovered were collected to ensure proper authorization and to protect the local citizens,” said Sgt. 1st Class Bruce Pavia, battle captain, 5th Sqdn., 4th Cav. Regt., who is a native of Colorado Springs, Colo.

Upon completion of the operation, the Soldiers returned to their respective Joint Security Stations to conduct thorough after action reviews.

No major events occurred during the operation, so it was

a chance for the ISF and MND-B Soldiers to discuss the high points of the day.

“Operation ‘Foul Dagger’ represented a tactical victory for the Iraq and Coalition Forces,” said Sgt. Joshua Smith, a civil affairs team member, 5th Sqdn. 4th Cav. Regt., who hails from Los Angeles.

“We made a lot of head way with the local population by handing out flyers and making a face-to-face, person-to-person connection with the citizens of Ghazaliyah.”

## Clearance operations build confidence, solidify skills of Iraqi Security Forces



U.S. Army photo by 2nd Lt. Rahsaan Reed, 4th Bn. 42nd FA Regt., 2nd HBCT, 1st Inf. Div.

Iraqi Soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 54th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, along with Iraqi Police from the Hateen neighborhood and Soldiers from the 4th Battalion, 42nd Field Artillery Regiment, operationally attached to the 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, climb over a pile of rubble during clearing operations in the Mansour district of northwest Baghdad Dec. 18.

**By Sgt. Brian Tierce**

*2nd HBCT PAO, 1st Inf. Div.*

BAGHDAD – Over the past year, Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers serving with the 4th Battalion, 42nd Field Artillery Regiment, attached to the 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, have been working side by side with their Iraqi Security Force counterparts to provide security and improve the quality of life for the citizens of the northwest Baghdad.

A recent clearance operation in the Mansour district offered Iraqi Soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 54th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, and members of the Hateen Police Department, the opportunity to display the operational skills they have developed over the past year.

“This was a battalion level operation led by the commander of the 2nd Bn., 54th Bde., 6th IA Div.,” said Capt. Michael Roscoe, Iraqi Security Forces coordinator, 4th Bn., 42nd FA Regt., 2nd HBCT, 1st Inf. Div.

“Over 30 IA Soldiers and 10 Iraqi Police officers from the Hateen neighborhood led the search of the large building and piles of debris in the Hateen neighborhood.”

During the clearing operations, only a minimal amount of weapons, to include two AK-47 assault

rifles were confiscated.

One of the main objectives of the mission was to engage the local population and assess the needs of the people.

“The commanders of the Iraqi and Coalition Forces engaged the local citizens in the area to gather their comments and reactions to the operation,” added Roscoe.

“Coalition elements also plan to conduct future operations in the area to engage with local businesses to see what assistance the ISF might be able to provide.”

During the operation, which was led by the ISF, Soldiers from the 4th Bn., 42nd FA Regt., had the opportunity to observe their Iraqi counterparts as they displayed their leadership capabilities and knowledge of their battle space.

“The IA lieutenants did a great job controlling their assets on the ground,” said Spc. Jason Cuevas, Company B. 4th Bn. 42nd FA Regt., 2nd HBCT, 1st Inf. Div.

The combined nature of the clearing operation suggested that the upcoming mandate to conduct combined operations will not cause a problem for the ISF and CF in the Mansour district and the success of these combined operations should lead to further cooperation from local Iraqi citizens.

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



# CAB lab technicians reach 1,000+ filter tests

By Sgt. 1st Class Brent Hunt

CAB PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – At a remote location on Camp Taji, just north of Baghdad, a small group of fuel lab technicians reached a milestone just six months into their deployment to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom Dec. 23 – more than 1,000 filter effectiveness tests.

The feat was accomplished by the hard work and dedication of the Soldiers of Company A, 404th Aviation Support Battalion, 4th Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, which is based out of Fort Hood, Texas.

Soldiers from the company are responsible for testing every fuel dispensing piece of equipment throughout MND-B to ensure quality aviation fuel goes into Coalition Forces aircraft each and every time.

“We are the lab that validates fuel for the aviation brigade and other elements for MND-B,” said Sgt. Manuel Logan, lab noncommissioned officer in charge, who hails from Los Angeles.

“Every 30 days, all fuel dispensing equipment has to be tested. If it doesn’t get tested, the vehicle is dead-lined, and that is why the FET milestone is so important.

“The FET basically equates to more than 4,000 hours of quality control and assurance, which means that time was dedicated to ensuring the fuel was top quality,” he added.

To conduct a FET, Soldiers take a sample of fuel from dispensing vehicles and run it through a series of tests, using a myriad of beakers, chemicals and high-tech equipment.

The tests include checking filter effectiveness, flashpoint, distillation, freezing point, boiling point, corrosion, electrical conductivity, gravity, contamination and visual appearances. The process usually takes a little less than four hours to complete.

“If there is something wrong with the fuel, the aircraft could possibly go down,” said Sgt. Sonia McGee, petroleum laboratory specialist, who hails from San Diego. “Right now, we have tested samples for more than 20 million gallons of fuel, and I estimate we will test approximately 50 million gallons by the time we redeploy.”

In addition to the responsibility of testing the MND-B petroleum dispensing vehicles, Soldiers in the unit are now testing the Iraqi air force’s supply of aviation petroleum. Iraqi



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Brent Hunt, CAB PAO, 4th Inf. Div. Sgt. Sonia McGee, petroleum laboratory specialist, Company A, 404th Aviation Support Battalion, 4th Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, who hails from San Diego, pours a fuel sample into a beaker for testing on Camp Taji Dec. 23. Soldiers from the company have reached the milestone of more than 1,000 fuel effectiveness tests since being deployed to Iraq six months ago.

airmen have been bringing in their petroleum samples to see how effective their fuel dispensing filters are working.

For many of the airmen, just getting it tested isn’t enough; they are now training how to test fuel and using the high-tech equipment as well.

“I have cross trained about five or six Iraqi air force airmen since I have been out here,” said Pfc. Aaron Lewis, petroleum laboratory technician from Brownwood, Texas. “This will be their mission pretty soon, so anytime they want to come over and get some hands on training, we are here to help.”

U.S. Airmen from the Coalition Forces Air Force Transition Team on Camp Taji have been training the IAF on how to conduct full-spectrum aviation operations. Iraqi airmen are currently in the classroom and out on the airfield getting hands-on experience.

“This is very helpful, and this helps us practice testing fuel,” said IAF Warrant Officer Jasim Abd Alhusen. “We are planning on getting our own lab pretty soon. I have a lot of experience from before and, at this rate, I’ll be able to do the tests on my own in a little more than a week.”

926th Eng. Bde.



# 926th PSD rescues men trapped in flipped car

By 1st Lt. Angel Richardson

926th Eng. Bde. PAO

BAGHDAD – Personal Security Detachment Soldiers from the 926th Engineer Brigade had a unique mission they do not necessarily perform on a daily basis when they rescued two Iraqi citizens, who were trapped in an overturned vehicle after it flipped into a canal Dec. 15.

The MND-B Soldiers performed their heroic act while on mission after visiting an ongoing school projects in the Abu Ghuraib district of Baghdad.

The PSD team was leaving a school in the Abu Ghuraib area and noticed a car speeding down the road.

“The first truck in our (ground assault convoy) was rounding the corner when the local national’s vehicle noticed us and, in an attempt to avoid or move out of the way of the convoy, they slammed on the brakes,” said Sgt. First Class Mathew Scalse, PSD noncommissioned officer in charge.

“The car tried to stop, but it began to swerve and flipped over into the canal,” added Staff Sgt. Thomas Bowie, PSD Squad

Leader.

Scalse said he believe the vehicle was moving an estimated 50-60 mph when the accident occurred. Once the car flipped in the canal, the Soldiers of the 926th PSD cordoned off the area as their fellow troops leapt to action and began pulling the two motorists from the car.

“When I got to the car, they were trapped and hollering. Their faces were halfway under water,” said Bowie. “I held Spc. (Gregory) Floyd’s back collar so he wouldn’t fall into the canal while pulling one of the men out of the car,” mentioned Latih, an interpreter with the brigade.

Once the citizens were pulled from their vehicle, Spc. Joshua Osterman, a medic, 926th Eng. Bde., rendered medical aid to ensure the men did not suffer any more injuries.

“I came up to the Iraqi citizen as he was being pulled from the vehicle,” said Oster-



U.S. Army photo by Capt. Mathew Slyder 926th Eng. Bde. Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers from the 926th Engineer Brigade’s personal security detachment rescued two Iraqi citizens after their vehicle fell into a canal in the Abu Ghuraib district of Baghdad Dec 15.

man. “I saw blood, and I had the man sit down so I could do a medical assessment of his injuries.”

One of the men had a head and arm injury. The two were provided space blankets to keep them warm in the cool temperature.

“First, I cleaned the blood off of the gentle-

men’s face and hands,” said Osterman. “I bandaged his head and hand because he had minor cuts that were continuing to bleed.”

The PSD Soldiers who assisted in retrieving the men from their water-filled vehicle said they felt very lucky to have been in the right place at the right time.

“If we were not right there when the accident occurred, the men could have drowned,” said Bowie.

Floyd and Osterman said it is important that the Iraqi citizens know that MND-B Soldiers are there to provide assistance when needed.

“I personally am thankful for being able help the Iraqi citizens,” said Floyd, a PSD driver. “It lets them know that we are here to help in anyway.”

“It was a good feeling to offer treatment. They were very grateful, and it was very fulfilling to be a part of a team so eager and willing to help,” added Osterman.



2nd BCT, 25th Inf. Div.

# Sons of Iraq continue to serve in Tarmiyah

**By Staff Sgt. Michael Moody**

*1st Bn. 14th Inf. Regt., 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div.*  
TARMIYAH, Iraq – The Government of Iraq continues to make steps toward self-sufficiency as demonstrated by its latest success – the recent paydays for the Sons of Iraq (Abna al-Iraq).

The GoI took over payment of the SoI October 1, making December's pay the second since the GoI took full responsibility of the program; the successful pay period lasted one week, Dec. 15-19, in the Tarmiyah Qada, northwest of Baghdad.

"This is really a great step forward," said 1st Lt. Erik Peterson, a native of Centennial, Colo., who is a civil military operations officer assigned with Company A, 1st Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment "Golden Dragons," 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team "Warrior," 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad. "This is the Ministry of Defense taking control, and now, they are officially integrated into the MoD."

Iraqi Army units throughout the Tarmiyah Qada are responsible to act as both pay agents and, in conjunction with the Iraqi Police, provide security.

The Sons of Iraq, an organization born of the Sahwa, or "Awakening," movement of 2007, is one of the principle agents responsible for the dramatically improved security situation enjoyed by the Iraqi citizenry.

The SoI members are paid according to their rank, said Peterson. There are the lower ranking individuals, who normally man

checkpoints; the mid ranking individuals, who are in charge of the lower ranking members; and lastly, the checkpoint captains, who report directly to the SoI leader.

The GoI is also working toward transitioning current SoI members into other roles within the Iraqi Security Forces. So far, 194 former SoI from Tarmiyah now serve their country as police officers.

Peterson said that while many SoI members are actively trying to transition into different jobs within the ISF, he still sees a need for their services.

"They are the continuity of the area," he said. "They have the firsthand knowledge of their area because they never leave."

This is especially important as IA soldiers are continually moved around, much like the U.S. Army, he added.

The SoI members who possess specific skills, such as engineers, skilled laborers and those with higher education, will be offered employment with the municipal or provincial governments.

"A successful transition is very encouraging to witness," said Capt. Calvin Kline, a native of Cincinnati, who serves as the information operations officer for the Golden Dragons.

"The Sons of Iraq, who have provided security and made great sacrifices, are being provided long-term employment, while the Government of Iraq is continuing to build its security forces. It's good to see; they're benefiting, and so is the government."



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Jacob Smith, combat camera, attached to 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div. An Iraqi government official talks with a member of the Sons of Iraq (Abna al-Iraq) prior to giving him his monthly pay, which was issued by the Government of Iraq in the city of Tarmiyah Dec. 17.

## Wolfhounds, Iraqi National Police search for illegal weapons



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. JB Jaso III, 1st Bn., 27th Inf. Regt., 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div.

1st Lt. Tommy Ryan, a Seminole, Fla., native, discusses plans with an Iraqi National Police officer Dec. 22 in the Istaqlal Qada during Operation Gunslinger Bonzai XXVI. Ryan is an infantry platoon leader with Company A, 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment "Wolfhounds," 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team "Warrior," 25th Infantry Division.

**By Staff Sgt. JB Jaso III**

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

ISTAQLAL, Iraq – Soldiers from Company A, 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment "Wolfhounds," 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team "Warrior," 25th Infantry Division, attached to 3rd BCT, 4th Inf. Div., Multi-National Division – Baghdad, and members of the 2nd Brigade, 1st Iraqi National Police Division, weathered the high winds and cold winter temperatures in search of illegal weapons caches Dec. 22 during Operation Gunslinger Bonzai XXVI.

The search led the combined forces to the Hussaniyah town of the Istaqlal Qada, where they searched the open fields, empty compounds and historic cache locations for any signs of illegal weapons.

In the past, the Wolfhounds have found mortar rounds, improvised-explosive device making material and weapons in the area that could've been used to harm Iraqi Security Forces, civilians and Coalition Forces.

Even though the Wolfhounds didn't find any weapons this day, the combined operation was a giant step toward continued security in Iraq, said 1st Lt. Tommy Ryan, a native of Seminole, Fla., who serves as a platoon leader.

"They were very knowledgeable and offered lots of advice," said Ryan, in reference to the NPs who assisted in the operation. "We were able to gather intelligence that was crucial to understanding a high-value individual in our area of operations."

The mission served to strengthen the bonds of the combined team for future operations.

"All patrols are now combined," said Capt. Timothy Hall, the battalion's assistant operations officer, who is a native of Fairfax Station, Va., in talking about the frequency of patrols the Wolfhounds are conducting with the Iraqi Security Forces. "We are ensuring that the conditions are set for the ISF to assume full responsibility of the area's security."

However, noted Ryan, working together is nothing new for the MND-B Soldiers.

"We have been conducting combined operations with the Iraqi Security Forces since day one," Ryan stated. "The practice hasn't change."



# Task Force 'Thunder' cleans up grove in Panda Garden

By Staff Sgt Scott Wolfe

2nd BCT PAO, 1st Armd. Div.

BAGHDAD – Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers continue to build upon their working relationship with the Sons of Iraq and Iraqi Army elements during Operation Panda Garden in the Jabour area, south of Baghdad, Dec. 15.

Company B, 1st Battalion, 35th Armor Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, MND-B, had overall control of the mission. They coordinated with the 4th Company, 2nd Battalion, 55th Brigade, 17th Iraqi Army Division and Sons of Iraq from the Jabour area for perimeter security during the operation.

The missions' intent was to clear prime, arable farmland suspected of being filled with mines and IEDs before completing cache sweeps through the area. The exercise was designed to deny suspected caches to al-Qaeda in Iraq elements during the upcoming elections and provide useable farmland to the village.

"We've got our engineer assets and our tanks. They're going to clear that palm grove and make it usable for the local farmers," said 1st Lt. Andrew Schlaf, from San Diego, Calif. He is the fire support officer for Company B and coordinated all communication from the tactical operations center during this mission. "We just want to make sure that the Iraqi citizens don't get hurt when they go out to farm."

On a clear, sunny day with blustery winds, members of the explosive ordinance detachment from the 447th Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron searched what would become the command post during Panda Garden, first with a robot, then with suited-up personnel.

Air Force Staff Sgt. Kathleen Lee and her military working dog, Cezar, inspected the rooms that would soon house the Tactical Operation Center for the duration of Panda Garden. Lee and Cezar are members of MND-B's "Striker Kennels," the K-9 working dogs attached to the Iron Brigade for this mission.

After the house was cleared by machine, man and beast, Company C, 40th Engineer Battalion, started clearing the palm grove wind breaks on either side of the fallow field at the near end of the objective.

Spc. James Gaudio, of Shabbona, Ill., is a combat engineer with the company and guided a remote-controlled vehicle, called a VNU-4, through the larger spaces between trees. The vehicle has a mine roller attachment he used to clear lanes through the groves. The roller plates weigh approximately 300 pounds each.

The remote uses a hand-held controller much like that of a gaming console, even with the squares, circles and triangles on the buttons.

Gaudio said that another configuration of the VNU-4 uti-



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Scott Wolfe, 2nd BCT PAO, 1st Armd. Div.

An Abrams tank from Company B, 1st Battalion, 35th Armor Regiment, Task Force 4-27 "Thunder", 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, clears fallow fields surrounded by an untended palm grove in the Jabour area, south of Baghdad Dec. 15.

lized that portion of the controller.

"I find it funny that I don't play video games, and yet I get a joystick from one to run an Army robot," said the combat engineer.

Other members of Company C cleared the areas around trees and locations where the remote vehicles could not reach using a combination of mine-detectors and careful probing by hand.

Spc. Aaron Laperna, a native of Dorr, Mich., explained that the mine detectors are a combination metal detector and small ground-penetrating radar array. When the detector goes off, it is because it has observed a change in the density of the ground underneath, coupled with metal content.

The empty field itself would be cleared by the tanks of Company B, with mine-roller attachments prominent on their armored behemoths. These tanks would prowl throughout the plot of land, trusting in their armor to protect them from an IED or mine.

Later, the field was searched by a Husky from the engineer

company. It is a single-Soldier vehicle that uses radar detection panels to look beneath the surface of the ground. When the vehicle operator would register an anomaly, he marked the location for a follow-on team with ground-penetrating radar mounted on a two-wheeled cart for further investigation.

The operation lasted through Dec. 19. It coordinated many different elements to ultimately make life better for local Iraqis.

When the mission was declared over, the village leader had the ability to have his people plant more valuable farmland and harvest the dates from the palm grove.

Before the task force planned to clear the area of both hazardous obstacles and possible caches, the field and grove were resources in reach but unavailable to the village of South Arab.

The wide range of systems utilized shows that MND-B forces are committed to denying caches from criminal elements, who would wish to disrupt the upcoming elections and to bettering the lives of the Iraqi people.

## MND-B Soldiers bring clean water to rural villages in Mahmudiyah



U.S. Army photo by Lt. Col. Wayne Marotto, 2nd BCT PAO, 1st Armd. Div.

Soldiers from Multi-National Division – Baghdad, 1st Battalion, 63rd Combined Arms Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, and residents of Chaka 1 work to install a solar powered water filter in Lutifiyah Nahia Dec. 16.

By Lt. Col. Wayne Marotto

2nd BCT PAO, 1st Armd. Div.

BAGHDAD – Local Mahmudiyah civic leaders, Sheiks, villagers and Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 63rd Combined Arms Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, held a ceremony for the installation of two Solar Powered Water Filters Dec. 16 at Lutifiyah Nahia, Mahmudiyah Qada.

The \$48,000 CERP water filters contract was awarded to the Ard Aleqa Contracting Company of Lutifiyah and will provide the 400 citizens of the community with clean, quality water. Prior to the water filters, the rural community did not have access to clean potable water, which historically has not had access to centrally distributed water.

"The people here get very little water, so it is good that we will be able to have clean water finally," said Tah Hassim Fadha the Chaka 1 Leader, the equivalent of a mayor.

Leaders from 1st Battalion, 63rd Combined Arms Battalion, worked in partnership with the local government to determine the best sites for the two water filters. One filter was placed near an Iraqi Army checkpoint in a rural area with a population of 200. The other filter was located in another rural area with a population of 200.

Sheik Adnon Radhy, a local sheik, told the crowd that he was pleased that the community would now have access to clean water. After his speech, the large crowd waited to taste the fresh water. One Iraqi was overheard saying that the people were so used to dirty water that the clean water tastes bad and unfamiliar, to the laughs of his fellow villagers.

"The rural areas are the heart of Mahmudiyah Qada, and they are often overlooked by both the GoI and CF. It is great to be able to get out to these isolated communities and make a difference," said 1st Lt. Robert Bowe, a native of Helena, Mont., and the civil military affairs officer for 1-63 CAB.

# HAPPY HOLIDAYS



CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – Lt. Col. Dale Buckner, commander, Special Troops Battalion, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, accepts a Christmas present from "Santa," played by Maj. Gen. Jeffery Hammond, commanding general of MND-B and 4th Inf. Div., during a Christmas staff party at the division headquarters Dec. 24.

U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Jody Metzger, MND-B PAO

## MND-B Soldiers celebrate Christmas throughout Baghdad



CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – David Lewis, a civilian contractor, president of R4 Incorporated, waves to the Soldiers in a Stryker as it leaves the gates to go on patrol Dec. 25. The members who work with R4 Inc. handed out cards and bags of candy to the troops as their way of giving back to the troops to recognize the service they provide by serving for their country.

U.S. Army photo by Spc. Benjamin Crane, MND-B PAO



▲ BAGHDAD – 1st Sgt. Timothy VanRoyen, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 299th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, and Sgt. 1st Class Davana Kirkwood, also of HHC, 299th BSB, hand out stockings to Soldiers in the battalion at Camp Liberty Dec. 25. The stocking gifts were part of "Operation Sugar Plum."

U.S. Army photo by Command Sgt. Maj. Julia Kelly, 299th BSB, 2nd HBCT, 1st Inf. Div.



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Jody Metzger, MND-B PAO



▲ CAMP LIBERTY Iraq – Reindeer and Santa Styrofoam statues were a few of many decorations that lined the Ironhorse Oasis Dining Facility where members of Multi-National – Division dined on a Christmas feast divvied out by the command staff of 4th Infantry Division. Along with the decorations, the 4th Inf. Div. band performed a holiday concert of Christmas songs.

U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Jody Metzger, MND-B PAO



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

▲ CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Col. Todd McCaffrey (left), a native of Hudson, Ohio, and commander, 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team "Warrior," 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, wishes happy holidays and encourages a Soldier assigned to 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment "Gimlets," 2nd SBCT, to "Finish Strong" during his visit to Joint Security Station Nassir Wa Salam, west of Baghdad, Dec. 25. The "Finish Strong" campaign urges Warrior Soldiers to combat complacency during their last two months in Iraq.



U.S. Army photo by Maj. Mike Humphreys, 3rd BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

◀ BAGHDAD – Capt. Aaron Swartz, a native of Lexington, Ill., who is the chaplain for 3rd Special Troops Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, and Maj. William "Chip" Nicholas, the 3rd BCT's chaplain, who is from Orlando, Fla., sing Christmas carols at a new chapel on Forward Operating Base War Eagle Dec. 24. After nearly seven months of holding religious services in conference rooms, the Strikers of 3rd BCT, 4th Inf. Div., christened their new chapel with a Christmas Eve candlelight service.

# HAPPY HOLIDAYS

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – Sgt. David Rivera, a trumpet player with the 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, shares his vibes during a Christmas concert at the Ironhorse Oasis Dining Facility Dec. 25. The event was a delight to the Soldiers and civilian contractors who dined on a meal served up by the command staff while they enjoyed Christmas tree lights and other decorations throughout the facility.



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Jody Metzger, MND-B PAO



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Jody Metzger, MND-B PAO

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# Day in the life ...

## Watchdog interpreter bridges 2 cultures

By Staff Sgt. Jessika Malott

8th MP Bde. PAO

BAGHDAD – Although words are not necessary for kind gestures, communication on the battlefield between Coalition Forces and local nationals is paramount for the success of rebuilding Iraq.

Due to the time, energy and resources used to conduct operations throughout the country of Iraq, there is one aspect for every mission that remains a constant since 2006 – the use of interpreters.

For Spc. Mohamed Dawoud, an interpreter assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 8th Military Police “Watchdog” Brigade, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, a native of New Jersey, the answer was clear when making the decision to join the Army.

“I joined the Army because I love this country. I will do anything for it – fight for it and help the nation – because they have helped me so much,” said Dawoud.

Not only was Dawoud’s love of country his motivation, but to direct him into the career field of his choice was based upon his sympathy for a mother who lost her son.

“I was watching television and this lady was crying because she lost her son,” he said. “Her son died because he did not understand the cultures and customs here. I want to inform everyone about what they can and cannot do here, to keep themselves safe.”

With his motivation for the job and dedication to his country, Dawoud starts his day like every Soldier. After conducting physical training and personal hygiene, he sits down in front of his television to watch Arabic news outlets to stay informed with what is going on within his area of operations.

After reading the news on the internet and watching television, he briefs his team about the various events happening or information for situational awareness.

“When we go on mission, I am prepared so in the event we need to stop, I can get out of the vehicle and talk to people to find out what the situation may be,” he said. “I carry a loudspeaker so that if I need to talk to a large group of people, I can do that.”

Dawoud also translates for the squad as they are moving to their various destinations. If he notices new signs or graffiti, he will Alert the team of what it may say in the event of danger ahead for the squad.

After arriving at their destination, Dawoud will either assist his squad members with their objectives or he will translate for the brigade leadership during meetings.

“I have to walk a fine line and pay attention to not only the words spoken, but also to the body language and gestures that are made,” he said. “If I don’t, I am not doing a good job, and the true meaning of what is being said will be lost.”

When Dawoud returns from mission, he also translates documents needed for other sections of the brigade that they may have obtained from their missions and objectives.

“In my opinion, I believe that we could not do our



U.S. Army courtesy photo

Spc. Mohamed Dawoud, an interpreter/translator assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Co., 8th Military Police “Watchdog” Brigade, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, a native of New Jersey, interprets information between an American Soldier and an Iraqi Army Soldier.

mission without interpreters like Dawoud,” said Master Sgt. Mike “Top” Barnes, the Police Transition Team noncommissioned officer in charge, a native of Elmira, N.Y. “With our mission, we rely heavily on them for translation of documents as well as for our conversations with the Iraqi Police officials. Their expertise allows us to carry out our brigade commander’s intent and vision without losing anything in translation.”

The days that Dawoud is not on mission, he conducts culture briefings for Soldiers.

“I also give briefings for the unit so that all Soldiers are aware of the cultures and customs for the area,” he said. “Everyone needs to know everything about the Iraqi people and how the Iraqi government works. For example, when you see a female, what and how are you going to say an Arabic word that will respectfully assure them to not offend them.”

Dawoud, who previously served with the 18th MP Bde., has extended his tour with the 8th MP Bde. to provide continuity between both of the command teams.

“I’m proud of what I do,” he added. “It doesn’t matter when I go home because my Family and friends are proud of me, I feel like I’m accomplished, and I am very happy in my job.”

“I joined the Army because I love this country. I will do anything for it – fight for it and help the nation – because they have helped me so much.”

**Spc. Mohamed Dawoud**  
interpreter  
HHC, 8th MP Bde., MND-B

# Raider K-9 team brings added capabilities to Rashid district

**Sgt. David Hodge**

1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

FORWARD OPERATING BASE FALCON, Iraq – A Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldier and his four-legged partner recently joined forces with other military dog teams at Forward Operating Base Falcon in helping to make the streets

of Baghdad a safer place for Iraqi citizens and Soldiers to live and operate.

Sgt. James Harrington, a military policeman and dog handler, attached to the 1st Special Troops Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, along with Ryky, his K-9 partner, patrol the streets and communities of southern Baghdad's Rashid district to search for weapons and make Soldiers a more effective force.

Harrington, assigned to the 947th Military Police Detachment, part of the 3rd Infantry Regiment "The Old Guard," stationed out of Fort Myer, Va., and his 3-year-old Belgian Malinois partner, completed approximately 52 missions and uncovered more than 25 finds since arriving to Rashid in October.

Harrington said that Ryky made several significant finds since beginning her mission in Baghdad, to include an AK-47 rifle hidden in a false ceiling and four mortar rounds that led to the discovery of a large mound of hollowed-out munitions.

Ryky detects odors from many types of munitions, such as ammunition, weapons, mortar rounds, artillery rounds, homemade explosives and trigger devices with residue on them.

Harrington, a native of New Orleans, said what makes the hollow ceiling discovery so significant is the fact that most K-9s do not acknowledge above space above their own height.

"Ryky is a very friendly dog," explained Harrington, a former infantryman in the Marines. "She is not a trained attack dog, so I allow her to be sociable with Soldiers. I let others pet her because it is a big morale booster."

Harrington met Ryky at the Specialized Service Dog School at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio.

"At the school, the dogs are exposed to helicopter rides, simulated gunfire and simulated mortars to see how they react," said Harrington, a 14-year military service veteran with six deployments since 1995. "The dogs must be confident around the noises; they can't just take off running."

Capable of detecting 19 separate odors on the battlefield and the ability to run off of a leash, the SSD dogs have a distinct advantage out in sector, said Harrington.

"Having Sgt. Harrington and the SSD dog gives me the extra capability to unleash the dog into an open area," said Staff Sgt. Christopher Ogle, who hails from Dayton, Ohio, and is the kennel master for the Falcon K-9 Team, 40th MP Det., from Fort Sill, Okla., attached to the 1st STB.

"It is that off-leash capability that puts the handler out of danger," he said.

Harrington said he feels the ability to multitask while operating in sector and conducting weapon searches is an important quality dog handlers should possess.

"I have to be able to watch for my security, watch for the dog's security, watch what she is searching, and finally lead the dog in the direction I want her to search in next," he explained. "I always have to be two steps ahead."

Recently, Harrington and Ryky cleared a 600-meter portion of a main thoroughfare in Baghdad for a distinguished visitor; it took them approximately an hour.

"It would take another dog three hours to complete that stretch of road because they would be on a six-foot leash and the handler has to present everything to the dog," Harrington stated.

Usually, the team uses a leash while out in sector due to stray dogs and small confined areas, he added, but, if needed, Ryky could be up to 200 yards away and still effectively search an area.

"It takes me out of the equation in case something was to go wrong; we lose a dog, but we don't lose a handler," explained Harrington, who has approximately two years experience with dogs.

According to Harrington, the SSD program has potential and is quickly becoming more widespread across all facets of the military.

One particular advantage of SSDs is the dog graduates ready to deploy right after completing the school, added Harrington.

Normal working dogs leave their school able to detect nine odors and receive additional training by their handlers in theater, said Harrington.

It is said in the "dog world" that the dog always out ranks the handler because the dog will lead the handler to where the odor originates, said Harrington.

"I think Ryky and I make Soldiers' jobs easier because we can search faster, the dog can smell better and she leads from the front," Harrington stated.

In the future, the need for working dogs may increase on the battlefield thanks to their keen sense of smell and ability to discover weapons with minimal Soldier over watch.

The Falcon K-9 Team currently keeps seven dogs in its kennels to support military operations in southern Baghdad, explained Ogle, who has six years experience handling dogs.



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. James Harrington, 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

Ryky, a three-year-old Belgian Malinois, is partnered with Sgt. James Harrington, a military policeman and dog handler from New Orleans, who is assigned to the 947th Military Police Detachment, part of the 3rd Infantry Regiment "The Old Guard," stationed out of Fort Myer, Va., attached to the 1st Special Troops Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

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<http://www.hood.army.mil/4id>

# MND-B selects NCO, Soldier of the Year

from **Board Pg. 1**

To get to this level requires rigorous study, discipline and commitment, said Sgt. Thomas El Far, a native of Bruceville, Texas, who serves as a petroleum supply specialist with Company E, 1st Battalion, 4th Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Inf. Div.

"This is my first time getting this far," he said. "It has been an unreal experience and a lot of hard work, dedication and preparation. (While deployed), you have to work your 12-hour shift, find time to eat, go to the gym, take your laundry in and study – it takes constant study. I carry note cards in my pocket at all times, so any time I have a second, I pull them out and study."

As the Soldiers waited patiently outside, studying with their sponsors, their names were called one by one. They proceeded into the building and reported to Gioia, the president of the board. Reporting itself was rather imposing because along with Gioia sat seven brigade command sergeants major from across MND-B.

After presenting themselves, they were handed off to a single member of the board, who asked a series of questions based on multiple categories such as: medical, weapons, military history, current events, leadership and troop-leading procedures. As the Soldiers answered the questions, the other six judges graded them based on their responses and their professional composure.

After the last of the 16 competitors completed his daunting task, the score sheets were tallied up. Also taken into consideration were each competitor's physical fitness training and weapons qualification scores. The Soldier and NCO with the highest overall scores were chosen as Multi-National Division – Baghdad's Soldier and Noncommissioned Officer of the Year for Operation Iraqi Freedom 07-09.

Spc. Brian Mouton, a medic with Headquarters Battery, 3rd Battalion, 29th Field Artillery Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Inf. Div., earned honors as the MND-B Soldier of the Year. Sgt. Jamiell Dominguez, who serves as medical section NCOIC with Headquarters Company, 2nd General Support Battalion, 4th CAB, 4th Inf. Div., earned recognition as the MND-B NCO of the year.

"This personally means a lot to me," said Mouton, a native of Seguin, Texas. "I've only been in the military for 22 months, but my unit takes being a Soldier seriously – and they let me know that from the start."



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

Sgt. Jameill Dominguez reports to the president of the board as Command Sgt. Maj. John Gioia returns her salute during Multi-National Division – Baghdad's Soldier and Noncommissioned Officer of the Year board competition for Operation Iraqi Freedom 07-09. Dominguez, a native of Seattle, serves as a medical section noncommissioned officer in charge with Headquarters Company, 2nd General Support Battalion, 4th Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division. Gioia is the senior enlisted leader for MND-B and the 4th Inf. Div. Dominguez and her fellow competitors were confronted with the daunting task of having to face eight MND-B command sergeants major as they answered questions to the best of their abilities at Freedom Rest in Baghdad's "International Zone" Dec. 18. Dominguez earned recognition as the Noncommissioned Officer of the Year.

"I knew what I had to do to become the top Soldier in my unit and now my division. I couldn't have done it without my leadership helping me prepare."

For Dominguez, a Seattle, Wash., native, the pressure of the board is something she is starting to become accustomed to since earning recognition as Soldier of the Year in 2007.

"To be able to represent your unit at any level is an incredible opportunity for personal and professional growth and development," she said. "It's given me an opportunity for a self assessment to reflect on where I am as an indi-

vidual and what I need to improve on."

The most valuable things she's learned, she explained, has been from her peers, leaders, subordinates and those she competes against.

"I'm among the best of the best," she said. "Having the opportunity to come together, learn from each other and take what we learn back to our units is making our units better and stronger."

At the conclusion of the competition, the winners stood side by side as their fellow competitors shook their hands and congratulated them on their success.

## Joint military mail terminals ensure smiles are delivered



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

A Kellogg, Brown and Root worker sorts through mail at Baghdad International Airport at a Joint Military Mail Terminal, Dec. 22. JMMT is the primary mail system for the 4th Infantry Division and Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

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

BAGHDAD – Since before the establishment of the United States of America – postal systems have been in place, delivering up mail to those troops deployed and a long way from Family and friends. It is because of this mail system that our men and women who serve in the United States military can have a viable way to correspond to those back home. It is with a special thanks to American founder and philosopher, Benjamin Franklin who is attributed to being the first Postal General to oversee the dispersion and delivery of mail within the American Colonies. What Franklin began became a paramount of growth in how we communicate today within the United States Postal Service.

While service members continue to serve overseas, sending or receiving mail is as easy as dropping a letter or a parcel off at the post office. But before it can be whisked away to the waiting recipient, there are several steps the mail must hit before this happens.

Before a parcel can be sent overseas to a foreign destination, USPS hands off service mail over to military jurisdiction and groups like the 81st Military Mail Terminal stationed throughout Kuwait, and Iraq ensuring service mail arrives safely to its destination. The MMT works through highly trained contractors serving with (KBR) Kellogg, Brown and Root, as well as Airmen serving with the 732nd Air Expeditionary Group out of Balad Air Base, Iraq. Together, they make Joint Military Mail Terminals.

"Our JMMT makes sure everything is going smoothly with the operations piece, and to ensure that KBR is meeting the intent of their contract. They also make sure that mail gets out to their respective units," said Lt. Col. Jason Kuroiwa, native of Honolulu Hawaii, who serves at Bagh-

dad International Airport, Iraq, as Director of the 81st MMT, under the 10th Expeditionary Sustainment Command.

The JMMT is responsible for dispersing mail to servicemen throughout all of Iraq and Kuwait and have three locations throughout the two countries.

"We're located at three different locations; JMMT North in Balad, Iraq, JMMT South which is in BIAP, and JMMT Kuwait which is in Camp Arifjan," said Kuroiwa.

Each year the JMMTs have succeeded in delivering millions of pounds of mail to their respective area of operations.

"This year we have delivered over 76,000,000 pounds of mail, and that's all of the JMMT's collectively," said Kuroiwa. "Here at BIAP we've delivered well over 32,000,000 this year, and for the month of December it has added up to over 131,000 pounds a day."

December can be a busy month due to all of the Christmas packages coming and going. To avoid potential problems the JMMT prepared for the worst.

"We monitor and oversee all of the problems that we might encounter in December – like this storm in the states now; the planes can't come in or go out. We can't do much about that, but sometimes units come in to get their mail and it gets a little backed up, so we take steps to mitigate it, like a 24-hour pick-up schedule so the units don't have to worry about time constraints, and this Christmas we haven't had any issues," said Sgt. Trend Fate, a native of Wilson, N.C., serving as operations non-commissioned officer in charge for the 81st MMT located in BIAP, Iraq.

Constant dependence on solidarity and competence of the JMMT and KBR contractors ensures what every service member overseas longs for – the delivery of a little piece of home.

# 40 MND-B Soldiers welcomed into Sgt. Audie Murphy Club

By Pfc. Lyndsey Dransfield  
MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – During a World War II battle in Holtzwihr, France, a wounded U.S. Soldier climbed on top of a burning tank, placed himself behind a .50-caliber machine gun and fired, killing the advancing enemy soldiers.

The Soldier, Sgt. Audie Murphy, was awarded the Medal of Honor at the age of 19 for his courageous actions. To this day, he the most decorated American Soldier in the Army's history and is an example to live by for all who wear the uniform.

One of the highest honors that any noncommissioned officer could hope to achieve is to be inducted into the club that bears Murphy's name: the Sergeant Audie Murphy Club.

During a ceremony at Freedom Rest in Baghdad's "International Zone" 40 Multi-National Division – Baghdad noncommissioned officers – and one surprised leader – were recognized for their excellence and welcomed into the highly esteemed club Dec. 18.

"These 40 noncommissioned officers represent the top 10 percent of the noncommissioned officers in the Army," said Command Sgt. Maj. John Gioia, the senior enlisted leader of MND-B and the 4th Infantry Division. Gioia, a native of Buffalo, N.Y., was inducted into the club in 1986.

"These Soldiers have been in combat for 13 months, and they took their own personal time to take it to the next level," said Gioia. "That tells me they have an incredible amount of devotion to duty and selfless service.

"They have gone through some hardships and sacrifices, and are still leading their Soldiers – even while preparing for this ceremony. These individuals embody what being a noncommissioned officer is all about, and they are living the NCO Creed."

The ceremony itself being conducted in Iraq was somewhat appropriate considering that the 4th Inf. Div. is a III Corps unit out of Fort Hood, Texas, where the club originated in 1986.

Earning induction into the Sergeant Audie Murphy Club is a rigorous process that requires discipline, selfless service and commitment. The Soldiers must first be recommended

## Sergeant Audie Murphy Inductees:

### 4th Inf. Div.:

1st Sgt. Timothy Bolyard	Sgt. 1st Class Mathew Dilcher
Sgt. 1st Class Grisel Rios	Staff Sgt. Tawana Batten
Staff Sgt. Michael Blake	Staff Sgt. Glenn Butler
Staff Sgt. Genaro Cayetano	Staff Sgt. Christopher Flagg
Staff Sgt. Jonathan Godfrey	Staff Sgt. Jason Patrick
Staff Sgt. Richard Valencia	Sgt. Shane Pennington
Sgt. Danielle Robinson	

### 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div.:

Staff Sgt. Ming Chiu	Staff Sgt. Brandon Gulley
Staff Sgt. CyTique Johnson	Staff Sgt. Matthew Zepeda
Sgt. Donald Casey	Sgt. John Castro

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

Sgt. 1st Class Chadwick Doyle	Sgt. 1st Class Travis Elliston
Sgt. 1st Class Daniel Mendez	Sgt. 1st Class Jason Milstead
Sgt. 1st Class Robert Sandoval	Sgt. 1st Class Gordon Smith
Staff Sgt. Brian Adams	Staff Sgt. Scott Bessette
Staff Sgt. Calvin Cameron	Staff Sgt. Adelbert Capen
Staff Sgt. Robert Dachenhausen	Staff Sgt. John Johnson
Staff Sgt. Tommy Peek	Staff Sgt. Christopher Roach
Sgt. Patrick Axon	Sgt. Steven Burke
Sgt. Ryan Escalona	Sgt. Airealle Glynn
Sgt. Josh Macer	Sgt. Kristin Taylor
Sgt. Chad Workman	

at company level and then attend numerous boards, working their way through their respective brigade and division commands, explained Gioia.

"I think the best preparation for the boards is actual experience: the experience that comes from the mentoring you receive from your leaders and peers," said Staff Sgt. Glenn Butler, a fire support specialist with Special Troops Battalion, 4th Inf. Div.

"Most of the questions are situational based. They ask about financial situations, combat situations – really, anything goes. They try to put you under stress and make you doubt your judgment while looking for accuracy and professionalism in your answers. This experience has been an incredible honor and extremely humbling."

The guest speaker for the event was Maj. Gen. Jeffery

Hammond, the commanding general of MND-B and 4th Inf. Div., who is a native of Hattiesburg, Miss.

Hammond congratulated the NCO's and commended them for setting an example to all Soldiers.

"There are two things that you may have more of than anyone in this division right now and that's character and moral courage," Hammond said. "Those aren't just words: It is everything you must be, you will be, and it's what the nation needs from you.

"It's your character that causes you to lead by example and your moral courage to do the right thing always, even when you think no one is watching. This is the guiding light that keeps the NCO Corps moving forward every day."

Following Hammond's speech, each new Sgt. Audie Murphy Club inductee was called forward and presented the Sergeant Audie Murphy Medallion.

"I'm honored to be recognized," said Sgt. 1st Class Grisel Rios, with Company A, STB, 4th Inf. Div., a native of San Turce, Puerto Rico. "This is a major accomplishment in my career, but mostly, I see it as a way for my Soldiers to look up and see that they can do it too. What Audie Murphy stood for is to lead from the front, and as NCOs, we try to lead from the front and mentor Soldiers to lead from the front as well."

The final induction came as quite a surprise when the man who attended to pay his respects to his NCOs who had distinguished themselves from their peers was himself an unsuspecting inductee into the club as an honorary member when Gioia called Hammond back to center stage.

The honorary induction of Hammond into this prestigious club is more than appropriate, said Gioia, because Hammond consistently and adamantly empowers the NCOs of the division.

Hammond's belief in the NCO Corps is readily evident for those who have met him. He has a powerful message he shares with his troops as he travels throughout the battlefield: "Sergeant run this division."

"Most of the Army is made up of enlisted Soldiers. They are the heart and soul and the strength of the Army," said Hammond, in expressing his gratitude to the gathered NCOs after being presented his honorary membership. "At the end of the day, it's you they (the Soldiers) trust, not me."

## Soldiers make commitment to 'Steel' brothers

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

COMBAT OUTPOST FORD, Iraq – Nineteen Soldiers took a few minutes away from their operational schedule and gathered Dec. 22 in the courtyard of Combat Outpost Ford, in the Bedia neighborhood of Baghdad's Adhamiyah district.

The Soldiers, who are members of Team Steel, have been in Iraq for close to a year. Some had seen heavy fighting in Sadr City, some had lost friends, gained new ones and all had spent a lot of time during the past few years away from family and friends.

In spite of, or because of, all the things the Soldiers had been through, they were reenlisting.

"It takes a special kind of person to volunteer to do the things that we do," said Lt. Col. Michael Pappal, who serves as the commander of 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 68th Armor Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad. "Steel once again is leading the battalion in reenlistment."

Team Steel is not just the Company C, 1-68 AR's nickname – it is a way of life.

"By becoming part of a team, and not only being told you're part of a team, the Soldiers

see that they are being taken care of... it wants them to be continuously part of an organization," said 1st Sgt. Conrad Gonzales, a native of San Antonio, Company C's senior enlisted leader. "Soldiers join the Army to do the job that they joined the Army for. They saw that their brothers to the left and right of them are doing the exact same thing they are. They're not just doing it for themselves; they're doing it for the guys next to them."

The Soldiers formed three rows and raised their right hands as Pappal, a native of Indiana, Pa., read the oath of enlistment.

"I think it is leadership as well fostering an environment of cohesion and teamwork, and you see that throughout the entire command," said Staff Sgt. Derek Eurales, a native of Cairo, Ill., who serves as the career counselor for 1-68 AR.

Staff Sgt. Mark Peck, who serves as a section sergeant for Team Steel's 1st Platoon, was one of the reenlistees.

"I decided that I was going to do this as a career," said Peck, a native of Buckhannon,



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Jerry Saslav, 3rd BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div. Nineteen Soldiers of Company C "Team Steel," 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 68th Armor Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, reenlist during a ceremony at Combat Outpost Ford in the Bedia neighborhood of Baghdad's Adhamiyah district Dec. 22.

W. Va.

Peck, who has been deployed three times and is headed to drill sergeant school after he returns to Fort Carson, Colo., in early 2009, said he realizes that he may be deployed after his tour as a drill sergeant is complete.

"It's part of the job," said Peck. "I understand that you've got to deploy. That's why you do what you do."

After the swearing in ceremony, Pappal took a picture with each of his Soldiers. Everyone then moved into the outpost's main

building, where the re-enlistees were presented with American flags, certificates and other small gifts; then, it was back to work.

"Soldiers reenlisting while they're deployed... demonstrating their commitment to not only their country but to their unit and the Soldiers who are serving next to them – it says a lot about the individual when they decide to do that out here while we're deployed in a theater of conflict," said Command Sgt. Maj. John Kurak, a native of Washington, D.C., who is the senior enlisted Soldier for 1-68 AR.

Steel's reenlistees enabled the Striker Brigade to become the first combat brigade in Forces Command to achieve its reenlistment numbers for fiscal 2009. For the average Soldier in Team Steel, this was not something they concerned themselves with; they had missions to run.

"A lot of people face challenges every day," said Eurales.

"The fact that these guys face their challenges and still decide to do what they do, it's definitely a great thing."

# Pioneers show Iron Brigade above standard

## 47th FSB wins USAREUR Award for Maintenance Excellence golden trophy

**By Staff Sgt. Scott Wolfe**

2nd BCT PAO, 1st Armd. Div.

BAGHDAD – Company B, 47th Forward Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, will be honored at the U. S. Army Europe Combined Logistics Excellence Award ceremony the first week of April 2009.

The unit, based out of Smith Barracks in Baumholder, Germany, will receive the gold medal award as the winners of the USAREUR Award for Maintenance Excellence.

At the ceremony, awards will be given for maintenance, supply and deployment excellence, with the winners receiving golden trophies and the runner-up silver.

Chief Warrant Officer 2 Dorian Bozza, from Queens, N.Y., was the battalion maintenance officer for the 47th “Modern Pioneers.” He entered the unit for the award to recognize the battalion’s maintenance accomplishments during its current deployment to Operation Iraqi Freedom.

“I put them in for the award to show ‘Big Army’ how the FSB is the lifeblood of the brigade,” said Bozza, who is now the battalion maintenance officer for Task Force 1-35 Armor, 2nd BCT, 1st Armd. Div., MND-B. “You can’t run without maintenance, and they don’t get the credit they deserve. The award is very time consuming but also very rewarding

to win.”

Bozza spent a lot of time putting the packet together. It has 25 pages of supporting documents, from pictures to missions and descriptions of the extenuating circumstances surrounding them.

“After I put it all together, at first I could not believe what we had done. We did the maintenance for two battalions with one company for a while,” said Bozza. “We took care of the maintenance for the Georgian contingent that was with us,” he added, referring to the coalition partner that had teamed up with the 2nd BCT until their redeployment to Georgia in August.

He laughed and said “We had to translate the 5988E and technical manual into Georgian.”

The 47th FSB is a legacy brigade and had to restructure its maintenance program before its deployment in April. Now, instead of each company having specialized personnel and taking care of their own vehicles in the battalion, one company does everything with access to all the specialized equipment needed for different repairs.

“That changed everything. We went from taking care of 178 vehicles to over 800. Add in the Georgians and that is another 68 vehicles,” said Staff Sgt. Matthew Crane, from Wolcott, N.Y., who is the Company B motor sergeant and also the unscheduled maintenance NCOIC.

Any maintenance issues that are noted when an operator conducts preventive maintenance checks and services goes through him.

Bozza added that the Pioneers are much smaller than the 203rd Brigade Support Battalion that it replaced. The mission parameters and responsibilities have not changed though.

“Our Job is to put vehicles on the road so they can do missions,” said Sgt. 1st Class Ignacio Ortega, a native of Guadalajara, Mexico. He is the battalion motor sergeant and a 17 year veteran.

He said he has never been with a unit to receive an award so prestigious.

“I don’t know how we keep up with everything with all the stuff we inherited,” added Ortega.

Bozza said that the non-mission capable equipment went from two to 57 after the 47th performed its first maintenance inspections on the signed-for vehicles.

“That was pretty bad,” he said.

But the BMO said he thinks Company B can take whatever is thrown at it, and winning the AAME would seem to prove him right.

“I think the 47th does the best maintenance in the brigade,” he said. “With all of the challenges and taskings, we do an excellent job.”

To Ortega, winning the award means “All we went through, all the teamwork, all came to something good.”



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Scott Wolfe, 2nd BCT PAO, 1st Armd. Div. Spc. Kip Bonds and Spc. Ryan Spengler work together to refill the hubs of a humvee going through maintenance services on Camp Striker on Dec. 15.

## Dagger ‘Map Men’ focus on battlefield terrain

**By Sgt. Brian Tierce**

2nd HBCT PAO, 1st Inf. Div.

BAGHDAD – When the 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom in October, it was up to a small group of Soldiers within the brigade to provide the unit with a tactical overview of the terrain in which it would fight.

The Soldiers of the Dagger Brigade’s digital topographical support systems section received this mission and immediately began to provide the command group with information about their upcoming operational environment in the vast city of Baghdad.

“We assist the commanders by giving them an accurate picture of how the terrain will affect the fight,” said Staff Sgt. Patrick Bennett, DTSS noncommissioned officer in charge, and a native of Cedar Rapids, Iowa. “In an urban area such as Baghdad, there is a lot of terrain information to go through and understand.”

The section has a small office in the brigade tactical operation center. Printers utilized by the section take up a large part of the office and are on an almost non-stop printing mission.

This mission serves more than to get units from point A to point B.

“Every product that the terrain team produces is to help and assist the unit to accomplish the next mission,” said Spc. Arthur Guerrero, digital topographical support systems Soldier, 2nd HBCT, 1st Inf. Div, MND-B and a native of San Bernadino, Calif. “We provide the most current information on paper so that commanders can use it for mission planning purposes.”

The job of the DTSS section is a 24-hour-a-day operation. For a section of just five Soldiers the hours can be a bit challenging, but the Soldiers know that they are producing a product which helps the Soldiers on the ground accomplish their mission more safely.

“We know that what we produce is helping,” added Bennett. “Our maps are up on walls all over the Brigade.”

With tasking coming at a fast pace the section is hard at work to not only produce; they also place a high value on producing



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Brian Tierce, 2nd HBCT PAO, 1st Inf. Div. Staff Sgt. Patrick Bennett, digital topographical support systems section sergeant, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad and a native of Cedar Rapid, Iowa, inputs data for an upcoming mission Dec. 24 at Camp Liberty, Iraq. The DTSS section is responsible for assisting the brigade with the analysis of topographical information.

the highest quality work possible.

“We make sure that the maps are to standard and have all the key information that the unit has requested,” added Guerrero.

Each day in Iraq offers a new challenge to the DTSS section and so far the Soldiers have been up to the task. The Soldiers know that with every new mission comes the chance to provide a bit of support to their fellow Soldiers.

“The request for information has been constant since the team got all of its equipment up and running,” said Bennett. “It’s our job to ensure the troops on the ground get the products to better understand their operational environment.”



## Central Florida community brings happiness to 'Peacemakers' Christmas celebration in Iraq

By Sgt. Jason Dangel  
4th CAB PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – For the first time in 26 years, Capt. Michael Beissinger won't be home for Christmas.

The young Apache attack helicopter platoon leader, along with 32 other members of the 4th Combat Aviation Brigade's "Peacemakers" Company, will spend their holiday season at Camp Taji, a large Coalition Forces military base located approximately 15 miles north of Baghdad and more than 3,500 miles away from the eastern seaboard.

For the majority of Soldiers assigned to Company A, 4th Battalion, 4th CAB, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, this isn't the first time they have celebrated Christmas in Iraq; but in the eyes of Beissinger, Christmas is a special time for everyone, no matter where they are in the world.

"Christmas means something different to everybody, and whether it's Family related or not, it brings up a lot of emotions and feelings for different people," said Beissinger,

from his chair in the company's command post, adjacent to the camp's airfield, where he parks his \$24 million attack helicopter.

"For a lot of our Soldiers, this is their second or third time over here. But for myself and a lot of other guys, it's our first time being away during the holidays, and I wanted to make something happen to help lift their spirits."

And make something happen he did.

In a massive display of patriotic support, more than 60 Families from the Winter Haven, Fla., area donated a myriad of Christmas gifts to Beissinger's company, an act of generosity that the Grinch wouldn't even scoff at.

"My parents gathered a bunch of people together, and a lot of people from Florida knew I was here, and this is where all this support started," Beissinger explained.

In the months leading up to the holiday season, the Apache helicopter pilot, who is affectionately referred to by his troops as Captain "Beis," was contacted by his parents, Stephen and Chris, about possibly organizing an effort to help support his Soldiers in Iraq.

In what Beissinger explained as the "Grass Roots" campaign, his parents managed to form a small coalition of about 15 Families who sent toiletries and decorations for Halloween.

"These 15 Families got out there and started spreading the word about us," he said. "Word got out to different schools, to different churches and basically all these people wanted to jump on the band wagon and help support us. They wanted to do something for the next go around."

The "next go around" was Christmas, and unsure of how much support he could get, Beissinger once again contacted his parents, who quickly put a plan into action.

"My parents put their heads together and went from there. They had a big meeting at my house in Florida with all the people that wanted to support us, and they had an overwhelming response.

"They had cars backed up all the way down the road," he added.

Initially, each Family wanted to donate gifts for each Soldier, but the platoon leader did not want the Families to have to limit their own Christmas celebrations.

Quickly after learning about his parents' success in gathering support for his company, Beissinger compiled a Christmas list from all of his Soldiers. He asked his Soldiers to list five items that they wanted for Christmas. The item they wanted the most would be listed first, and the rest would be listed in order of importance.

In the end, Beissinger had formulated a 16-page Christmas "wish list" that included a group photo as well as individual pictures of each Soldier with their names, ages and hometowns.

"All the Soldiers were putting down, you know, 'hey I want an iPod, hey I want this.' But some guys said they wanted to donate to charities, and at that point, it went beyond receiving gifts, these guys wanted to give back to the community," he said. "It took on a different meaning when all this started happening."

Chief Warrant Officer 2 William Myrick, an Apache helicopter pilot from Victoria, Texas, was an example Beissinger used when speaking about the character of the Peacemakers Company.

"He wrote down that he would like to donate to a women's shelter, and he would like to get some stuff for his kids," Beissinger said, of Myrick. "Every single thing he asked for, for his kids, the Family went out and bought every single thing on the list and made sure it was fulfilled.

"He emailed me when he was home on leave and told me how much that meant to him. His Family was able to provide a nice Christmas for his kids, and it all stemmed from the support my parents gathered in Florida."

Sgt. Christopher Meno, a senior Apache crew chief from Guam, who is on his third combat deployment, described the event as something he has never seen before – and something he will always remember.

"This is by far the best Christmas I have had in Iraq," he said. "I know for the Soldiers; this definitely lifted their spirits to know that somebody actually went out of their way to support them."



U.S. Army photo by Capt. Michael Shaw, 4th CAB  
A Christmas tree surrounded by a pile of gifts stands inside a company command post at Camp Taji Dec. 15.

Meno personally received all five items he wrote down on the wish list, including his number one item: a guitar.

"In my opinion, it's just amazing to know that there are Families willing to go that extra mile for our Guys serving over here during the holidays," said Capt. Michael Shaw, the company's commander, from Fremont, Calif.

"Now did this have to be something financial such as gifts? No."

"All of these Families took the time to try to get to know the Soldier they were sponsoring just by looking at their pictures, and they gave their best effort to personalize each and every gift. The Families looked at the pictures, looked at the Soldier's list and then just went to town," said Shaw.

The Peacemakers' official Christmas celebration was held Dec. 15 in a small gravel-strewn area surrounded by concrete barriers, about 100 yards away from their small fleet of Apache helicopters.

The celebration was held early because the company's leadership determined that the likelihood they could all get together on Christmas probably wouldn't have happened due to mission requirements.

"I don't even know who to thank anymore," Beissinger said. "We have stuff coming from all over Florida now. I have been getting stuff from Orlando, Lakeland, Bartow, Clearwater, Tampa; all these people are supporting us, and it all started in Winter Haven. It's just crazy. I just wanted to make sure that everybody had a happy holiday season.

"Small town USA still loves us; they still support us. This is evident by all the caring and generosity these Families have shown to my guys. I'm glad these Families are responding because it really drives it home to these guys that there are people back home that care about us."

Even though all the "big" Christmas gifts have been unwrapped and stowed away, all of the Soldiers will surely still be talking about the event as they complete their 12-hour workdays Dec. 25: Christmas Day.



U.S. Army photo by Capt. Michael Shaw, 4th CAB

Sgt. Christopher Meno, senior crew chief, Company A, 4th Battalion, 4th Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, from Guam, shows off his Christmas gifts after his company's Christmas celebration at Camp Taji Dec. 15. Meno, along with 32 other members of the "Peacemakers" Company, received a slew of gifts from more than 60 Families from the Winter Haven, Fla., area. The donation enabled the Soldiers to have a Christmas celebration in Iraq that many said they will never forget.



Sgt. 1st Class  
Nichole Bonham

# Bonham's Blockbusters:

*Twilight swan drama – a narcissist dream*

By Sgt. 1st Class  
Nichole Bonham

MND-B PAO

Camp Liberty, Iraq – Ah, young love.

We all have our stories to share. What we were doing when we first saw him.

How nervous we were the first time we talked to him. How he saved our life by stopping an out of control car with his bare hands and ended up being a vampire who hungered for our blood. Yeah, those were the days ... Well, maybe that's not how you or I would remember things, but that's the story Bella Swan will be telling her grandchildren someday – if she lives that long.

Bella (for Isabella) is the main character of Summit Entertainment's feature film "Twilight," directed by Catherine Hardwicke and released to theaters in the United States and Canada Nov. 21. It's a film closely based on the first of four books in Stephanie Meyers' bestselling Twilight series about the love affair between two teenagers: one human, the other not.

In fact, the screenplay by Melissa Rosenberg is so close to the book that it even mirrors key phrases and dialogue. "About three things I was absolutely positive. First, Edward was a vampire. Second, there was a part of him – and I didn't know how dominant that part might be – that thirsted for my blood. And third, I was unconditionally and irrevocably in love with him."



Bella Swan, played by Kristen Stewart from 2007's "Into the Wild," moves to Forks, Wash., to live with her father, Charlie, played by Billy Burke. On her first day at Forks High School, she meets handsome and broody Edward Cullen, played by Robert Pattinson, best known as Cedric Diggory from the Harry Potter franchise. She's immediately attracted to his unearthly beauty and, although she doesn't realize it, he's immediately attracted to her as well – or at least to her smell.

Edward and the rest of the Cullen Family refer to themselves jokingly as 'vegetarians' – vampires who choose to only hunt animals, not humans. But Bella Swan has a smell as tempting as a perfectly cooked steak. Then there's the fact that Edward can read minds, everyone's mind, except Bella's, and there you have it, the perfect recipe for teenage angst.

He's a bad boy who wants to be good; she's a good girl who's a perfect mystery to him.

To be honest, I was as reluctant to see the movie as I had originally been to read the book. I left the teenage angst years behind me long ago and don't miss them at all. But the book was a gift from a friend, so I had to at least try. I finished it the same night I started it. It turned out to be an easy read with interesting, if not terribly complex, characters who say what they mean and aren't afraid to wear their hearts on their sleeves. Not great literature, but definitely entertaining mind-candy.

The preview for the movie, however, looked more syrupy-sweet than I wanted to sit through. But I'm human, and female – you can translate that as 'curious' if you like, the shoe certainly fits in my case. And, of course, there's a rea-

son hunky bad boys have never gone out of style – call me shallow too, that's okay I'm a big girl, I can handle it. So I watched it the first chance I got and decided I just wouldn't expect much – which is good because the movie mirrors the book again by being not great but very enjoyable anyway.

One thing director Catherine Hardwick did exactly right was the overall tone of the movie. There was a feeling of tense expectation, a feeling that every glance, every word, every decision was of major importance. It took itself so very seriously in the way only a teenager, or some other form of narcissist, can maintain.

And yet Hardwick managed to pull off that effect without making me roll my eyes in disgust. Instead, it made that level of self-absorption into a sweet memory of what it was like to be that young.

Hardwicke's understanding of the teenage mind is not so surprising though. She started her career as a director with 2003's award-winning "Thirteen" about a young girl losing control of her life in the midst of underage sex, alcohol and drug abuse and self-harm. She followed that with 2005's "Lords of Dogtown," a biographical film about a group of skateboarders who revolutionized the sport. But it's her work on this film, "Twilight," that's going to make her name known. With an opening-weekend gross of \$69.6 million, Hardwick now holds the record for the best opening-weekend box office for a female director.

Unfortunately, she won't be returning for the sequel. And yes, of course, with a current gross of more than \$158 million, there's going to be a sequel.

Summit Entertainment confirmed Dec. 13 the newest installment, November 2009's "New Moon," would be directed by Chris Weitz of "American Pie" and "The Golden Compass" fame. A director who is also obviously in tune with the young teenage mind but from a very different perspective.

So I guess Twilight fans, myself included, will just have to cross our fingers and hope for the best.



# Gaming Review: **SECRET SERVICE**



Why the hell are our guys with the Costa Sentavans? Is this your doing, Kauffman?

## *No new ideas, no personality, & not worth playing*

By Sgt. Jason Thompson

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – The ever-popular first-person shooter genre is far from stagnant as releases like Valve's online co-operative title, *Left 4 Dead*, so clearly proved.

Yet along with titles big and small that remind us there's so much more to the genre than barreling down a corridor spraying bullets, there are just as many that do nothing interesting or novel. The latter is certainly the case with Cauldron's *Secret Service*; when it's not blatantly ripping off *Infinity Ward's Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare*, it fails to escape tedium's event horizon.

Perhaps the game's most interesting aspect is its release date. In early November 2008, it hit store shelves, just in time for the presidential election. Considering it's got a narrative enveloping a potential assassination, a vice-president with a distinctly Cheney-like appearance, and threats from a militant foreign power, perhaps Activision thought it the best window to publish.

As it turns out, the release represents pretty bad taste, particularly because the game does not attempt to resolve or present its issues or themes in any sort of elegant manner. Instead, it's very much a crude and bumbling mess of a conspiracy plot on a level of ridiculous that occasionally exceeds even the preposterous exploits of *Jack Bauer*.

From locations like the Lincoln Memorial to the terraces of the White House, you'll battle wave after wave of terrorists and, eventually, groups of U.S. secret service agents. If you're anything like us and the thought of executing American agents makes you uncomfortable, don't worry, the game forces you to reload for a checkpoint if you shoot to kill rather than use a stun gun.

That is, at least, until it gives you the all clear to kill agents.

But let's for a second, wipe away the offensive narrative and potential patriotic conflict of interest and focus on the game itself. The PC and Xbox 360 versions look decent for a budget priced game and, at least on the Xbox 360, run fairly smoothly.

The PlayStation 2 version, on the other hand, is an absolute visual disaster. The frame rate is poor, even with sensitivity sliders we couldn't find a comfortable control setting, and it looks like somebody forgot to add in textures in spots.

In terms of the Xbox 360 and PC version, you're still going to find the experience to be frustratingly limited. It is a budget-priced shooter, but that doesn't mean it has to be as bland as it is.

Throughout the course of the game, you'll engage in sniping challenges, a helicopter shooting sequence (like *CoD4*), and plenty of monster closet-type scenarios where as soon as you enter a large space you can expect enemies to jump out from behind doors and pillars.

In many cases, you're forced to repeat the exact same challenge several times (a White House balcony defense comes to mind), and in no case will you be anything but mildly entertained.

Enemies do exhibit a degree of intelligence, as they'll step back and forth, charge your position and run to cover in some cases, so the combat isn't totally without challenge. Foes do, however, just as often exhibit predictable hide and peek routines or just stand in pre-determined spots, making engaging them in battle more of an exercise in routine than something thrilling or dynamic.

Mixed in with the vanilla shooting action are various hacking mini-games, which those who played *BioShock* might find familiar. In this case, you're switching around tiles of circuitry instead of pipes, and though the boards increase in complex-

ity, there's not much to them.

Still, they're occasionally a nice break from the repetitive shooting sequences.

The game tries to keep things varied by adding in sentry turrets, night-vision sequences, 'laser trip bomb' detection in dark tunnels and a particularly annoying timed deactivation sequence, but none of these mechanics come off as original or interesting. Instead, it feels more like the developer looked at *Infinity Ward's* work and sloppily imported bits and pieces, including the narrative presentation.

As for audio, you'll find awkward and forced voice acting, music that fails to enhance anything other than your desire to shut the game down and tinny gunfire effects. Also, as a general rule, horribly annoying intruder alarms do not increase the sense of tension during a firefight. Either make them distinct (see: *Star Trek's* red alert sound effect) or get rid of them.

*Secret Service* is a functioning product – as long as you're talking about the Xbox 360 or PC versions. You can successfully run through corridors and open spaces and participate in by-the-numbers firefights with mildly intelligent enemies.

Considering the genre and how far it's advanced since the days of *Wolfenstein 3D*, Cauldron's effort in no way deserves to be remembered, save for the fact that it came out right around the time the American populace voted Barack Obama into the country's highest office.

I give *Secret Service* a disappointing 2 security badges out of 5.



Sgt. Jason Thompson

# SMA Preston visits MND-B Soldiers

from SMA Pg. 1

nity to visit with the Soldiers and see how they are doing. His trip not only provides him the opportunity to keep them abreast of what is happening in the Army, but it also provides him an avenue to get feedback, first-hand, directly from his deployed Soldiers.

The Soldiers he meets during his visit, he said, never fail to impress him, and he is truly proud to be one of their own.

"Hands down, there is no doubt in my mind that the Americans who we have serving today are the cream of our society," said Preston. "Those men and women – who volunteer to serve in an Army at war, and supporting a nation at war – are the best of what America has to offer."

Along with Preston during the "SMA Hope & Freedom Tour 2008" were super model Leeann Tweeden and country singer Craig Morgan, who dedicated their time to entertaining the troops. Afterward, the two signed a plethora of autographs and posed for pictures with the Soldiers.

But the most prominent visitor of the day was Preston himself as the Soldiers patiently awaited their opportunity to shake his hand, pose for a picture with their senior leader and share a few words with him. Of course, he took every opportunity to ask his troops how they were doing and asked for their observations as well.

Wilson, MNF-I's senior enlisted leader, said it is important for the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines to have the opportunity to visit with their senior enlisted leaders because he provides a direct link as to what is happening at the Army level, and he can share the Soldier perspective of what is happening and how it will affect them.

"When the Sergeant Major of the Army comes out and talks to the Soldiers," said Wilson, "he was once where we are at, so he can directly relate to Soldiers – and the Soldiers can relate to him. They just love to see him out here."

During Preston's visit to each site, he took advantage of the opportunity to speak with the assembled troops about where the Army was, where it is and where it is heading.

A key message he shared with each gathering is one that is important to him and important to Army leaders, and that is establishing predictability and stability for Soldiers and their Families. The only way to achieve this, he explained, is to grow the Army to meet these objectives.

He spoke of where the Army was, talking about the Army's troop strength during the days of Desert Storm/Desert Shield, in which 780,000 Soldiers were on active duty, adding that following the end of the conflict, the Army quickly underwent a reduction of 300,000 Soldiers down to an end-strength of 480,400 active-duty Soldiers and 32 brigade combat teams.

Following the terrorist attacks on 9-11, when the Army was again called upon, this time to Afghanistan and shortly thereafter to Iraq, military leaders realized they would have to grow the Army to meet its increasing responsibilities and attempt to provide predictability and stability for its forces. To do this, the Army's mission was to expand to 48 fully manned BCTs by 2011.

The Army team has performed tremendously in expanding its forces, he said, pointing out that there are now 40 fully manned BCTs as additional BCTs are being developed, manned and equipped. In fact, the Army's strength increase has grown dramatically, with 545,000 Soldiers presently on active duty, which is an increase of more than 63,000 Soldiers over a 5-year period.

Growing the Army, particularly while it is at war, is a tremendous challenge. As such, he said it is imperative to grow it with the right people as well.

"I have gained, over the last five years, a deep appreciation for what our recruiters do," said Preston, "and the tremendous challenges in recruiting for the caliber and quality of those Americans, who volunteer and make the commitment to be part of America's Army.

Equally important, he added, is keeping the Army's quality Soldiers and maintaining the ever-important combat experience and knowledge those Soldiers possess. This mission is one that seems to defy the odds at times because many perhaps feared the current operational tempo and deployment cycles could potentially lead to an exodus from military service. Such has not been the case.

He said there are numerous success stories throughout the Army of Soldiers staying with the team, such as the high retention rate of the 4th Inf. Div.

"Here it is, the first quarter of the fiscal year," said Preston, "and the division has almost met its fiscal year retention goals in the first three months – that's incredible."

As to why the Soldiers are staying, he said that really should not be that big of a surprise because the bottom line is that Soldiers are dedicated, motivated and part of a winning team. And that team perspective, the feeling of being part of something that is bigger than oneself and taking care of teammates, is powerful in and of itself.

"Nobody wants to leave the team right now while the team is in the middle of the fight," explained Preston. "We always knew, in our heart of hearts, the reason people reenlist and continue to stay is they are doing a real-world mission. I think they can see, first hand, their contributions in accomplishing what we are trying to achieve.

"It's hard, hard work. You are deployed for 12 to 15 months; it's long, long hours. You only get two weeks R&R leave in the middle of that, and yet, Soldiers are reenlisting and they are staying with us – they are staying with the team."

And leading the way are numerous senior Soldiers, who could have left the team long ago but remain committed to leading their troops in time of need.

"I have more sergeants major in the Army right now, with more

than 30 years of service," said Preston, "who could have retired a long time ago – they could have left. Yet, they continue to serve, and they want to continue to be a part of this.

"Our Soldiers and leaders, they want to be part of a winning team – and they are."

Wilson adamantly agreed with the importance of remaining with the team, explaining that "the Soldiers and their leaders, the Airmen, the Sailors and the Marines – they are the reason I continue to serve and stay in the Army."

The opportunity to hear from the Sergeant Major of the Army, to see him, and to share some time with him is important, said Davis, because it also validates, for the Soldiers, what they are hearing from their senior enlisted leaders.

"If you are an enlisted Soldier, and you hear it from the senior leadership, you have a sense of purpose," said Davis. "It benefits our Soldiers to hear it from who I'm hearing it from because it shows them that we are on the same sheet of music.

"It provides predictability, which is critical in decision making in the Army. It gives you the ability to plan and focus, and that gives you a little more peace and calmness as you go into battle – You've got to talk the talk and walk the walk."

As Preston concluded his visit with the Soldiers of MND-B and the 4th Inf. Div., he said he wanted to let the Soldiers know he is proud of them and their accomplishments, as they should be as well, and he encourages them to share their stories with their fellow Americans.

"For all of the Soldiers, servicemembers, leaders and Army civilians of Multi-National Division – Baghdad and the 4th Infantry Division, I just want to say thanks," said Preston. "I'm very proud of all of your accomplishments over this long deployment.

"I hope, as you finish your time here, you go back home with your Families and friends and reflect on your deployment experience. I want you to know how much I appreciate your contributions in accomplishing our missions."



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Maj. Eric Lobsinger, MND-B PAO  
Sgt. Maj. of the Army Kenneth Preston, speaks to a formation of 4th Infantry Division Soldiers and their partnered troops Dec. 20 at the Combat Aviation Brigade's hangar on Camp Taji, north of Baghdad. Preston visited Soldiers in Kuwait, Iraq and Afghanistan during the annual USO Tour: "SMA Hope & Freedom Tour 2008."



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Maj. Eric Lobsinger, MND-B PAO

Country singer Craig Morgan (left), super model Leeann Tweeden and guitarist Michael Rogers, entertain Soldiers from 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, and their partner units, at a packed Rosenberg Café on Forward Operating Base War Eagle Dec. 20.

# Mol's Wide World of Sports

## '2008, we hardly knew ya'

By Staff Sgt. Michael Molinaro  
4th Inf. Div. PAO

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – You know we've been here a long time when your resident sports writer gathers up all that occurred over the course of an entire sports calendar and prepares the annual year-in-review article ... for the second time on one deployment.

From a would-be perfect season to a Summer Olympic Games to another BCS mess, it is time to take a look at all of the triumphs and tribulations that was the year in sports for 2008.

The year began with the New England Patriots pursuit of perfection. A perfect regular season and two more wins in the playoffs brought the Pats to the Arizona desert to take on the road-warrior New York Giants, who took out Tampa Bay, Dallas and Green Bay. The Giants had seen the Patriots up close and personal in Week 17 and found a chink in New England's armor. The Giants harassed Tom Brady all evening and never let him get comfortable. Eli Manning and David Tyree hooked up on one of the most memorable plays in Super Bowl history with an out-of-this world scramble and catch before Plaxico Burress scored the winning touchdown with less than a minute remaining, handing the Giants their third Super Bowl trophy and denying the Patriots dream of immortality.

College basketball took over the main stage as it showcased one of sports best events, March Madness. A little school from North Carolina, Davidson, got the attention of the nation as the Wildcats stunned Gonzaga, Georgetown and Wisconsin before bowing out to Kansas in the Elite Eight. The Jayhawks claimed the school's fifth national championship in men's basketball after a thrilling overtime victory against Memphis. Mario Chalmers hit a three-pointer with two seconds left in regulation to send the game into overtime.

Baseball resumed without Barry Bonds and Roger Clemens, the two faces of the Steroid Era. Boston and the New York Yankees were the favorites to win again, and the New York Mets had Cy Young-winner Johan Santana on the staff in hopes of capturing the National League pennant. But a quick start by the downtrodden Tampa Rays couldn't possibly hold up, could it?

The month of June witnessed the sports world crown four champions. It started on the ice when the Detroit Red

Wings hoisted the Stanley Cup for the 11th time after defeating the upstart Pittsburgh Penguins four games to two in an exciting final. The series showcased Sidney Crosby, the face of the league, and the Red Wings, perhaps the leagues most well-known franchise. It garnered huge television ratings and seemed to bring the NHL back into the American sports landscape.

The best rivalry in the history of the NBA was reborn in the NBA Finals when the Los Angeles Lakers and Boston Celtics hooked up. Kobe Bryant, the league MVP, couldn't carry the Lakers past the Celtics, who were led by the three-headed monster of Paul Pierce, Kevin Garnett and Ray Allen. The Celtics earned the franchise's 17th NBA title.

Father's Day weekend brought the sports world another crowning achievement in the career of Tiger Woods. Playing on one healthy knee, Woods withstood a head-to-head battle with the ageless Rocco Mediate and, after 90 holes of crucial putts, sand saves and mental stress, won his third U.S. Open and 14th overall major championship, calling it the best one he had ever won because of the adversity he overcame.

Rafael Nadal defeated Roger Federer in the Wimbledon tennis championship in what many tennis experts called the greatest tennis match of all time.

The dog days of summer gave us the story of the Tampa Bay Rays, the youngest team in the major leagues, who were out-slugging the big boys from New York and Boston. It also brought us the drama that would never end, the Brett Favre saga. Favre opted out of his retirement and wanted to return to Green Bay, but upper management was poised to move on with the younger Aaron Rodgers, so Favre moved to the Big Apple and the New York Jets.

The world's greatest athletes converged on Beijing for the Summer Olympic Games. Two individuals stood out above the rest – Jamaican track and field star Usain Bolt, who broke the 100 and 200 meter world records, and American swimmer Michael Phelps, who won an single-Olympic record eight gold medals, a feat which earned him numerous endorsements and Sports Illustrated's Sportsman of the Year.

Jimmy Johnson claimed his third consecutive NASCAR Sprint Cup title and is now talked about in the same light as Richard Petty, Dale Earnhardt and all of the greats. The King himself declared

that Johnson may go down as the best driver of all-time.

The 2008 NFL season got off to a lousy start for the Patriots, who lost star Tom Brady eight minutes into the season, for the entire year. Tennessee and the New York Giants became Super Bowl favorites. Detroit streaked toward a season of futility. Rookie quarterbacks Matt Ryan of Atlanta and Joe Flacco of Baltimore led their teams toward the playoffs. Bill Parcells worked his magic yet again, this time from the front office and turned around Miami while his former team, pre-season favorite Dallas, stumbled once again in December and Tony Romo showed he may be a good fantasy quarterback but not a very good one when it counts.

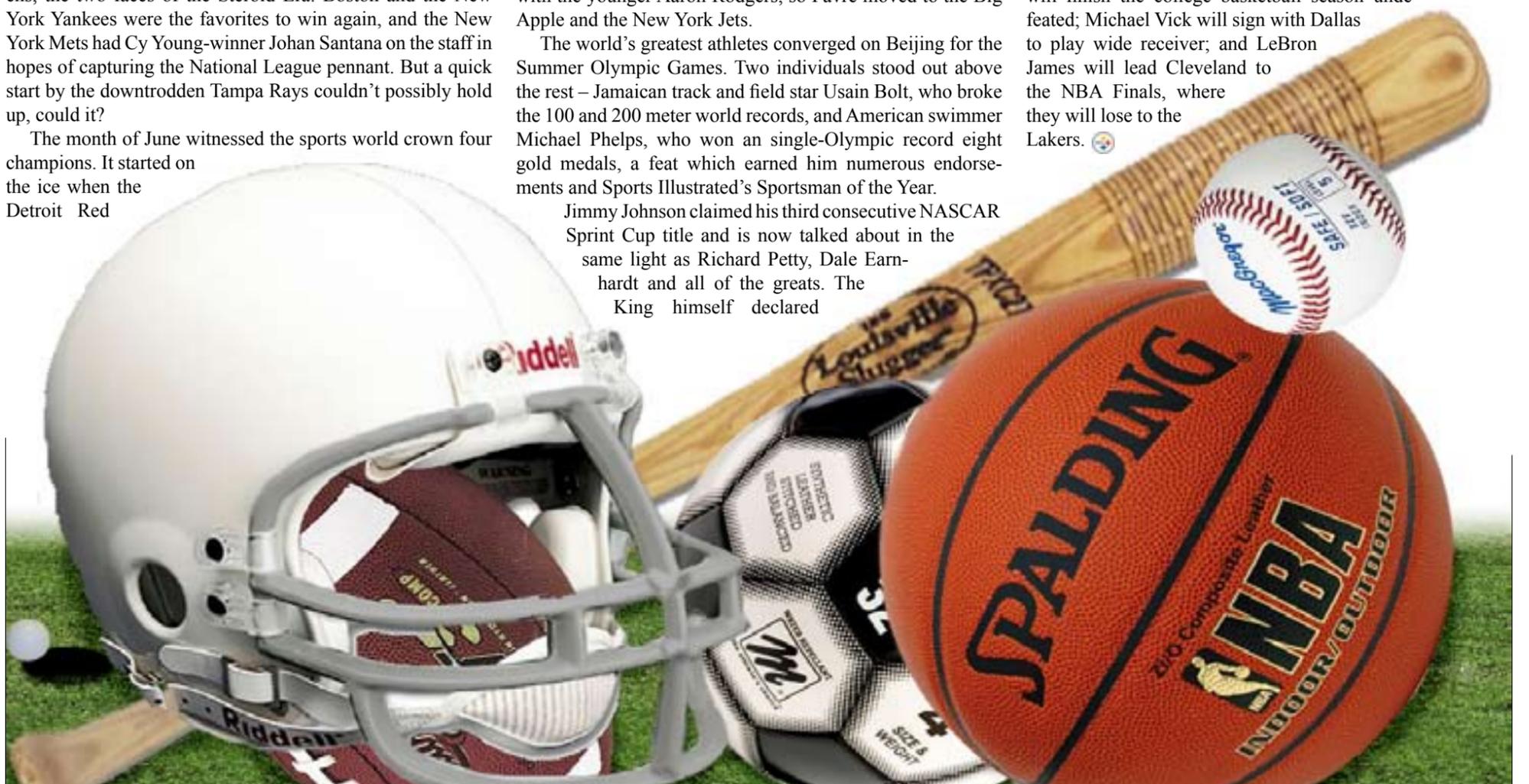
In baseball, both New York teams choked and failed to make the playoffs despite their huge payrolls. The Rays beat Boston in the American League Championship Series and took on the Philadelphia Phillies in a World Series that will go down known more for the weather than the play. The Phillies ended the crying in Philadelphia for at least a few days and won the city's first championship in any sport in 25 years.

College football had another terrific season despite the BCS mess. Oklahoma and Florida will meet in the BCS championship after a season dominated by the Big 12 conference. The SEC was very overrated this season as perennial stalwarts Auburn, Tennessee and Arkansas all had bad years. Joe Paterno showed why 80 is the new 50 as his Penn State Nittany Lions came within a field goal of going undefeated. Charlie Weis again showed that an ego bigger than the stadium he coaches in cannot get the job done alone at Notre Dame. Non-BCS schools Utah and Boise State went undefeated but are shut out of proving their worth since Division-I college football remains the only sport known to man without a playoff.

So what could go down in 2009? I say Oklahoma wins the National Championship; the Super Bowl will be won in overtime; the Yankees will finish last in the AL East; Tiger Woods will come back and golf like he never left; North Carolina will finish the college basketball season undefeated; Michael Vick will sign with Dallas to play wide receiver; and LeBron James will lead Cleveland to the NBA Finals, where they will lose to the Lakers. 🍀



Staff Sgt. Michael 'Mol' Molinaro





A Sons of Iraq (Abna al-Iraq) member holds his monthly pay, which is the equivalent of approximately \$300 U.S., during Sol payday activities in the Rashid district of southern Baghdad. Soldiers from Company A, 2nd Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment, attached to the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, provided over watch and were on hand to settle any potential issues.

# MND-B Soldiers provide over watch for Sol payday activities

**Story and photos by Sgt. David Hodge**

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE FALCON, Iraq – Dozens of Abna al-Iraq (Sons of Iraq) members lined up outside the main building in the Masafee community, an area reputed in past years for strong sectarian violence, at the headquarters of 3rd Battalion, 7th Brigade, 2nd National Police Division, Dec. 16 to receive their monthly stipend.

Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers attended the monthly payday activities as observers just two months after U.S. Forces relinquished control of the SoI to the Government of Iraq in southern Baghdad.

“It was only two months ago that we transitioned control of the SoI to the Iraqi National Police,” said 1st Lt. John Miller, platoon leader assigned to Company A, 2nd Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment, attached to the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, MND-B. “We supervise SoI paydays and make sure there aren’t any problems.”

It is important for the Soldiers to oversee the paydays to ensure there are not any problems throughout the day, said Miller, a native of Davidson, N.C.

“The two sides are trying to work all the kinks out,” Miller explained. “The NPs are very competent and very organized so everything went well.”

The NPs modeled their payday activities after the Coalition Forces way of doing things, said Miller.

Many SoI members feared the transition to Iraqi control would leave them jobless or imprisoned, but Hameed Kadam Hamad, an SoI member with 14 months service, arrived at the NP headquarters and filed into the line with approximately 30 fellow SoI members to pick up his paycheck, which is roughly equal to \$300 U.S.

Hamad said he wants a job with the Iraqi Army or NP to make more money and provide better support to his family.

Hamad attributed many of the security gains in Rashid to the SoI.

Iraqi National Policeman Lt. Col. Kareem Qasim Muhammed, operations officer for the 3rd Bn., 7th Bde., 2nd NP Div., said he believes the SoI continue to operate in the same fashion as before the transition.

“I think there is no lack in security during the transition from Coalition Forces to Iraqi Security Forces,” said Muhammed, who, as a representative of the NP, personally paid the money to the SoI members.

He stressed that progress is being made in the community and said the SoI play an important role.

“The SoI have been very good,” Muhammed explained. “The SoI have cooperated with us completely and contacted us directly when they have any information or problems. The SoI are close to us.”

Muhammed said that in recent months, many SoI members transitioned into the ISF, and he welcomes the additional security forces as they fight by his side against the criminals.

By the end of the day, approximately one-half the SoI in Masafee left with their money, said Miller.

The other three muhallas, or neighborhoods, received their payment the following day.



▲ Sons of Iraq (Abna al-Iraq) members wait outside the 3rd Battalion, 7th Brigade, 2nd NP Division headquarters in the Masafee community to receive their monthly pay during Sol payday activities Dec. 16 in southern Baghdad’s Rashid district.

◀ Iraqi National Policeman Lt. Col. Kareem Qasim Muhammed, operations officer for the 3rd Battalion, 7th Brigade, 2nd National Police Division, counts Iraqi Dinar with a leader of the Sons of Iraq Security Force during monthly payday activities Dec. 16 at NP battalion headquarters in the Masafee community.