

The Ivy Leaf

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MULTI-NATIONAL DIVISION - BAGHDAD

“STEADFAST AND LOYAL”

JANUARY 19, 2009



Mission continues as security agreement takes effect

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

Sgt. James Bowhay, a cavalry scout assigned to Troop C, 7th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, touches base with Iraqi National Police patrolmen from the 1st Battalion, 3rd Aburisha Bde., before combined cordon and search operations Dec. 30 in the Rashid district's Abu T'shir community of southern Baghdad. The Soldiers partnered with the 3rd "Feather" Brigade to search for weapons and munitions in the predominately Shia community, as part of ongoing efforts to enforce Baghdad's Fardh al Qanoon, or Rule of Law.

By Master Sgt. Guadalupe Stratman
MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – As the Security Agreement takes effect Jan. 1, Multi-National Division – Baghdad's mission remains the same.

“Our mission continues; we will protect the Iraqi populace,” said Maj. Gen. Jeffery Hammond, commanding general, 4th Infantry Division and MND-B. “The significant difference is we will now conduct our missions with our Iraqi Security Force partners in the lead. We're still here to help them but the weight shifts from our shoulders to the increasingly capable ISF.”

As the U.N. Security Council Resolution 1790 expires, the Security Agreement represents a request by Iraq for U.S. forces to remain in Iraq to

assist with security and stability only as needed and requested by the Government of Iraq.

“It means we'll make a few adjustments in how we execute operations but for the most part, it reinforces transitions that are already underway,” said Hammond. “We will conduct all combat operations by, with and through our ISF partners.”

To ease the transition of the Security Agreement, MND-B has worked closely with the Baghdad Operations Center since early November for all combat missions said Brig. Gen. Robin Swan, deputy commanding general, MND-B.

“We have spent a great amount of time with

see **Security Pg.2**

FOB Callahan turned over to MoT

By Sgt. Whitney Houston
3rd BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

AL SHA' AB, Iraq – Days after the Green Zone was handed over to Iraqi authorities, things continue moving forward in Baghdad.

Coalition Forces handed over Forward Operating Base Callahan in the Al Sha'ab neighborhood to Iraqi jurisdiction Jan. 3 in the Sha'ab neighborhood of Adhamiyah district of Baghdad.

FOB Callahan was the former Sha'ab Market and was a strategic spot in Adhamiyah, which

was taken over in 2007 as part of the surge to monitor routes and more fully secure the area. With the new security agreement and increased security in the area, Coalition Forces saw fit to hand the building back to the Iraqi Ministry of Trade.

“This building has been a Coalition camp since March of 2007; it was taken over during the surge, and now we've handed over this central

see **Callahan Pg.5**

'Panthers' assume command of eastern Rashid 'Warriors' end 13-month deployment

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE FALCON, Iraq – Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers bid farewell to the 2nd Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment, and welcomed the 1st Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, during a Transfer of Authority Ceremony Jan. 4 at Forward Operating Base Falcon in southern Baghdad.

The 1st “Panther” Bn., 505th PIR, attached to the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, assumed responsibility for the communities in the eastern Rashid district from the 2nd “Warriors” Bn., 4th Inf. Regt., in front their fellow Soldiers, leaders and Iraqi Security Forces partners.

“The Soldiers of the 2nd Bn., 4th Inf. Regt., have soldiered hard these past 13 months,” said Col. Ted Martin, commander of the 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div. “Their battlefield record is second to none, and their partnership with the 7th Brigade, 2nd National Police Division, serves as a model for all other battalions to emulate.”

The 1st “Raider” Brigade salutes the Warriors, said Martin, who hails from Jacksonville Beach, Fla.

“I want to welcome the Soldiers of the 1st Bn., 505th PIR,” said Martin. “Their outstanding battle reputation precedes them, and we have high hopes for continued success in East Rashid.”

Part of the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, stationed at Fort Polk, La., the Warriors arrived in Iraq's capitol city in December 2007 and immediately began patrolling the Doura community, an area once stricken with violence but now stable due to improved security over the last year.

“2008 was a great year for the Doura community,” said Lt. Col. Timothy Watson, commander of the 2nd Bn., 4th Inf. Regt., attached to the 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div. “We have seen a transition from combat operations to the restoration of essential services.”

Over the 13-month deployment, the Warriors discovered approximately 50 roadside bombs, 90 weapons caches and detained dozens of criminals, explained Watson. The Warriors also expanded essential services by improving electricity, paving roads, fixing sewers and refurbishing schools.

Watson said he credits much of Doura's success to local leaders within the communities and combat support from the ISF.

“The 7th Bde., 2nd NP Div., have proved themselves to be a disciplined and professional force that the people of Doura can trust,” explained Watson, who hails from Atkinson, N.H.

Brig. Gen. Karim Hoseinee, commander of the 7th Bde., 2nd NP Div., congratulated the Warriors for a job well done and welcomed the new battalion.

“We could not establish and enforce the security in the community without the sacrifices from U.S. Soldiers and the ISF,” said Karim. “I give my thanks to all the brave Soldiers who put their lives at risk to secure Rashid.”

To demonstrate his appreciation, Karim presented small decorative throw rugs to MND-B leaders during the ceremony.

“We are excited and honored to serve alongside the ISF leadership and community leaders,” said Lt. Col. Dave Bair, commander, 1st Bn., 505th PIR, attached to the 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div. “These brave men are heroes to their people and are strong leaders who will triumphantly lead Doura back to greatness. We will support the ISF every step of the way.”

Since 2001, the Panthers deployed five times: three deployments to Iraq and two tours to Afghanistan in support of the Global War on Terror, said Bair.

“This day is special for the paratroopers of this battalion because it marks the beginning of another chapter in our storied history,” he added.

The Panther Bn., is part of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, stationed out of Fort Bragg, N.C., currently scheduled for a 12-month deployment in support of MND-B and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The Ivy Leaf **Commentary / Editorials****Multi-National Division - Baghdad**
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 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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U.S. Army photo by Spc. Elliot Valdez, MND-B PAO

Maj. Gen. Jeffery Hammond (left), commanding general, Multi-National Division - Baghdad and the 4th Infantry Division, Gen. Abud (right), commander, Baghdad Operations Center, visit with Sheikh Mohan Dec. 18. To ease the transition of the Security Agreement, MND-B has worked closely with the Baghdad Operations Center since early November in order to implement the agreement.

Iraq security agreement takes effect, MND-B remains committed to mission

from **Security Pg.1**

the BOC working out the every detail of the Security Agreement," said Swan, a native of Pittsburg.

"All of our combat operations are done combined with our Iraqi Security Force partner, which is a flat rule that was initiated in November in advance of the Security Agreement," said Swan.

Overtime Coalition Forces will reduce their presence in the city of Baghdad. The first step will be Jan. 3 with the transfer COP Callahan to the Ministry of Trade. Next, FOB Rustamiyah will transfer to the Iraqi Army by March 31.

"Our coalition only outposts will be closing or transferring to Iraqi control. We will maintain some positions in Joint Security Stations in an advisory role, but the Iraqi Security Forces will be maintaining security in Baghdad."

As far back as August, the Baghdad Provincial Reconstruction Team, which works closely with MND-B and the GoI, has conducted business similar to what the Security Agreement requires.

"(The Security Agreement) embodies legally a lot of what

we, the PRT and the ePRTs at the brigades, have been doing - particularly partnering with Iraqi officials," said John Bass, Baghdad PRT team leader.

Bass and his PRT first listen to the already identified needs of the Iraqi government.

"All the projects that we undertake or the initiatives that we are engaged in are coordinated with the appropriate Iraqi government official and institution," said Bass, a native of Chatham, N.Y. "Those are things that are now required. They were not required two and three months ago."

The Security Agreement is the way Baghdad PRT and the division needs to go, said Bass.

The environment in Iraq is changing and MND-B will adapt to that, and it reflects the increasing capability of the Iraqi government to start doing more for itself and for its people.

"The Security Agreement is a testament to how far we have come with preparing the ISF and our Iraqi government counterparts to truly be in the lead," said Hammond. "There are still some challenges ahead and the ISF needs to demonstrate they can handle the responsibility. But we will be with them to assist when required. They have come a long, long way."

Unified Common Plan forged by MND-B, PRT-B

By **Staff Sgt. Brock Jones**

MND-B PAO

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq - Maj. Gen. Jeffery Hammond, commander of 4th Infantry Division and Multi-National Division - Baghdad, and John Bass, team leader of Provincial Reconstruction Team - Baghdad, signed a document known as the Unified Common Plan at the Stadium in front of division headquarters on Camp Liberty Dec. 30.

The document outlines and aligns the efforts of both MND-B and PRT-B as far as building civil capacity is concerned, said Maj. Luis Fregoso, who serves as the fires and effects planner and the assessments officer with division plans section, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B.

"We have developed a document which we named the Unified Common Plan that synchronizes and binds MND-B and PRT-B together to essentially have a common vision for (increasing) civil capacity," he said.

"This document depicts all the tasks and measures of effectiveness that are going to be measured and tracked to show our progress."

The UCP has been in development for about a month and a half and was created from what was known as the

Joint Common Plan, and comes as a result of many lessons learned by the two parties.

"This is a step in the right direction. This is the product of a lot of lessons learned, mistakes made, I think, and conclusions drawn," commented Hammond during the signing.

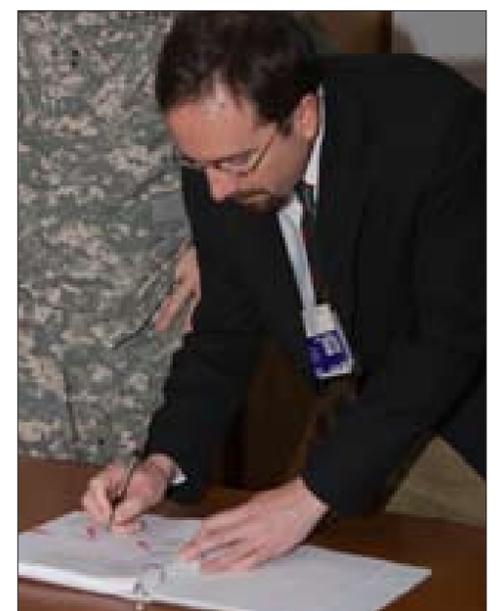
"I'm very honored to be the one that's able to sign MND-B up for this along with John Bass who I think is just a great foreign service officer who's come forward and made this thing work."

Bass took a moment to express his gratitude to the leaders of the division's Brigade Combat Teams and various staffs who have been working to help the citizens of Baghdad create a better environment in which to live.

"This embodies a lot of hard work not only by all the planners... (but also the) hard work of all of you at the ground level, figuring out what works and what doesn't."

"Thank you all very much for your contributions for making this what it is going to be," he said.

The UCP is reviewed and updated ev-



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Brock Jones, MND-B PAO

John Bass, team leader of Provincial Reconstruction Team - Baghdad, signs the Unified Common Plan at the Stadium in front of division headquarters on Camp Liberty Dec. 30.

ery six months so that as units rotate in and out of Baghdad province, there is an ability to keep the document up-to-date with the changing operating environment.

Chaplain's Corner

Holistic Wellness & Happiness

By Capt. Edward Harris
Chaplain, CAB, 4th Inf. Div.

BAGHDAD – “Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness” is probably the most popular phrase in the Declaration of Independence. It is also the most loaded statement in the Declaration.

Thomas Jefferson implied that life and liberty are absolute rights but happiness is only an absolute in its pursuit. We are not guaranteed happiness in this life; however, the pursuit of happiness is something people are constantly striving to achieve.

In the pursuit of happiness, one must first ask “What is happiness? What factors bring about happiness?”

In reality, there are universal factors that can be attributed to bringing about happiness. Many researchers today attribute the personal pursuit of holistic wellbeing as the cornerstone to universal factors of happiness.

“Holistic wellness is best understood as the maturity of habits and qualities in life that will meet the demands and vigors of a person in his or her entirety,” said James Reese and George Everly in their book, *Psychological Body Armor: Seven Strategic Lessons about Life, Resiliency, and Coping with Stress*.

“It can be divided into four areas: spiritual, Family, personal and occupational wellness. While each area is very personal and private, the general concept of wellness relies on the knowledge and self-awareness to recognize missing elements and to create a lifestyle that fills the voids.”

As human beings, we naturally attempt to fill these voids. The problem is that most of the time many people try to fill these voids using poor choices and coping skills, which takes away from their ability to perform effectively as Soldiers and leaders.

One way we, as Soldiers and leaders, attempt to fill voids is to overcompensate in one area in order to make up for the loss in another. The problem with this is we do not develop the other areas and thus remain infantile in our ability to take care of those spheres.

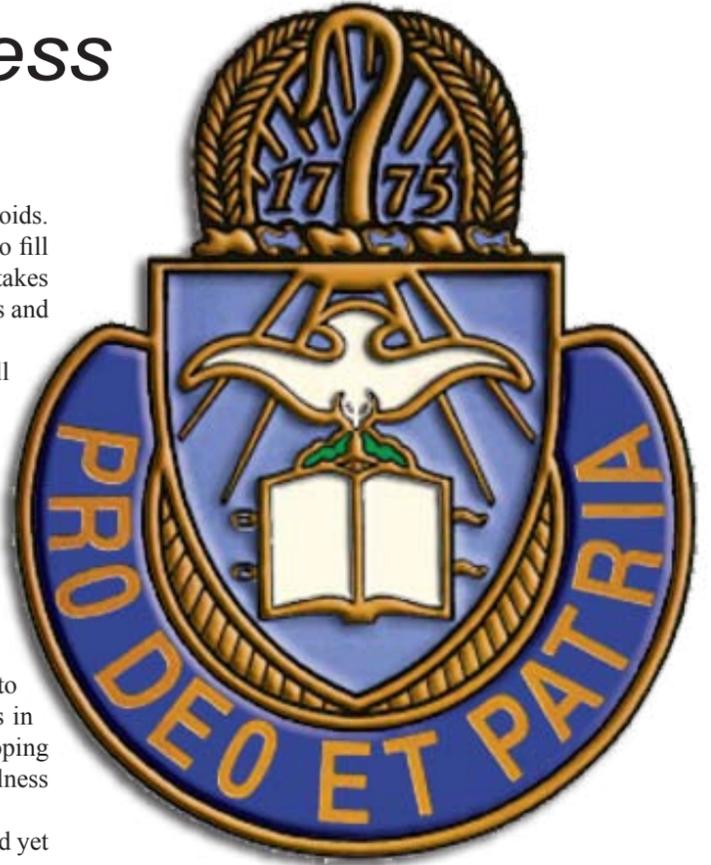
For example, picture each of the areas as a cup. If we do not pour fluid into one cup, we cannot get anything to drink from it. On the other hand, once a cup is filled to the top, any attempt to fill it with more liquid it will just cause it to overflow.

The most common example of this in the military is to overextend oneself in the area of occupational wellness in an attempt to make up for spending very little time developing and filling the areas of spiritual, personal and Family wellness – spiritual wellness is usually the most often avoided.

“What good is it for a man to gain the whole world and yet lose or forfeit his very self?” (Luke 9:25)

The end result of not investing and developing habits conducive to meeting the demands of all four areas of holistic wellness is the eventual erosion of the other areas of wellbeing.

Not only are the four areas separate, but they are also mutually supportive of each other to ensure the success of the



whole. Thus, we are only as strong as our weakest area.

When we spend sufficient time investing in all four areas of our life, we find that we are more efficient, stable and better able to cope with what life throws at us. Ultimately, we are happier human beings and the pursuit of happiness can become a realization.

Chaplain's Inspiration

Most look up and admire the stars. A champion climbs a mountain and grabs one. Let us remember to live life as a champion and not dream our life away by gazing upon the stars. Champions live with enthusiasm. The worst bankruptcy in the world is the person who has lost his enthusiasm and motivation. Champions move others forward. Let us move forward this day motivating those around us to live above the common level of life as we protect the nation of Iraq.

II Corinthians 2:4 “I am greatly encouraged; in all our troubles my joy know no bonds.”



Word on the Street:

What are your plans following redeployment?

By Spc. Elliot Valdez
MND-B PAO



Maj. Brant Cornish
Hampton, Va.
G5, DSTB, 4th Inf. Div.

“I'm going to go home and get reintegrated and prepare to PCS to my next duty station.”



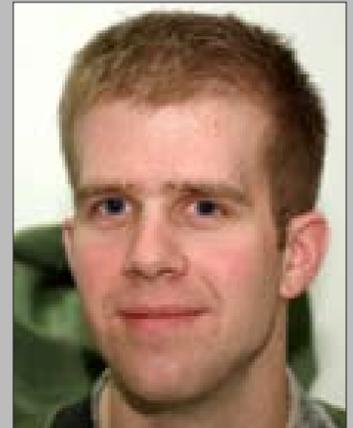
Sgt. 1st Class Juanita Rico
Denver, Colo.
PMO, DSTB, 4th Inf. Div.

“I'm going hiking in Colorado.”



Pfc. Jeremy Holderness
Crystal Lake, Ill.
486th MCT, attached to
G4, DSTB, 4th Inf. Div.

“I want to go back to Germany and then travel as much as I can.”



Spc. Daniel Linkous
Fayetteville, N.C.
G7, DSTB, 4th Inf. Div.

“I'm going to go home and spend lots of time with my Family.”



U.S. Army Photo by Sgt. Shana Henline, MND-B PAO

K-9 reenlistment

BAGHDAD – Capt. Kurt Rowland (left), a Seattle, Wash., native, presents Sgt. Gloria Gonzalez, a native of Columbus, Ga., and her dog Max with their certificate of reenlistment after she reenlisted for six more years on Dec. 31 at Al Faw Palace. Gonzalez, a dog handler for the MND-B Provost Marshal Office, has served in the Army for seven years and has been Max's handler for two years. Rowland is a lawyer with the Staff Judge Advocate office, 4th Infantry Division and Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

ISF, MND-B Soldiers confiscate cache

2nd HBCT PAO, 1st Inf. Div.

BAGHDAD – Soldiers from the 4th Battalion, 54th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, conducting combined operations with Troopers from the 4th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, operationally attached to the 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, discovered a cache of weapons at approximately 8:40 a.m. in the Mansour district of northwest Baghdad Jan. 3.

The effort uncovered a 130mm projectile, two Russian-manufactured PG7 85mm rockets, an 82mm mortar, two M6 mortar fuses, six 14.5mm small arms projectiles and an RPG-7 expelling charge.

The contents of the cache were then moved to an Iraqi Joint Security Station and disposed.

“The ISF are growing more capable with each well executed mission they conduct,” said Maj. Koné Faulkner, a spokesperson for 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, MND-B. “We will continue to provide support but missions like this prove that the ISF are able to conduct operations and succeed in securing the people of Baghdad.”

MND-B Soldiers, ISF discover munitions in Bayaa, Karb de Gla

1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

BAGHDAD – Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers partnered with Iraqi Security Forces confiscated weapons Jan. 9 in the Rashid district of southern Baghdad.

At approximately 2 p.m. in the Bayaa community, Soldiers from Company A, 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, MND-B, partnered with the 2nd Battalion, 5th Brigade, 2nd National Police Division, discovered one AK-47 assault rifle, one AK-47 magazine, and four pistols.

Soldiers from Company D, 1st Bn., 505th Parachute Inf. Regt., attached to the 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B, partnered with the 1st Bn., 7th Bde., 2nd NP Div., discovered a 225-pound bomb near a road

in the Karb De Gla community at approximately 4:45 p.m. An explosives ordnance disposal unit responded and destroyed the bomb on site.

Soldiers from Co. D, 1st Bn., 22nd Inf. Regt., 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B, partnered with the 3rd Battalion, 5th Bde., 2nd NP Div., discovered a home-made bomb consisting of three pounds of plastic explosives at approximately 5 p.m. in the Shurta community. An Iraqi EOD unit responded to the scene to properly dispose of the bomb.

“The 1st ‘Raider’ Brigade remains vigilant in our efforts to rid the Rashid district of weapons and criminals while providing mentorship and over watch for our Iraqi counterparts,” said Maj. Dave Olson, 1st BCT Spokesman, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B.

IA soldiers detain suspected accomplice to suicide bomber

Multi-National Division – Baghdad PAO

BAGHDAD – Iraqi Army soldiers detained the father of a suspected suicide vest bomber Jan. 3.

The father is suspected of being an accomplice to his son, who allegedly is responsible for the suicide bombing at a local Sheik meeting Jan. 2.

While conducting a vehicle checkpoint in Lutifiyah, IA soldiers from 1st Battalion, 25th Brigade, 17th IA Division, detained

the suspect at approximately 11:30 a.m. The suspect is being transferred to Joint Security Station Yusifiyah for questioning.

“This operation was completed efficiently and professionally by the 17th Iraqi Army Division with the assistance of local citizens, who provided them with tips,” said Lt. Col. Wayne Marotto, spokesman, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

News briefs

ISF, MND-B Soldiers arrest suspected criminal in Mansour

2nd HBCT PAO, 1st Inf. Div.

BAGHDAD – Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers and Iraqi Security Forces arrested a wanted special groups criminal Jan. 8. The criminal is believed to be responsible for emplacing improvised explosive devices in the Mansour district of northwest Baghdad.

At approximately 10 p.m. in the Ghazaliyah community, Troopers of 5th Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, MND-B, partnered with the 4th Battalion, 22nd Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, arrested the wanted criminal after receiving a tip from an Iraqi citizen.

“This arrest is another example of warrant based targeting success for the Iraqi Security Forces and Coalition Soldiers,” said Maj. Kone Faulkner, spokesman for the 2nd HBCT, 1st Inf. Div. “This is another step toward enforcing the rule of law in Iraq and demonstrates the increasing capacity of the ISF and the Government of Iraq.”

MND-B Soldiers, ISF arrest 2 suspected criminals, find bomb-making materials

1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

BAGHDAD – Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers and Iraqi Security Forces arrested two suspected criminals and discovered roadside bomb-making materials Jan. 6 in the Rashid district of southern Baghdad.

At approximately 9:45 a.m. in the Bayaa community, Soldiers from Company A, 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, MND-B, partnered with the 3rd Battalion, 5th Brigade, 2nd National Police Division, arrested two individuals suspected of conducting an attack on Coalition Forces.

The Soldiers transported the detainees to a nearby forward operating base for questioning before handing them over to an Iraqi authority.

Iraqi Army soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 24th Brigade, 6th IA Division, partnered with Soldiers from Co. B, 1st Bn., 22nd Inf. Regt., 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B, discovered a battery with a timer attached at approximately 2:15 p.m. in the Saydiyah neighborhood.

The discovered items are commonly used to produce roadside bombs. The IA transported the materials to their headquarters for proper disposal.

“The 1st ‘Raider’ Brigade, partnered with the ISF, arrested the suspected criminals in accordance with Iraq’s Security Agreement,” said Maj. Dave Olson, 1st BCT Spokesman, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B. “Our goal is to keep these suspected criminals from terrorizing innocent Iraqi citizens and prevent future attacks on Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces.”



Mission – Soldier – Family – Team



Soldiers provide assistance to girls of al-Nahareen school

By 1st Lt. Jamen Miller

3rd BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

SADR CITY, Iraq – Imagine a city where education is not valued for the immense impact it has on a child's life – or where attending a school of formal education could mean forfeiting your life.

One did not have to travel far into Sadr City during the governance of the extremists and militants to witness the injustices firsthand. Children did not attend schools, especially girls, mainly because veteran teachers had either fled the city due to violence or simply ceased teaching because of the threat to their safety.

Schools that were not being used by the militia as staging points and hideouts were in such a degraded state that class could not effectively be held.

Now fast-forward to the present day, when children feel safe enough to walk to school alone without their parents escorting them. Neighborhood councils are fighting political battles to ensure schools are re-supplied beyond previous levels, and the importance of a formal education at all ages is valued.

With the help of Soldiers from Task Force 1-6 and 3rd Battalion, 42nd Brigade, 11th Iraqi Army Division, schools in Sadr City have not only been reconstructed, but reconstituted with the mission to spread education in an attempt to end illiteracy and ignorance that makes militia groups so prevalent – a subtle way of waging war against Special Groups.

In this war-torn city, teachers are now armed with the dedication to teach children once again and to attempt to rebuild their city one child at a time.

The 3rd Platoon, which is part of Company C "Warlord," 1st Battalion, 35th Armor Regiment and Task Force Regulars, which is in turn attached to 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, in conjunction with their Iraqi Security Force counterparts from 4th Company, 3rd Bn., 42nd Bde., 11th IA Div., conducted an operation to deliver backpacks and food and water to the needy children of the Al-Nahareen Girls Primary school in the Thawra I region of Sadr City.

The tokens go a long way to further instill the importance of education in the minds of the developing girls who attend the school.

Many of the children received backpacks already through efforts by the headmistress, Miriam Mohsen, and teachers of the school. However, a group of students that have suffered the saddening loss of their fathers due to violence have not been rewarded for their dedication to education.

The girls are at the 4th and 5th levels of their school, are more than deserving of recognition for their sacrifices.

Upon the platoon's arrival, the headmistress called the girls from their classes and assembled them in the courtyard.

There were more students occupying the newly renovated school than the platoon imagined. The girls were looking around and giggling at the Warlord Company and 4th Company Soldiers who flanked them on all sides.



U.S. Army photo by 1st Lt. Jamen Miller, 3rd BCT, 4th Inf. Div.
Capt. Andrew Slack, a Cincinnati native, speaks with girls at the Al-Nahareen Girls Primary school in the Sadr City district of Baghdad Dec. 25, prior to handing out school supplies to some of the students.

"I believe these girls will help to heal the wounds of the fighting that has been caused by the militias – not just figuratively, but also literally," said Spc. Eric Williams, medic with 3rd Platoon, Co. C, 1-35 AR. "So many doctors and nurses have fled the city due to sectarian violence. My hope is that these girls will go to college to become the next generation of doctors and nurses that will help cure the country of suffering."

An Iraqi Army officer, 2nd Lt. Farass, was called forward to help distribute backpacks to the students, who were organized in front of the assembly.

Speaking with the headmistress when the event concluded and hearing her appreciation for 3rd Platoon's efforts made the time spent organizing the logistics and including it into the planning worthwhile for the Soldiers.

"The dedication that American forces have shown (in Sadr City) is amazing. Every day, you show us how much you care for the

children. My wish would be that everyone in the city can see your good deeds and help to make sure everything continues to improve, if only for the children," Mohsen said

Soldiers on both sides said they support her view and look forward to the day when education is a right afforded to every child around the country.

Although the scope of the operation was small when looking at the number of children reached, the magnitude of the impact on the community is tremendous. Gaining support for schools, especially schools for girls, from the neighborhoods can help ensure the successes that have been gained in Sadr City are maintained upon the unit's departure.

With more public outpouring of support and the return of teachers to the area to educate, the potential for more opportunities for children in the poverty stricken area of the city can continue in the years and decades to come.

Former FOB Callahan turned over to Iraqi Trade Ministry

from Callahan Pg. 1

shop market back to Iraqi control due to the increase of security in Adhamiyah," said Lt. Col. Michael Pappal, an Indiana, Pa., native, serving as commander of the 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 68th Armor Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

The Ministry of Trade plans to renovate the building and return it to a market while simultaneously taking down concrete barriers surrounding it.

"There are two big effects by reopening this building: the first impact will be that traffic will be alleviated considerably by the reopening of two major roads in the area, which will allow people to move around more freely as we take down barriers. Larger vehicles will be able to transport anything from goods to fuel. And in the upcoming months, as they fix it up, they'll open it back up and it will be a source of income for the area," said Capt. Kevin Kahre, native of Evansville, Ind., serving as the commander of Company D, 1-68 AR, 3rd BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

Although Coalition Forces are withdrawing from the building, they have relocated to other outposts across north-east Baghdad. The move promotes a sense of normalcy, with roads and commerce restored, and will help the people see



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Whitney Houston, 3rd BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.
Lt. Col. Michael Pappal, a native of Indiana, Pa., serving as commander of the 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 68th Armor Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, hands the key over to Anys Faleyeh, the general manager of the Ministry of Trade, at the Sha'ab Market Jan. 3.

they are moving forward and American troops will withdraw in due time.

"This building is so prominent and has been a big reminder of a U.S. presence," Kahre said. "So, we've relocated to an old firehouse with the National Police across the street.

By leaving this building, it shows those who live here that Iraq is becoming more sovereign by taking control of these bigger areas. It's a symbol to them that Americans are not needed as much in the area on top of the economic benefits."

Kahre went on to explain how rewarding it has been for him and Soldiers who have deployed multiple times to see things come "full circle" and how good it was to see Iraqis get that part of their city back.

There are eight other markets like the one in Sha'ab and two remain under Coalition control. The Ministry of Trade showed eagerness to reopen these markets and give the Iraqi people work.

"We have nine markets like this throughout Baghdad, and we've started the renovation plans for them. There are only two more of nine to be handed back over to us," said Mahdi Hasaan Shihab, a Ministry of Trade employee.

"It's a happy time for us you know because it's ours, and we want to utilize the Ministry of Trade to serve the people of this area and help the economy."

Handing back critical areas like the Sha'ab Market shows a confirmation that security is improving in Baghdad and, as security improves, Iraq will continue to move forward as a country.



1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

Raiders support local leaders, better community

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE FALCON, Iraq – Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers witnessed Iraqi orphans from schools throughout western Rashid perform patriotic folk songs and skits for local community leaders and Iraqi Security Forces as a show of support and celebration for Iraq's growing independence and as part of an observation of the Islamic holiday of Ashura, at the Jihad Neighborhood Advisory Council Building Jan. 3.

Soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, attended the special event hosted by local governance leaders and Iraqi Security Forces, and brought a little morale of their own to the orphans gathered at the Jihad NAC Hall in the Rashid district of southern Baghdad.

The Soldiers of Company C "Copperhead" hope that events such as the celebration will eventually build a rapport between the Iraqi people, the local governance and the ISF, said 1st Lt. Jason Behler, an armor platoon leader from Houston.

"It is part of the transition of security responsibilities," said Behler, assigned to Company C, 1st Bn., 22nd Inf. Regt. "It's a transition to get the Iraqi people to not only trust their local government, because this is a joint operation between the Iraqi Army and local governance, as they give to the kids, care for their own people."

The recent assumption of responsibility for security operations in Iraq with the implementation of the Security Forces Agreement Jan. 1 also means providing stability and support for the Iraqi people, Behler explained.

Taking care of Iraq's citizens will prove to be beneficial to the ISF over time, as Iraq's soldiers and police officers build upon the security gains made during the last year, he said.

"The experience, they have to learn on their own; it is going to be new and different for some of them," he said. "... but they are going to learn, and become comfortable in their new roles."

2nd Lt. Yasir, a platoon leader from Mosul, assigned to the 1st Bn., 53rd Bde., 14th IA Div., said that events like the celebration is another step toward the ISF taking real responsibility for their country and its people.

"Very soon, you will see us going to the people and interacting with them," Yasir explained.

The transformation will take time, said Yasir, but the Coalition Forces will see good results as the ISF work to endear themselves to the Iraqi people.

"What we went through and what the Iraqi children and women have gone through during the war has really devastated them – and almost destroyed us," he said.

"This is what we see here: the very first steps to rehabilitate everyone. We are in the right place, and these are the first steps in a very long journey."

The IA soldiers will do everything possible to show the citizens of Rashid and Baghdad that the ISF are human beings capable of caring and serving the Iraqi people, said Yasir.

The situation in Iraq has changed dramatically during the past couple years, which has changed the role of the combat-arms Soldiers, said Sgt. William Thomas, III, who hails from Orange County, Va., and is assigned to 1st Bn., 22nd Inf. Regt.

"We set up local governance meetings, talk about problems and fix problems, and we do this together with the IA, the Iraqi Police and the Sons of Iraq to get everything unified and bring the country together," said Thomas, who is currently on his third deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Combat units and company commanders are taking more of a lead role in civil military engagements and are making an impact within the Iraqi communities, said Staff Sgt. James Ossipov, civil affairs team leader, part of CAT 15, attached to the 1st Bn., 22nd Inf. Regt.

CA Teams working at the company and platoon-levels enabled the maneuver units to be more proactive in getting



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Brent Williams, 1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div. Sgt. Jeramy Storrer, an armor crewmember from Ogden, Utah, and Staff Sgt. Matthew Rigge, an Abrams tank commander from Cottonwood, Minn., unload soda and supplies Jan. 3. The Soldiers brought the supplies to the Jihad Neighborhood Advisory Council in the Rashid district to distribute to Iraqi orphans from schools.

the ISF to take more responsibility within their communities, said Ossipov, who also said that he is more optimistic about Iraq today than his previous deployment in 2005.

Events such as the makeshift celebration at the Jihad NAC Hall is an excellent opportunity for the NAC leaders to provide for their people, build morale for the children and offer a helping hand to the schools and their teachers, he explained.

"It's a feel-good kind of mission," said Ossipov. "We're obviously not going to solve any problems today, but since we have the capabilities to do something nice, we do what we can."

The CA Team of specialists, part of Company D, 404th CA Bn., a U.S. Army Reserve unit, stationed out of Fort Dix, N.J., gathered the school bags and supplies, toys and foodstuffs for the armor company to give to the Jihad NAC and Iraqi Army soldiers of the 1st Bn., 53rd Bde., 14th IA Div.

Advisors vital piece to Baghdad's success puzzle

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

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – Nowhere in Iraq is the magnitude of the new security agreement on display more than at the Baghdad Operations Command, where Iraqi Security Forces leaders huddle daily with their brothers from Multi-National Division—Baghdad and the Baghdad Operations Command Advisory Team.

The BOC is a task force that was established by Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki in an effort to maintain security within Baghdad and is commanded by Iraqi Gen. Abud Kamar. The BOCAT conducts day-to-day coordination with the BOC to synchronize combined operations to protect the population in Baghdad.

"The BOCAT's primary responsibilities are to advise, coach, teach and mentor our Iraqi counterparts," said Maj. Steven Milliken, BOCAT Operations Officer, 4th Inf. Div. "The advisors ensure that current Coalition Forces operations are synchronized with the BOC and information is shared between MND-B, battle space owners and BOC forces."

The BOCAT is made up of more than 80 personnel, including Soldiers from the 4th

Infantry Division and other MND-B units, Multi-National Forces-Iraq, Sailors and a Marine. Col. Bill Salter, 4th Inf. Div., is the BOCAT Chief and advises and mentors Abud. Salter also acts as a liaison between the BOC and the leadership of MND-B, commanded by Maj. Gen. Jeffery Hammond.

The implementation of the new security agreement has handed control of Baghdad and the coordination of all military action within the province to the BOC. With the increased responsibility of the BOC, a new command information center is currently being constructed at the BOC's headquarters. It will facilitate operations, intelligence and planning into the same room which enables for better staff organization and enhancing their situational awareness, Milliken said.

"The CIC allows the advisors better access to their counterparts and will enable advisors to ensure information goes to the correct staff sections for analysis and action as required," he remarked.

The new security agreement has not changed much in regards to the relationship between the BOC and BOCAT. In relation to MND-B, however, the BOCAT has become

an even more vital element of MND-B's operations.

"With the conditions of the Security Agreement, the importance of the BOCAT has significantly increased as the advisors become the entry point for MND-B to support ISF operations," said Salter, a Del Rio, Texas native.

This deployment has seen numerous successes under the BOCAT's watch. During the Sadr City uprisings last spring, the BOCAT coordinated and synchronized all ISF offensive operations during the conflict, Milliken said. Once the operation was completed and the Special Groups leaders were killed, captured or fled, the BOCAT supported the BOC in re-establishing essential services to the area and the rest of Baghdad.

The BOCAT assisted with the recent transition of the International Zone to ISF control; worked hand-in-hand with their Iraqi counterparts to ensure the successful transfer of Sons of Iraq members to the government of Iraq and transitioned all SoIs under Coalition Forces contracts in Baghdad; and is currently working to help prepare security for successful provincial elections scheduled for

this month.

"The BOCAT provided critical situational awareness to CF," Salter said. "This increased situational awareness quickly identified emerging flash points within the ISF or the population. The BOCAT, therefore, was able to notify MND-B, who could adjust operations and force dispositions accordingly in order to mitigate these emerging threats to stability."

Subordinate advisory teams are spread throughout Baghdad, serving in the same capacity as the BOCAT with their respective ISF units while at the same time serving as another source of information for the BOCAT. As the deployment for many of the BOCAT's members winds down after 15 hard months, the reasons for their successes are not hard to figure out.

"In addition to mentoring and advising, our advisors also created personal relationships, sharing on past experiences," Salter remarked. "With very few exceptions, our advisors are all previous deployers to Iraq, having worked with Iraqis and used their experience and knowledge to forge a special relationship with their counterparts."

3rd BCT, 82nd Abn. Div.



New Year brings Iraq to forefront of security role



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Alex Licea, 3rd BCT PAO, 82nd Abn. Div.

Iraqi Army soldiers assigned to 1st Company, 2nd Battalion, 37th Infantry Division, patrol a neighborhood Dec. 31 in the Al Karradhah district of eastern Baghdad. IA soldiers were assisted in the counter-improvised explosive device operation by Paratroopers assigned to Battery B, 1st Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad. Iraqi Security Forces will now oversee all military operations in Iraq under the security agreement.

By Staff Sgt. Alex Licea

3rd BCT PAO, 82nd Abn. Div.

JOINT SECURITY STATION ZAFARANIYA, Iraq – The Government of Iraq officially took charge of its nation's security Jan. 1 when the U.S.-Iraqi security agreement officially came into effect.

Under the agreement, all U.S. military action in the country must be approved by the Iraqi Security Forces.

Offensive operations against suspected enemy forces will also be combined with ISF partnership.

The agreement has brought no significant change to how Paratroopers assigned to the 1st Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, operate day-to-day business. The battalion has already been working in a secondary or "over watch" approach to its ISF partners since their arrival to Iraq in early December.

This was evident when Iraqi Army soldiers assigned to the 1st Company, 2nd Battalion, 37th Brigade, 9th Infantry Division, with assistance from Paratroopers assigned to Battery B, 1st Bn., 319th Abn. FA Regt., led a dismounted patrol Dec. 31, a day before the agreement took effect, in the Al Karradhah district of eastern Baghdad.

Iraqi Army soldiers began the patrol by inspecting two Sons of Iraq checkpoints. The IA soldiers spoke with the SoI commanders at each point to discuss the checkpoint's living conditions and evaluate its capabilities.

The IA, along with their U.S. counterparts, then turned their attention to patrolling a nearby populated neighborhood to conduct counter-improvised explosive device operations. IA soldiers spoke to local residents and took a look at the

neighborhood's essential services. The IA soldiers also gathered any intelligence on suspicious activity in the area.

Paratroopers assigned to Btry B., 1st Bn., 319th Abn. FA Regt., based out of Fort Bragg, N.C., clearly saw a difference in how the IA operates now compared to their first deployment. This is their second deployment to Iraq for many Paratroopers in the unit.

They are more proactive now and really have a sense of their new responsibilities, said Sgt. Brandon Fellers, a team leader with Btry. B's 1st platoon.

"They are leading patrols and taking care of business," said the Fort Dodge, Iowa native. "It's definitely a change from the first time I was in (Iraq)."

Paratroopers asked their Iraqi counterparts for direction during the five-hour patrol in a clear sign that the ISF was in control of the operation.

"We make it a point that they tell us where we need to go as oppose to us telling them where they need to go," said 1st Lt. Chris Hoffman, a native of St. Louis and a platoon leader for Btry B., 1st Bn., 319th Abn. FA Regt.

The atmosphere in the neighborhood was positive throughout the patrol as residents greeted the IA soldiers and their coalition partners with waves and smiles. IA soldiers were offered tea to drink and Iraqi children asked Paratroopers for handshakes and pictures during the patrol.

The Iraqi people clearly feel a change in the country due to the improved security, said one Iraqi Army soldier assigned to the 2nd Bn., 3rd Bde, 79th Inf. Div.

"Everything has changed, and the Iraqi people feel much better right now," he said. "You can feel the difference in security from just a couple of years ago."

8th MP Bde.



Victory Base MPs finish tour of duty at turn of new year

Ohio National Guard detachment paves road to success for Montana NG

By Ray McNulty

8th MP Bde. PAO

CAMP VICTORY, Iraq – With the start of a new year, a Transfer of Authority ceremony symbolically represented the end of a deployment for the 583rd Military Police Detachment, Victory based MPs Jan. 1.

Prior to the arrival of the 583rd MP Det. in April, MP units from Arizona, Washington and New York conducted garrison duty at Victory Base Complex.

Since the inception of Victory Base Complex more than five years ago, the Military Police garrison duties have been assigned to National Guard units specifically trained for and experienced in military police duty.

"Imagine a medium-sized American community that covers a lot of territory," said Capt. Erik Luca, a native of Cleveland, and the commander of 583rd MP Det., Ohio National Guard.

"Most of its residents are either in the military or associated with it," said Luca. "They are Soldiers, American civilian contractors, local-national Iraqi contractors and third-country service providers.

"Most of those residents are male and single. That community is unlike any in the States. It is the job of the 583rd MP Det. to establish and maintain law and order on the camp."

The detachment is attached to the 8th Military Police Brigade, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

The specific assignment of the unit, a five company detachment drawn from Ohio cities and towns ranging from Youngstown, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Toledo and Columbus, acted as the police force for the base community. Its 45 Soldiers were constantly on patrol, which was split into a two-shift day, weeklong cycle.

"Here at Victory Base, the 583rd has applied all its prior experience in keeping law and order on this sprawling base that includes Camp Victory, Camp Liberty, Camp Slayer, Camp Stryker, Camp Cropper, Baghdad International Airport and Saither Air Base," said Lt. Col. Jason Reckard, provost marshal, a native of Youngstown, Ohio.

"If it involves law enforcement, we are the first responders," he continued.

As first responders, MPs cover a wide range of incidents ranging from traffic accidents, speeding, petty larceny, assaults, unattended death, and General Order Number 1 violations involving contraband for alcohol, drugs, pornography or other barred substances.

"Like any community with a dense and rapidly growing population, our unit has focused laser-like attention on traffic

enforcement, particularly for speeding and safety violations, as well as traffic accident reporting and follow-up investigation," he added,

"In our deployment we made major progress in a program to eliminate hazardous traffic patterns, including placing and upgrading signage for all public ways."

Most importantly, the unit instituted a mandatory vehicle safety inspection and registration system.

"The 583rd paid attention to the basics from the day we arrived in Baghdad," said Sgt. 1st Class Shawn Murray, traffic NCOIC, a native of Youngstown, Ohio. "Without a question, one of the proudest accomplishments was not one auto-related fatality on our watch."

More than 1,100 traffic violation tickets were issued. There were 328 traffic accidents related to excessive speed, with some related to adverse weather conditions, particularly rain or dust.

Throughout the year, the traffic enforcement unit pursued an aggressive Random Anti-Terrorist Measures Stop program that had a high rate of success in identifying suspicious drivers.

After the Transfer of Authority ceremony on New Year's Day, the detachment was succeeded by the 143rd MP Det., a Montana National Guard unit.



2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div.

Bakiryah School reopens, breathes new life into neighborhood

By Sgt. Brian Tierce

2nd HBCT PAO, 1st Inf. Div.

BAGHDAD – The Bakiryah School is tucked into a Baghdad neighborhood just behind an old horse track. The school and its students have been getting by with little room and large classes for some time.

But the fate of the school took a turn for the better with a little assistance from a neighboring district, the 6th Iraqi Army Division and Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers.

The Bakiryah School celebrated its reopening Jan. 4 in the Mansour District demonstrating just how much those involved care about the education of the children of Iraq.

Dr. Nahad Abbas Shihab al-Juburi, deputy minister of education for the Karkh district, performed the ceremonial ribbon cutting for the event, which was also attended by Brig. Gen. Ghassan, commander, 54th Bde., 6th IA Div., as well as Lt. Col. Monty Willoughby, commander of the 4th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, and Lt. Col. Christopher Beckert, deputy commanding officer of the 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division.

“The school was overcrowded, and through a local contractor, we were able to build a new school building and house all of the students,” said Willoughby. “It will be a tremendous benefit for the students, and it will increase their ability to learn.”

The atmosphere at the event was very joyous for the children as they gathered in the freshly renovated courtyard prior to the ceremony to sing songs and listen as their classmates read poetry to the distinguished guests of the event.

“The most important thing that you saw today was real emotion,” said Beckert. “Today you saw real excitement on behalf of a community who takes the education of their children very seriously.”

The troopers of the 4th Sqdn., 10th Cav. Regt., who partner with the 54th Brigade to provide security for the Mansour district, have seen a marked improvement to the area during their time in northwest Baghdad.

“We’ve done a couple of different things here in accordance with the belladiah,” said Willoughby. “We’ve helped put in solar street lights and we’ve done some revitalization of the market area through micro grants. Then we looked at the school and decided to help out to provide a little bit of community pride and gain some community support.”

Throughout the event, the support of the community was evident not only in the large turnout but also in the festive mood created by the reopening.

Following the ribbon cutting, the Iraqi leaders toured the school to get a better look at the renovations.

Once the tour was complete, a traditional Iraqi meal was served to cap off the event.

“The improved school in Bakiryah is very important because it breathes life back into the community,” said Beckert. “It also demonstrates the will of the Iraqi Army and the local community leaders to work together for a better Iraq.”



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

▲ Dr. Nahad Abbas Shihab al-Juburi, deputy minister of education for the Karkh district, cuts the ceremonial ribbon to reopen the Bakiryah School in the Mansour district of northwest Baghdad Jan. 4. Nahad assisted the school with the renovation project with help from the 6th Iraqi Army Division and Soldiers from the 4th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, operationally attached to the 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.



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

▲ School children celebrate the reopening of the Bakiryah School in the Mansour district of northwest Baghdad Jan. 4.

► Lt. Col. Monty Willoughby, commander, 4th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, operationally attached to the 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, greets a school official from the Bakiryah School prior to a reopening ceremony in the Mansour district of northwest Baghdad Jan. 4.



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

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



CAB air traffic controllers receive FAA rating

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

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Three Multi-National Division – Baghdad air traffic controllers have become officially rated for the first time in their careers by the Federal Aviation Administration at Camp Taji Dec. 31.

Spc. Radha Bhramdat, from New York City, Pfc. Jose Cordova, from Phoenix, and Pfc. Scott Vongpradith, from Fort Worth, Texas, assigned to Company F, 2nd Battalion, Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, reached the milestone six months into the “Iron Eagle” brigade’s deployment to Iraq.

To become rated by the FAA, the Soldiers had to qualify at the two-position air traffic control tower at the airfield on Camp Taji. The qualification included 154 days of on the job training at the flight data and local/ground controller stations.

“Being rated means you are proficient at your job,” said Bhramdat, who is serving on her first deployment to the region. “This facility is very busy, and the hardest part is keeping everything safe and having to multi-task. Learning how to deal with multiple aircraft simultaneously is tough.”

Bhramdat works in a company of more than 40 air traffic controllers, who are responsible for safely orchestrating arrivals and departures of various types of fixed and rotary wing aircraft.

Flights depart and land both day and night at the airfield, north of Baghdad, and the air traffic controllers coordinate their movements so accidents do not occur. They make certain that aircraft stay at a safe distance apart and direct them efficiently to minimize delays.

During arrival, as an aircraft approaches the airfield, the pilot radios ahead to inform the tower of the aircrafts presence. If the path is clear, the controller directs the pilot to the runway; if the airfield is busy, the aircraft is instructed to wait to land.

The procedure is reversed for departures. The controller tells the pilot when it is safe to depart, and issues a clearance for the pilot. Once in the air, the aircraft is guided out of the airfield’s airspace by the controller.

“It (having three more FAA rated ATCs) makes the mission a whole lot easier, because we can reduce the number of controllers on shift, especially during leave,” said Sgt. 1st Class Derrick Brown, acting first sergeant, who hails from Kingstree, S.C. “Having more FAA rated controllers gives us a lot of flexibility with personnel.”

The Fort Hood, Texas, based company stood up less than two years ago and many of the Soldiers and the company as a whole are still growing. More than 80 percent of the controllers were straight out of advanced individual training when they joined the company.



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

Pfc. Scott Vongpradith, air traffic controller, Company F, 2nd Battalion, Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad from Fort Worth, Texas, tracks a Blackhawk helicopter landing on the Camp Taji Airfield Dec. 31. Vongpradith received a Federal Aviation Administration rating after serving 154 days of on the job training while deployed to Iraq.

With many of the controllers in the company new to the mission, receiving their first rating opens the gate to work at other air traffic control towers. Essentially, they can now work at any air traffic control tower after a brief familiarization class on the specific airfield or airports operations.

The first time a controller is rated is the

only time they have to wait the initial 154 days before receiving an official rating.

“Being rated has been my goal since I deployed here,” said Vongpradith. “It is a big deal being rated because you are capable of managing air traffic control towers. A rated controller makes sure everyone does everything right.”

926th Eng. Bde.



Soldiers of 6th IA Div., 890th Eng. Bn. develop strong partnership

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

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – The partnership between the Iraqi Army soldiers of the 6th IA Division and the Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers from the 890th Engineer Battalion, 926th Engineer Brigade, has been a continuing development over the course of the battalion’s deployment.

The two forces came together for yet another milestone Dec. 27, a joint mission to be documented in the history books. To date, the 890th Engineer Battalion, from Gulfport, Miss., has had many great successes in helping the Iraqi Army shift control of the route clearance missions by combining them into daily operations of the 890th Eng. Bn.

On this particular day, members of the 836th Engineer Company, from Kingsville, Texas, conducted a route-clearance mission alongside the 6th IA Div. The Soldiers of the 890th Eng. Bn. have participated in numerous missions with the IA. As each mission comes to a completion, progress is made as the IA becomes more familiar with its route-clearance vehicle, the Badger, and is integrated within the 890th Eng. Bn.’s route-clearance formations.

Cpl. Clifton Fortune, native of Stephenville, Texas, rode with the 6th IA in the Badger and served as the radio transmitter operator for the formation.

“This is my second time to ride in the Badger,” said Fortune. “These men are very friendly, down-home boys just doing their job. They are very proud to do what they do. They are very professional when on route clearance.”

“You can tell that they are getting more comfortable with the route-clearance missions. It’s nice to know that they really do appreciate our assistance.”

Fortune said the Iraqi Army soldiers are proud of what they do and are very similar to the American Soldiers is many of their beliefs.

“It is amazing to see how proud they are and to see how much faith these Soldiers have,” he said. “The bond they have formed with each other is very strong. They take nothing for granted and are very giving. They are very curious about the American culture, and just as we love our Families, they do too.”

Fortune that although the language barrier can be difficult, the IA and MND-B Soldiers still manage to communicate and work as a team.

The main thing however, is to prepare the IA soldiers for conducting independent operations.

“It’s beneficial to see the Iraqi Army working with us to see how we do things so, ultimately, they can take command of their own route clearance and their own country,” added Sgt. John Carter, a native of Kingwood, Texas, who serves as a “Buffalo” arm operator with his crew.

Following the day’s route-clearance mission, the 6th IA Div. soldiers were invited to take part in the Sapper Call, a tradition enjoyed by MND-B’s Sappers, which is a monthly social event that promotes networking and camaraderie among engineers. The event offers plenty of food, entertainment and fellowship. The IA soldiers were able to mingle and



U.S. Army photo by 2nd Lt. Susie Hubbard, 890th Eng. Bn., 926th Eng. Bde.

Soldiers from the 6th Iraqi Army Division check out a possible Improvised-explosive device Dec. 27. The 6th IA and the 890th Engineer Battalion Soldiers conduct joint efforts to support route clearance missions.

share their stories and experiences of missions, Family life and many other common interests in the company of each other.

“After we performed our mission that day, we ended up going to Sapper Call that night,” said Carter. “The Iraqi Soldiers were not only our guests but also our partners. It made you feel good to know that we’re in this together. The Soldiers of the 890th Eng. Bn. had a great time, and it is safe to say that the Iraqi Army had a great time as well.”



2nd BCT, 25th Inf. Div.

School opens despite past violence

By Sgt. 1st Class Christina Bhatti

2nd SBCT PAO, 25th Inf. Div.

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Approximately 300 girls in blue jumpers and white head scarves stood in formation on the school's courtyard. The chill in the morning air rose in puffs as they chatted, happily anticipating the formal opening of their new school.

"Today is a good day," said Sheik Saeed Jassim Hameed al Mashhadani, a tribal sheik in Tarmiyah. "This day marks a beginning of education for these girls."

The Huda Girls' School in Tarmiyah, northwest of Baghdad, officially reopened its doors Jan. 5 in a ceremony, which featured speeches, poems and songs. The school provides education to approximately 950 girls, who attend at various times throughout the day to accommodate the valuable education opportunity.

The school has a long history of learning. Originally built in 1982, the building was used as dormitory but transformed into a school for agriculture in 1995. Since then, it has transformed again into a primary and high schools specializing in the sciences.

"This is really something big for the people. This is a fort of science," said Muhamad Ibrihim Jassim, administrative supervisor for the Ministry of Education in Tarmiyah about the opening of the school. "This is the largest school in the area."

The school has long been recognized by the Ministry of Education for its excellence in education, but in 2003, that excellence was threatened.

The building was the scene of significant violence, said Dr. Malcom Phelps, a native of Washington, and senior education advisor for the embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team attached to the 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team "Warrior," 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

During major combat operations in 2003, the school slowly ceased to function as a fort of science and transitioned into a fort for terror.

The school, which lies up the road from a Joint Security Station, was the launching point of ambushes, improvised-explosive device attacks and sniper fire against Coalition Forces and the then nascent Iraqi Security Forces.

After a cautious stability was reached in the area in 2006, Soldiers from the 1st Cavalry Division began projects to rebuild the badly war-damaged school.

During the process, a major terror plan was thwarted. According to a Multi-National Corps – Iraq press release, Soldiers assigned to 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, discovered a command wire leading from the school's outer perimeter to one of the rooms. Inside the room, the cavalry troops discovered five artillery shell explosives. The insurgent's planned attack also included two large explosive-filled propane tanks buried underneath the school's floor and numerous projectiles emplaced underneath electrical conduits in front of each classroom.

"This was a major setback," said 1st Lt. Erik Peterson, a native of Centennial, Colo., who is a civil military officer assigned to Company A, 1st Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment,



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Christina Bhatti, 2nd SBCT PAO, 25th Inf. Div.

Approximately 300 girls stand in formation in the courtyard of the Huda Girls School in Tarmiyah, northwest of Baghdad, during the official reopening Jan. 5. The school was under renovation since 2006.

"Golden Dragons," 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div. "If they went off, not only would the building have been destroyed, many lives would have been lost."

More damage was caused to structure by removing the explosives, Peterson said. Engineer crews had to deliberately pull up the floor and take down walls brick by brick to ensure there was no longer a threat built into the structure.

Eventually those individuals involved in the plot were captured or killed by U.S. Forces and ISF.

"Even though this was a setback," Peterson said, "we had to try again. This is the only secondary school in the city. If it wasn't rebuilt, there would be no place for these girls to go to school and get a good education."

Approximately \$300,000 dollars of Iraqi and U.S. funds were spent to rebuild and refurbish the school, which contains 18 classrooms, science labs, an administration suite and an auditorium.

Now that the school is open, it faces many of the same issues plaguing the entire education system of Iraq.

"We have so many students," Jassim said, adding that the girls now go to school in shifts to help alleviate the overcrowding. "We need more buildings so we can effectively teach these students."

Peterson said there are more school projects currently in

the works, and he hopes more schools will open soon.

More than just new schools, Jassim said more teachers are also needed, but he is confident in the coming years that will be easily alleviated for the Tarmiyah Qada.

"All of the teachers we currently have graduated from this school," he said. "They belong to this area. Some of these girls will do the same thing, and we will continue to prosper like we did before the fighting."

Jassim said he is sure the area is now safe and the fighting done.

"There is nothing more to be scared of," he said. "These girls can come to school in peace."

Even though there is peace and stability in the area, a symbol of violence still looms in the background. Clearly visible from inside the school's compound is the brightly colored dome of the Ghalani Mosque. This mosque is a known safe haven for terror and frequently broadcasts anti-Coalition Forces and ISF messages.

Jassim said this will not deter his efforts and the efforts of his teachers to ensure the best education possible is available for his students.

"It is our duty to provide the best education possible," he said. "We have been charged with that duty – and we will prevail."

2nd BCT, 1st Armored Div.



9th IA Div. soldiers, Iron Brigade Sappers continue partnership

By Staff Sgt. Scott Wolfe

2nd BCT PAO, 1st Armd. Div.

BAGHDAD – Soldiers from the 1st Engineer Company, 9th Iraqi Army Division, and Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers from Company B, 40th Engineer Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, conducted a combined operation in accordance with the Security Agreement in the Al Rasheed area of southeast Baghdad Jan. 3.

The new year marked a transition in the way MND-B and their Iraqi Security Forces allies execute missions as the MND-B Soldiers moved to a supporting role.

No changes were needed for Company B, and their partners at 1st Company. Following a communications check and some minor vehicle repairs, the two units filed into one convoy and set out to conduct patrols with the Iraqi engineers in the lead – just as the units had been operating for the past few weeks.

In fact, very little will change with the way the reconnaissance patrols are run because of how eager and thorough the IA soldiers from 1st Company were during their training, said Capt. John Holcombe, from Shawnee, Okla., the commander of the Company B “Bulldogs.”

The Bulldogs put the 1st Company through a rigorous regimen of basic and advanced engineer skills from early October through the end of November. The MND-B Soldiers said they are very pleased with the results.

“The IA (engineers) surprise me a lot. They like going out,” said Sgt. Russell Slaven, a Tulsa, Okla., native, and combat engineer with Company B.

“This is the group I trained,” he said, with a note of pride in his voice. “They found three improvised-explosive devices during training in 35 minutes. None of the other groups were even close.”

Slaven is on his third deployment and said he has worked with the Iraqi Army each time.

“But this time, more than any other, I have to say they are a lot like us,” he said.

The lead vehicle for the route-clearance patrol was an Iraqi Badger, a vehicle based off of CF Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle.

This Iraqi armored vehicle had an interrogation arm that the Soldiers used to good effect, stopping the convoy three times to



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

Iraqi Army Sgt. Ali Balad (right), the senior sergeant of the 1st Engineer Company, 9th IA Division, along with his gunner, driver and vehicle commander, return from conducting a joint clearance patrol in the Al Rasheed area Jan. 3. The IA soldiers conducted the patrol with their partners from Multi-National Division – Baghdad’s Company B, 40th Engineer Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division. Behind them is the vehicle they used during the mission: a Badger 1, which is an Iraqi route-clearance vehicle.

check suspicious debris and trash on the side of the road.

Once the IA soldiers cleared the articles as “safe” and not a danger to the patrol, they retracted the arm and moved out again with a confidence demonstrated by the banter amongst themselves as they alertly scanned the area while conducting the mission.

Speaking through an interpreter, Sgt. Ali Balad, the Iraqi sergeant in charge of the patrol, said he liked working with the Bulldog engineers and was glad they had provided him the training he had received. He had previously worked with U.S. Soldiers at Camp Anaconda.

“We succeed at our job because we like it,” he said, in very

passable English. “I like being an engineer, and I will stay in the Army as an engineer.”

Private Mustafa Ali, the gunner on Balad’s Badger, said he has started to see more people cooperating with the IA due to the visible cooperation between Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces.

When the convoy returned to al Rasheed, a small ceremony was held by Holcombe for the IA soldiers.

Each Iraqi engineer was awarded a small certificate stating he had completed his training from Company B, 40th Engineer Battalion, in a satisfactory manner and was therefore a graduate of route-clearance training.

IA, MND-B operation yields explosive find but no fugitives



U.S. Army photo by 1st Lt. George Schwartz, 1st Bn., 63rd CAB, 2nd BCT, 1st Armd. Div. A work detail of Iraqi Army soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 23rd Brigade, 17th IA Division, removes bags of artillery propellant from a cache Dec. 27. The cache was found in the al Beta area thanks to a tip from an Iraqi citizen. The combined operation paired the IA soldiers with Soldiers from Company B, 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 63rd Armor Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad. During the operation, 26 50-pound bags of explosive were found.

By Staff Sgt. Scott Wolfe

2nd BCT PAO, 1st Armd. Div.

BAGHDAD – It was still dark when the Soldiers of Company B, 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 63rd Armor Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, left Camp Striker Dec 27.

Their humvees were faint outlines and red tail lights as they drove through the countryside on their way to al Beta, a small town on the west side of the Euphrates and Baghdad.

The company was on a combined combat operation with Iraqi Army soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 23rd Brigade, 17th IA Division, to apprehend two suspected criminals high on the Iron Brigade’s priority list who were believed to be in the area.

The IA and Soldiers of Company B “Bounty Hunters,” would provide an outer perimeter to prevent suspected criminals from escaping the door-to-door search that would en-

sue when the operation commenced.

Other Soldiers from the Bounty Hunters would serve as advisors for the Iraqi platoons conducting the searches.

Captain Cory Roberts, a native of Clyde, Texas, the company commander, was on hand for the combined operation and observed how the IA and his unit cooperated together.

Later in the day, the Iraqi Police beefed up the established outer security cordon with additional armed personnel. Although the search for the fugitives came up dry, but the operation was still a success.

During the operations, an informant led a search party to an open pit, which contained 26 bags of artillery propellant and five AK-47 rifles. All in all, 650 pounds of explosives were captured.

“He led us right to it,” said 1st Lt. George Schwartz, a platoon leader and native of Winona, Minn, adding

that he was surprised at how quickly they found the cache. “It was buried under about two feet of dirt and nothing else. We never would have found it if not for him.”

Roberts told his platoon leaders and sergeants during a review of the day’s activities.

“650 pounds of (explosives) is not a total bust,” he added, as he told his troops it was just a matter of time until the fugitives were caught.

Roberts also pointed out that the Bounty Hunters had learned more about the capabilities of their IA counterparts and how the company could better plan future combined operations after this experience.

Combined missions such as this one highlight the coordination and trust between Iraqi Security and Coalition Forces. As the CF has continues to hand the reins over to the Iraqi Army, it has gained a partner in the battle against al-Qaeda in Iraq and other criminal elements in Iraq.

ROLE TRANSFER AT SECURITY STATIONS

ISF take control of JSS Ghazaliyah III

By Sgt. Brian Tierce

2nd HBCT PAO, 1st Inf. Div.

BAGHDAD –When Joint Security Stations across Baghdad were transitioning to Iraqi control, Soldiers from the 5th Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, and the 2nd Battalion, 22nd Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, did their part by transferring JSS Ghazaliyah III, in the Ghazaliyah district of northwest Baghdad, to Iraqi control Jan. 1.

The process of turning over control of JSS Ghazaliyah III actually began in November.

Troopers from the 5th Sqdn., 4th Cav. Regt., arrived in Iraq to replace the outgoing 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), and almost immediately began to transition control of the security station to their Iraqi counterparts.

The completion of the transition came as a marked moment for the troopers, who dedicated their time to setting up their Iraqi counterparts for success in Ghazaliyah.

“The Soldiers of Blackfoot Troop were instrumental in completing the transfer on time,” said 1st Lt. Patrick Howlett, officer in charge of the November transition. “We will now focus our efforts towards assisting our Iraqi counterparts in order to better prepare the Iraqi Army to

take full control of Ghazaliyah.”

During the ceremony, Lt. Col. John Richardson IV, the commander of the 5th Sqdn. 4th Cav. Regt., alongside his Iraqi Army counterpart, Lt. Col. Abdullah, signed formal documents for the transition of authority from Coalition Forces to the Iraqi Army.

Once the documents were signed, the group was called to attention and the Soldiers witnessed the raising of the Iraqi flag by an Iraqi soldier, with the assistance of Spc. Anthony Perez, Troop B, 5th Sqdn., 4th Cav. Regt.

“This was a monumental occasion for the Iraqi Security Forces in Baghdad,” said Howlett.

Although the security station was transitioned and the Iraqi flag rose, there was at least one Soldier who expressed his sorrow in leaving the JSS, where he has spent the majority of his time in Iraq.

“Being at JSS Ghazaliyah III is like a homecoming,” said Sgt. 1st Class Deondre Long, a native of Galveston, Texas.

With the transition complete and the mission of supporting their Iraqi counterparts fresh on their minds, the Soldiers of the 5th Sqdn. 4th Cav. Regt., are ready to take on the challenges of helping secure northwest Baghdad.

“The transition of JSS Ghazaliyah III to full Iraqi control shows the continuing improvement of the state of the Iraqi Security Forces,” added Howlett.

Spc. Anthony Perez of Troop B, 5th Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, and an Iraqi Soldier from the 2nd Battalion, 22nd Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division raise the Iraqi flag above Joint Security Station Ghazaliyah III in the Ghazaliyah district of northwest Baghdad Jan. 1.



U.S. Army photo by 2nd Lt. Cait Smith, 4th Sqdn., 5th Cav. Regt., 2nd HBCT, 1st Inf. Div.

JSS Sab al Bour officially transitions to Gol control

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

JOINT SECURITY STATION SAB AL BOUR, Iraq – Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers bore witness to an historic event at Joint Security Station Sab al Bour, northwest of Baghdad, as the national symbol of Iraq was raised over the Governance Center Dec. 30.

The raising of the flag formally symbolizes the transition of control from the Coalition Forces back to the Iraqi government in the area.

Another page in Iraqi history was written as local leaders from Sab al Bour, joined by Soldiers assigned to Troop B “Bountyhunter,” 2nd Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment “Strykehorse,” 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team “Warrior,” 25th Infantry Division, MND-B, gathered for a ceremony commemorating the event.

Before officially raising the flag, Sab al Bour Nahia Mayor, Radhe Jaffar, along with Thamir Amud, Sab al Bour Nahia chairman, buried several items in a time capsule underneath the flag pole. Among the items buried were several compact discs, which contained pictures of all the Nahia and Iraqi Security Forces leaders. Memorandums explaining what happened in Sab al Bour and the accomplishments of the new Iraqi Government were also included.

Buried along with the CDs were 15 9mm rounds – one for each block in Sab al Bour.

“The 9mm rounds being buried represent the end of violence in Sab al Bour,” said Jaffar. “It (the 9mm rounds) also represents the fact that we are ready to leave the bad times buried in the past.”

Together, the two men placed the capsule into the ground and covered it with dirt.

The honor of raising the flag was given to

Thamir, a man who spent 13 years in prison under Saddam Hussein’s regime for refusing to join the Baath party.

Thamir raised the flag slowly, as his eyes welled up with tears of joy.

“This is one of the proudest days of my life,” Thamir said. “This is truly a great occasion as it symbolizes a new beginning and the end to many years of depression.”

Capt. Dan Digati, a native of Medford, Ore., the Troop B commander, acknowledged all the improvements and positive steps the government in Sab al Bour made since May.

“Today’s ceremony was certainly a tear jerker,” he said.

“Thamir and Radhe have seen Sab al Bour at its worst and for them to be a part of this transition means so much to not only them but to myself and the men and women of Bountyhunter Troop.”



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Brandon Vacchelli, 2nd SBCT

Radhe Jaffar (left), Sab al Bour mayor, and Thamir Amud (right), Nahia chairman, bury a time capsule underneath the flag pole at Joint Security Station Sab al Bour, northwest of Baghdad, Dec. 30. The burying of the capsule was a prelude to raising the Iraqi flag above the JSS, symbolizing the transition of control.



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Charles Joseph, 2nd Sqdn., 14th Cav. Regt., 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div.

JOINT SECURITY STATION HOR AL BASH, Iraq – Iraqi Army Soldiers from the 4th Battalion, 36th Iraqi Army Brigade, 9th IA Division, march toward the flagpole at Joint Security Station Hor al Bosh, northwest of Baghdad, Dec. 31. The Soldiers are responsible for raising the Iraqi national flag above the JSS to symbolize the transition from Coalition Forces control to IA control.



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Brian Pierce, 1st Bn., 27th Inf. Regt., 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div.

◀ ISTAQLAL, Iraq – Lt. Col. Richard “Flip” Wilson, of Brooklyn, N.Y., shakes hands with a leader from the 2nd Brigade, 1st Iraqi National Police Division officially transitioning security of the Istaqlal Qada Jan. 1 in accordance with the Security Agreement. Wilson commands the 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment “Wolfhounds,” 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team “Warrior,” 25th Infantry Division, currently attached to 3rd BCT, 4th Inf. Div., Multi-National Division – Baghdad.



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

BAGHDAD – Iraqi Soldiers from the 3rd Battalion, 54th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, pose by the newly placed sign in front of Joint Security Station Khadra in the Mansour district of northwest Baghdad Jan. 1. The Iraqi Army assumed control of Joint Security Stations throughout the ‘Dagger’ operational environment as per the recently signed security agreement between the Government of Iraq and Coalition Forces.



U.S. Army photo courtesy of 4th Bn., 42nd FA Regt., 2nd HBCT, 1st Inf. Div.

BAGHDAD – Iraqi Army soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 22nd Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, and Iraqi Policeman from the Ju’aifer local police station, hold up the Iraqi National flag prior to raising it over Joint Security Station Sheik Marouf in the Karkh district of northwest Baghdad Jan. 1.



U.S. Army photo by 1st Lt. Christopher Smith, 1st Bn., 27th Inf. Regt., 2nd SBCT

JSS SALAMIYAT, Iraq – Iraqi Army Soldiers and Iraqi National Police Officers salute the Iraqi national flag after it was raised above Joint Security Station Salamiyat, west of Baghdad, Jan. 1. The raising of the flag symbolizes the transition of control of the JSS from Coalition Forces to the Iraqi Security Forces. Under the Security Agreement, all combat operations are now combined operations between ISF and Coalition Forces.

Day in the life ...

Philippine-native serves 2 countries with honor

By Sgt. David Hodge

1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

FORWARD OPERATING BASE FALCON, Iraq – When Spc. Joaquin Jucaban was a young boy, he looked up to his uncle, a member of the military. Growing up in Iloilo, Panay, in the Republic of the Philippines, Jucaban insists joining the Philippine National Police was not a Family tradition but a matter of pride.

Assigned to the 1st “Raider” Brigade’s Personnel Section at Forward Operating Base Falcon in southern Baghdad, Jucaban now spends his work days assisting Soldiers with administrative needs and identification card issues.

“I served in the Philippines with intentions of serving my country because it was where I was born, and it is patriotic,” explained Jucaban, a human resource specialist assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad. “People get to give a part of themselves back to their country.”

To accommodate the Soldiers from the joint security stations, Jucaban set up work hours to fit the Soldiers’ schedule, explained Jucaban, who operates the ID card machine from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. most days of the week.

Due to a slow-moving ID card printing system, Jucaban sets appointments every 30 minutes and processes an average of 15 cards per day.

Soldiers request new ID cards for many different reasons during a deployment, ranging from damage, promotion and expiration, stated Jucaban.

Jucaban serves more than 3,000 Soldiers and civilians from five different battalion-sized units and other detachments in southern Baghdad, said Sgt. Frank Crisafulli, human resources noncommissioned officer, HHD, 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

“Spc. Jucaban is an outstanding Soldier, and he takes his job very seriously,” said Crisafulli, a veteran of more than four years and two combat deployments to Iraq. “He has executed his job flawlessly since he arrived in the unit.”

Crisafulli, who hails from Fredericksburg, Va., said Jucaban’s professionalism and military bearing were among the first things he noticed about the Soldier when he arrived at the unit.

“I think my job is important because every Soldier needs an ID card,” explained Jucaban, a veteran of more than two years in the U.S. Army and seven years in the Philippine National Police.

“It is an important piece of identification and is considered a sensitive item.”

Jucaban, a former first lieutenant and platoon leader for the Philippine National Police, said being an enlisted Soldier gives him another perspective, or overview, of how the Army works.

Since deploying to southern Baghdad’s Rashid district in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Jucaban worked as a clerk in the brigade’s official mail room and a liaison officer for the 1st “Raider” Brigade at



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

Spc. Joaquin Jucaban, a human resource specialist assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, processes identification cards for the Soldiers of the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, Jan. 6 at Forward Operating Base Falcon.



Photo courtesy Spc. Joaquin Jucaban, 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div. Spc. Joaquin Jucaban, who hails from Iloilo, Panay, in the Republic of the Philippines, poses in this 2002 graduation picture from the Philippine National Police Academy.

Baghdad’s International Airport, a hub for many U.S. Soldiers coming in and out of the Iraqi capitol.

Before traveling to the United States in 2006, Jucaban earned two degrees in the Philippines: a Nursing Degree from Saint Paul University in Iloilo, and a Public Safety Degree from the Philippine National Police Academy, a three-year academy, which he said is modeled after the U.S. Military Academy.

After graduating from the National Police Academy in 2002, Jucaban served four years at his first assignment, the Philippine National Police Special Actions Force, which is considered to be an elite counter-terrorism/counter-insurgency unit.

Jucaban and his Family relocated to England in search of better employment for his wife, who is also a registered nurse.

Soon after, Jucaban’s wife sought another job as a nurse in the United States, and the couple and

their children moved to Columbia, S.C. “After arriving in the U.S., I started looking for work at just a regular job,” said Jucaban, who has been married for

five years and has two boys: ages 4 and 5. “I looked online for a job and applied for the Army.”

Jucaban said he feels moving to the U.S. and becoming a Soldier is still quite surreal because both he and his Family never dreamt of living in America.

“Even before I came, I believed in what America was fighting for,” Jucaban stated. “The reason is freedom and democracy, and providing it to other people who cannot fight for it themselves.”

Based on that concept, it was like a dream come true.

“Back in college,” he said, “I wrote a recruiter in the U.S. to enlist in the Army. That was back in 1998.”

Recently, Jucaban was selected to attend Officer Candidate School, a seven-month course at Fort Benning, Ga. He said he is excited about the opportunity to become a commissioned officer again and feels the training will be similar to the National Police Academy in the Philippines.

“The Philippine National Police Academy patterns many things, such as training and doctrine, after that of the U.S.,” Jucaban explained. “I foresee the experience as challenging.”

When away from work, Jucaban enjoys spending his time reading books, talking with Family by phone and attending church. He said he plans to take his Family back to the Philippines between OCS and his next assignment to visit their relatives and introduce his children to their native land.

“If I serve 20 years in the Army, maybe I will retire back home,” he said. “In the Philippines, there is a tradition that residents who lived there return to die there as well.”

Jucaban is tentatively scheduled to attend OCS in March 2009.

MND-B Soldier rejoins Army after 38 year break in service

Sons' choices to join military inspire father to sign up again

By Sgt. Whitney Houston

MND-B PAO

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – Soldiers' reasons for serving their country are varied and often deeply rooted. When asked why they joined the service, many Soldiers will reply with long and complicated stories of how they came to wear the Army uniform.

Maj. Robert Sexton, a native of Cleveland, who serves as a physician with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 425th Civil Affairs Battalion, attached to 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, has a story about why he serves today that spans three continents and four decades.

During the Vietnam War era, Soldiers often came home to a less-than-warm welcome, confronted with protests, strikes and turmoil.

Sexton was one such Soldier, having served an honorable tour in Vietnam nearly 40 years ago, returning home to social upheaval in the United States. Shortly after he left the service, he and his Family moved to his wife's native country, Guatemala, due to the commotion happening around the country.

"I went into the service when I was 17 years old and was in Vietnam from '68 through '69, and I turned 19 while I was over there. I was in a unit attached to the 101st Airborne (Division), and we worked with the Republic of Korea troops on Army boats as a support unit doing transport, insertion, and evacuation," Sexton said. "We were not assaulters; we were defensive all the way. We were constantly up and down the rivers and canals."

"Then I got out of the Army in 1970, when I was 20, and had a 38 year break in service," said Sexton. "My wife and I decided in 1972 that we were going to go back to my wife's country because we were not happy in the United States. There were a lot of war protests, everything was upside down. They were closing universities and going on strike, which was kind of upsetting coming out of the military."

Soon after he and his Family moved to Central America, Sexton started working many jobs to support them but eventually decided to realize his desires and go through medical school there in Guatemala.

"I had always thought about medical school, but because we were just married and right out of the Army and we had two kids, I had to work two and three jobs all of the time: landscaping, painting houses, there just was no time for studies," Sexton said. "But it had always stuck in the back of my mind, and I don't know why, but we visited a medical school down in Guatemala and they had an open-door policy."

He didn't think he would make it through that first year of medical school because of the language barrier. However, because medical terminology, especially with the basic sciences, is pretty much the same in every language. He made it through, even as the number of students was thinned down from over 1,200 first-year students to 120.

Sexton eventually finished medical school in Guatemala and gained his residency and had planned on staying there and starting up a practice. However, he said, violence and turmoil seemed to follow him from Asia down into Guatemala.

"Guys chased my wife on a motorcycle one time because she was kind of a leader at the Instituto Guatemalteco Americano, and that was sort of the reason that we decided to come back in 1981 because things were getting so rough down there," Sexton said. "Our oldest two (children) witnessed an assassination right outside our house: two guys

Why I Serve



Maj. Robert Sexton
Cleveland, Ohio
Physician
HHC, 425th CA Bn., 4th Inf. Div.

"I joined 13 months ago, November of last year. I figured we have less than one percent of the American people in the service, and some of those people are going to need a break sometime – and that's what I aim to do. I'm still physically fit. I thought I could make a contribution."

with machine guns, eighty rounds in each one of them, and there were kidnappings as well. I had already finished medical school and had everything set up. I had my residency and was playing on two ball teams, so I didn't ever plan on leaving."

When they moved back to the states, he went through the necessary channels and regained his residency and was licensed to practice medicine in several states. Eventually, he ended up in Tucson, Ariz., where he practiced as a neonatologist, a doctor who works in intensive care for newborn babies, and started a private emergency medical practice with a close friend.

Following nearly two decades of success in Tucson, Sexton and his Family began undergoing a transformation of sorts as two of his sons joined the Marine Corps, both at 17 years of age, as he had done in his youth. He said their decisions came as a surprise to Sexton because he never mentioned the military as he raised his children through the years. His sons joining the Armed Forces, among other things, inspired him to want to make a contribution in some manner to the same cause his sons had so willingly taken up.

"Our youngest boy joined the Marines two years ago, and he was 17 when he joined," said Sexton. "Our third son joined the Marines in 1997 right out of high school, 17 years old as well. And in 2003 he was due to get out, he had three weeks left on his contract; however, he insisted on going to

Iraq so he extended himself and went into Iraq on the first wave."

Their decisions to join the Marines surprised and moved Sexton because they never talked about the military at home and he thought his children would get through high school and then go on to college. He began to feel the tug of inspiration.

"My two sons inspired me," he said. "Then, two years later after reading what the Army had done over there, I got more and more inspired with everything I read."

Coming to the conclusion that the fight against terror would be one of long duration, he said he felt he was physically able to still make a contribution with his experience and medical knowledge. He accepted a commission to the Army in November 2007 and has been serving as a doctor in Baghdad since October.

"I joined 13 months ago, November of last year. I figured we have less than one percent of the American people in the service, and some of those people are going to need a break sometime – and that's what I aim to do. I'm still physically fit. I thought I could make a contribution," Sexton said.

Sexton's decision to rejoin the Army after a 38-year break in service leaves him little possibility of earning a military retirement because of his age. He simply lives with the satisfaction that he is making a contribution to a noble cause while he still can, believing that he is right where he should be.

He works incessantly to bring medical care and training to needy areas in Baghdad, working with Iraqi Security Forces and Iraqi doctors on combined medical engagements where Iraqi medical professionals go to areas where medical clinics have not been established to treat patients for a day under the supervision of U.S. medical personnel.

Sexton works with the five companies in his battalion that are attached to various brigade combat teams throughout MND-B to help build medical capacity in their areas by engaging local Iraqi medical agents through such events as CMEs.

"He blows us away.

He's pushing 60, and he's more physically fit than some of the younger guys here," said 1st Sgt. George Guerra, a native of Oxnard, Calif., who serves as the senior enlisted leader with HHC, 425th CA Bn. "We hardly ever see him because he's always gone doing these combined medical engagements."

"He's really into his work and he loves it. He just wants to get out and do this work with the Iraqi people."

Sexton said he finds great satisfaction helping Iraqis by providing them with needed medical care and expressed a desire to go to other places with the Army when his tour is over where he could use his experience to help human beings.

"I'll be going to Afghanistan next year with my old unit," Sexton said. "After Afghanistan, I would like to go to the Horn of Africa because that's where I think Civil Affairs probably shines the most. I would like to do tours in Central and South America because of the language, and I wouldn't mind going to the Philippines."

Sexton's selfless view on life is something that has developed throughout years of conflict and eventual dedication to the medical profession and typifies a life of service that many desire at heart but few have the possibility to achieve. Surely in his endeavors to help fellow humans, his experience and outlook on life will spread to the men and women who serve around him, and he will re-inspire those who initially inspired him to be where he is today.

Striker aviation element plans for *takeoff*

By Sgt. Whitney Houston

3rd BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

FORWARD OPERATING BASE WAR EAGLE, Iraq – Every time a helicopter flies overhead, one can't help but watch the magnificence of a machine that defies the laws of gravity.

Rarely would anyone think of the time and preparation it takes to coordinate those flights; the Brigade Aviation Element for the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, toils daily to ensure air operations go smoothly within its operational environment.

"We deal with helicopter operations and pretty much schedule, plan and track all of the flights that are submitted through our brigade. The way we plan for this is through air mission requests, which take around three days to approve," said Staff Sgt. James Tebbe, a native of Reno, Nev., serving with BAE, 3rd BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

"We take the request and send it up to division, where it gets filtered through an approval process. And finally, Soldiers, commanders and pretty much anyone who needs to move efficiently and safely throughout the battlefield in a timely manner, can do so," said

Coordination of flights is a continuous mission and demands nearly all of the time and focus of the dedicated Soldiers' who work within the BAE.

"A typical day starts out with a mountain of requests, and we basically sift through them and see what we need to submit by what times. We are basically submitting those requests throughout 12- to 14-hour days. We are constantly adjusting for things that will happen or did not happen the day before," said Sgt. 1st Class Kenneth Green, a Jackson, Miss., native, serving with BAE, 3rd BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

As time draws nigh to leave Iraq, the BAE has started making preparations to move Soldiers serving with the Striker Brigade to where they need to be in order to take off for home.

"We're in charge of getting 3,500 to 3,800 Soldiers out of this AO, and we're probably right on target. Our biggest concern is that our numbers match up and timelines are met as far as when the helicopter comes in and how many Soldiers get on and, at the same time, ensuring everything runs smoothly and safely," Tebbe said.

"Right now we are formulating a manifest and figuring out how many people we gotta move and to what locations," added Green. "That number of people will play a part in which type of aircraft we'll use, like Chinooks for larger loads or Blackhawks for the smaller ones."

The strenuous work of BAE Soldiers may, at time, seem to fly under the radar. However, the Soldiers witness and appreciate the fact their hard work keeps Soldiers from encountering improvised-explosive devices.

"We enjoy keeping Soldiers off of potentially dangerous roads and getting them where they need to be as quickly and safely as possible," Tebbe said.



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

Staff Sgt. James Tebbe, a native of Reno, Nev., exits a bunker Jan. 6 to verify his flight manifests in hand at Forward Operating Base War Eagle. Tebbe serves with the Brigade Aviation Element, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.



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

Capt. John Spencer, native of Richmond, Ind., who serves with the 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 68th Armor Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, gives a bag full of new soccer balls to Iraqi children Jan. 9.

Adhamiyah's al Talaba Sports Complex opens

By Sgt. Whitney Houston

3rd BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

QAHIRA, Iraq – After the doldrums of any circumstance, hope is restored in new beginnings.

In the Qahira community, which lies within the Adhamiyah district of Baghdad, the Talaba Sports Center was reopened to the public Jan. 9 after an extensive refurbishing project that Coalition Forces and Iraqis undertook to improve the impoverished Shi'a neighborhood.

"When we took over this area, we assessed all of the areas to see what nonlethal missions we could conduct to fight off a lethal threat. And what we did was target an area that we thought needed the most help," said Capt. John Spencer, a Richmond, Ind., native, serving with 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 68th Armor Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

He said Qahira is an important neighborhood because it contains a preponderance of lower-income Shi'a and had, at one time, a substantial militia that campaigned against the government of Iraq.

Opening a sport center, such as this, he explained, will have a huge impact on the community, which helps to counteract propaganda.

"If you create just a little bit of happiness for them, you'll create a lot of happiness within the community, which shows forward progression toward a better life," Spencer said.

The Talaba Sports Complex was a huge undertaking.

The refurbishment was funded through the Commanders Emergency Relief Program, and manpower was provided by area residents.

The project included repairing the gym floor, roof, stadium seating, kitchen, bathrooms, locker rooms, light fixtures, electrical systems and the parking area. The scope of work also included cosmetic issues, such as painting and cleaning the inside and outside walls.

"The project ended up costing \$187,300 of CERP funds and took approximately 60 days to finish the project," said 1st Lt. Brendan McNichol, native of Morris, Conn., who serves with the 1-68 AR, 3rd BCT.

Among the facility's amenities, said Spencer, is a basketball court that can also be used as an indoor soccer arena. It is one of two gyms in the area that measures up to Olympic standards.

The sport center, which will be used predominantly by six schools in the area, is open to children of all ages. The complex, he added, has been well received by residents of the area.

"There are approximately 80,000 residents that live in Qahira, and this is the only sports complex in the area," said Muhammad Madlom, the Neighborhood Advisory Council chairman, "So, it is a good achievement for Coalition Forces – and it is good they focus on and care about sports for youth because these guys are the future of this country. It will have a huge psychological impact on them as well as influence them for the good as they participate in sports."

MND-B Soldier strives for excellence in 'free time'



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Shana Henline, MND-B PAO

Sgt. Timothy Boyd, a Dallas native, works at his desk in the Prosecution Task Force office, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, where he spends not just his work time, but also his study time for a master's degree and his "free time" building databases to improve workflow.

By Sgt. 1st Class Nichole Bonham
MND-B PAO

CAMP LIBERY, Iraq – It has always been a mark of pride for the Army to be able to point out the drive, ambition and dedication in its best Soldiers. There was an old Army ad campaign that stated, "We do more by nine a.m. than most people do all day."

One prime example of that striving-for-excellence attitude can be found in Sgt. Timmothy Boyd, a Dallas native, serving a tour in Iraq with Company B, Division Special Troops Battalion, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

Boyd has developed a reputation for going above and beyond all expectations.

While working in the Systems Communications section, he used his free time to develop a unit Website, where spouses back home could interact with their deployed Soldier. He regularly offers his knowledge of computers – and again, his own free time – to help friends and co-workers with any hardware or software problems they're having with their personal computers.

Not that he has a lot of free time. In fact, he may have less than most. With the assistance and support of his unit, Boyd recently completed his bachelor's degree in computer science.

"He promised me if I kept him on night shift that he would complete (his bachelor's degree), and he made that promise, and I was so proud when he did complete it," said Staff Sgt. Marlene Noel, a Miami native, Boyd's supervisor. "(I'm) so proud that he got player of the day, that he's getting recognized for the things he's done."

"It was a lot of work, but instead of watching movies during the free time, you know, you just had to do some homework," Boyd said, of completing his degree. "So it took a little bit of sacrifice, but I was able to get it done."

He is now working toward his master's degree in computer science. And the story doesn't end here.

Boyd's latest assignment is with MND-B's new Prosecution Task Force, a section that develops arrest warrants for approval by Iraqi judges per the recently-passed security agreement. His job as an intelligence analyst is to comb through intelligence reports all day long, looking for evidence to use in putting together a warrant. He helps his partner, a law enforcement professional, develop interview questions for detainees based off the evidence he finds in the reports and puts together the warrant packets that are presented to Iraqi judges.

When Boyd came into the section, he noticed a problem with the lack of organization and ability to cross reference files in current warrants – so he fixed that. Again, he used his free time and civilian-acquired computer programming skills to create a database to manage all the information the section processes.

"He took a very basic (system) that was there and turned it into what's essentially become the standard for the other divisions here in Iraq," said Maj. Kevin Admiral, a native of Nolanville, Texas, who serves as chief of Prosecution Task Force, 4th Inf. Div. "I think he's definitely set a great example for all noncommissioned officers and Soldiers here in Baghdad. He definitely knows how to manage his time."

Boyd has also worked with Multi-National Corps – Iraq to help develop the Combined Information Data Network Exchange database for warrants so the new system maintains some of the same functionality he developed in his own program.

After this deployment, Boyd's enlistment will be up and he said he plans on becoming Mr. Boyd and finding a job in the computer science career field he's been spending so much of his "free time" studying for.

When asked if he's planning on ever bringing those skills back to the military, he keeps his options open. "It's always a possibility."

'Iron Eagle' DART fine tunes fire fighting skills

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

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – In combat, a disabled aircraft can cause a myriad of problems on the battlefield. Trained professionals must be ready to respond to the urgent situation at a moment's notice and have to literally be prepared for hundreds of different scenarios.

Members of the Disabled Aircraft Recovery Team from the Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, are qualified to do just that.

The DART platoon, comprised of approximately 40 Soldiers from Company B, 404th Aviation Support Battalion, is trained to respond, access damage and determine whether or not an immobilized aircraft can safely be extracted from the battlefield. Training for this mission is a mission of its own.

During an extensive training exercise Jan. 2, the "Iron Eagles" DART platoon fine tuned their fire fighting skills while dousing a controlled blaze with McCaw Compressed Air Foam backpack fire extinguishers on Camp Taji.

As the brigade's primary DART, learning how to efficiently suppress fires, among other tasks, are one of the various tools that make up the team's repertoire of aircraft recovery skills: a 24/7 mission they don't take lightly.

"This is the system we would utilize in case of an emergency, such as if an aircraft were shot down or had to make a precautionary landing and is on fire," said Capt. Alfredo Reyes, DART platoon leader, from Pasadena, Texas. "If this were the case, we would be able to deploy with CAB assets and get to the site and extinguish the flames."

The McCaw CAF backpack, weighing in at 60 pounds, is a powerful extinguisher used for fire suppression, exposure protection, hazardous material cleanup as well as decontamination. The lightweight, rugged system can expel five gallons of water into as much as 350 gallons of pressurized foam for



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Jason Dangel, CAB PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

Ron Bailey, with the Camp Taji Fire Department, teaches Soldiers from Company B, 404th Aviation Support Battalion, Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, how to use the McCaw Compressed Air Foam backpack fire extinguisher at Camp Taji Jan. 2.

a distance of up to 40 feet.

During the two-hour block of instruction on fire fighting, the Soldiers were first briefed on the ins-and-outs of the McCaw CAF system with course instructor Ron Bailey, a member of the Camp Taji Fire Department, who served 13-years as a firefighter with the Navy.

After the class ended, the DART Soldiers, along with Camp Taji Fire Department personnel, made their way to a remote area, where they learned how effective the extinguisher system is when it comes to fighting fires.

"You'll definitely be able to stay warm out here," said Bailey, while igniting an old fuel tanker into a towering wall of fire during a particularly frigid morning in Iraq.

Then, in teams of two, the Soldiers took turns fighting the blaze until the flames were completely extinguished. Bailey ignited the fuel truck twice during the exercise, and both times it took the Soldiers approximately five minutes to fully extinguish the flames.

"This is real good training and is probably the best training we've done since we've been out here," said Sgt. Robert Thibault, DART noncommissioned officer-in-charge, from Coventry, R.I.

"As far as real world scenarios, this is something that we will see if an aircraft goes down and catches on fire. It is important that all the Soldiers are trained and can execute this operation as the mission dictates."

Being trained and ready is something the platoon's leaders take seriously. Every Friday, Reyes and Thibault set aside the whole day to train their team on aircraft recovery, because they understand the importance of their critical combat mission.

Whether it's as simple as responding to a bird that has to make a precautionary landing due to a simple maintenance problem, or it is something as serious as an aircraft engulfed in flames, they both agree that the platoon's training must be wide-ranging and versatile to ensure mission success.

"We are ready for anything," Thibault added. "Throw any scenario at us, and we'll be able to react accordingly. As a DART, we can only be proactive to a certain degree. We have fully trained personnel and all the necessary equipment, but every mission is different. I'm fully confident that we can successfully accomplish any mission we encounter, and training events such as this puts us in a better position to do just that."

Ironhorse Band serves music, morale with honor

By 1st Lt. Shawn Clark
MND-B PAO

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – There is a reason a Soldier's chest will swell just a bit more as he or she listens to the national anthem in honor of our country or listens to taps in remembrance of a fallen comrade. These events are more powerful because of something they have in common: they have their own theme music.

Thanks to a group of dedicated individuals, Soldiers of 4th Infantry Division and Multi-National Division – Baghdad deployed to Camp Liberty and the surrounding areas around Iraq's capital city, have enjoyed the highly talented 4th Inf. Div. Band; through their musical talents and efforts, they strive to help make special events more special and solemn times more dignified.

Soldiers in the band will tell you they are a Soldier first, trained and proficient as any other. Where these Soldiers may differ a little from their peers, however, is their experience in their chosen trade prior to making their commitment to their nation and the Army.

Becoming a member of an Army band is not as simple as one recruit being issued a weapon, the next a mop and the next one a trumpet, said Chief Warrant Officer 5 Robert Nixon, commander of the 4th Inf. Div. Band, who is a native of Lebanon, Ohio. In fact, it takes years of special training and hard work to play in a division-level band. It also takes the support of the division leadership as well.

Nixon said he is particularly grateful for their number-one fan and the support and direction he provides.

"Maj. Gen. Jeffery Hammond, the commanding general for the 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, gave us a mission and said, 'You will play music; that is what I want you to do. I don't want to hear about you pulling guard duty because you are a band.' He has made our deployment 100 percent successful by employing us to do what we are trained to do – play music," Nixon said.

Normally a band is tasked out for guard duty when deployed, a task they have accepted and excelled at

in the past, said 1st Sgt. Jeremy Smelser, a native of Killeen, Texas, who serves as the senior enlisted leader of the band. During this deployment, because of the strong support from the command, they have been able to achieve a great balance of doing their mission and supporting the overall mission by volunteering for other duties.

"Well, you know we run the 4th Inf. Div. gym, right?" Smelser said, with obvious pride.

He admits running the gym is a win-win situation because it has allowed the members of the band to take on additional responsibilities, provide a valuable service to all service members and civilians deployed to Camp Liberty, and all with the added bonus of the opportunity to get themselves in shape. When the chance came up to manage the division gym, Smelser volunteered his unit on the spot and never looked back. They now pride themselves on winning local physical training challenges with other units and the benefits of proving good customer service to gym patrons and working out during their off time has translated directly into the band's overall performance.

"A good physical foundation allows a Soldier to excel in every other area of life, and it definitely helps build the confidence needed to perform at a division level," Smelser said.

Sgt. 1st Class Henry Reyna, a native of San Antonio, Texas, said he believes the best thing about being in the band is that its members get the opportunity to see everything and go everywhere as they perform.

"We see ourselves as ambassadors of the Army, and as the 4th Inf. Div. Band ... we have been able to do just that."

Getting out there, close to their fellow Soldiers, to provide them with music for the memorials, the ceremonies and the celebrations that have come and gone during the long days of the division's deployment has been the band's mission since arriving in Baghdad. It is a mission they have performed with the precision and harmony of a perfectly tuned instrument.



U.S. Army courtesy photo
Staff Sgt. Colleen Murray, a flute player with the 4th Infantry Division Band, kneels at the feet of "Elvis," Sgt. Wayne Beach, a trombone player with the band, as they participate in the 4th Inf. Div. Band Holiday Show at the Field House on Camp Liberty Dec. 19, showing the local troops how to celebrate "Elvis style."

Paratroopers train NP mechanics

By Staff Sgt. Alex Licea
3rd BCT PAO, 82nd Abn. Div.

JOINT SECURITY STATION BELADIYAT, Iraq – Maintenance superiority has been a consistent standard in order to keep a military force operational and ahead of its enemies in combat.

This fact was stressed when 10 national police mechanics assigned to the 8th Brigade, 2nd NP Division, partnered with Paratroopers assigned to Company F, 2nd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, in a joint vehicle maintenance training event Jan. 5 at Joint Security Station Beladiyat.

The effort was to familiarize NP mechanics of the 8th Bde., 2nd NP Div., with the general components and maintenance procedures of the M1151 up-armored humvee. The NP unit is about to receive its initial fielding of the vehicle.

Training events such as these allow Coalition Forces to pass key lessons learned on vehicle maintenance giving its Iraqi partners the advice they need to stay equipped and prepared to defend its country's security.

"The goal of the training was to help improve the 8th Bde., 2nd NP Div., maintenance program," said Capt. Jeremiah Corbin, a native of Ashtabula, Ohio, and commander of Co. F, 2nd Bn., 505th PIR. "We are providing them with the basic component identification, characteristics, trends and common faults of the humvee."

Improvised-explosives devices continue to be a threat in Iraq. The M1151 up-armored humvee is a key tool to counter the threat of IEDs, and proper maintenance can go a long way.

"They will be able to care for these vehicles in order to be effective in future military operations," said Chief Warrant Officer 3 Jason Barrett, a native of Flint, Mich., maintenance technician for Co. F, 2nd Bn., 505th PIR. "The NP mechanics were eager to learn and frequently asking questions throughout the training."

This is the first in a series of training sessions between the two counterparts. NP mechanics will focus on basic troubleshooting and how to properly conduct maintenance on a humvee transmission in the weeks to come.



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. James Selesnick, 982nd Combat Camera Co.
Sgt. Richard Allums, a native of Orlando, Fla., a mechanic with Company F, 2nd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, shows Iraqi National Police mechanics the location of components under the hood of a M1151 up-armored humvee during a vehicle familiarization training event Jan. 5 at Joint Security Station Beladiyat.

Dagger chaplain, assistant aim to improve Soldiers' spiritual fitness

By Spc. Dustin Roberts
2nd HBCT PAO, 1st Inf. Div.

BAGHDAD – Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers who serve with the 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team “Dagger,” 1st Infantry Division, trained for the better part of 2008 in order to prepare for their deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The Soldiers focused on what their mission would be for their specific job field, worked on their physical fitness and sharpened their warrior skills to be ready to battle the enemy if need be.

These abilities are expected to be maintained every day.

For two individuals in the brigade, what matters most is the Soldiers’ inner wheel that maintains the desire to stay combat efficient throughout the deployment.

“If you look at what we do as an Army to train for battle, our skill sets and specific military occupational specialties are what we focus on; we focus on physical fitness, and we also focus on mental tenacity and perseverance,” said Maj. Peter Johnson, the chaplain and spiritual leader in the Dagger Brigade. “With the culmination of those you really can’t sustain without a spiritual strength behind you.”

Johnson and his assistant, Staff Sgt. Matthew Forrester, both of Headquarters and

Headquarters Company, 2nd HBCT, keep their schedules busy by reaching out to Soldiers and making sure religious services are available in all of the forward operating bases and joint security stations across the Dagger Brigade’s areas of operation.

Forrester keeps record of the spiritual needs by keeping in constant contact with the brigade’s subordinate units, ensuring there are no issues of spiritual fitness.

“I also talk with Soldiers and make sure morale is good. If I see anything that stands out to me that could be an issue, or if they request to speak with the chaplain, I will let the chaplain know,” Forrester said. “I try to reach out to the Soldiers as much as I can.”

In a scheduled yearlong deployment, said Johnson, it can be very difficult to balance life’s issues at home, whether financially, mentally or spiritually, and still successfully complete everyday missions in combat.

“How does a Soldier who was just had his world rocked, either emotionally or spiritually, focus on his job?” asked Johnson. “To be able to do that, you have to have foundation, which is a spiritual strength. It’s a day by day exercise of preventative maintenance, checks and services for the soul.”

It is crucial, he added, for Soldiers to be mentally healthy during the deployment by



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Dustin Roberts, 2nd HBCT PAO, 1st Inf. Div.

Maj. Peter Johnson (right), the chaplain and spiritual leader of the 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, speaks with Soldiers operationally attached to the 2nd HBCT at Joint Security Station Adl.

enduring through loneliness and stressful situations.

“Sometimes a Soldier will say that they can’t go on anymore. After an hour or two of counseling, the Soldier will still think it is hard, but they find out they can make it,” he said. “Before they know it, it’s been 12.5 months and they are going home, saying, ‘Wow, I did it.’”

The two said that they don’t want Soldiers

to just barely make it through the deployment but to mentally conquer in their inner battles to make them morally stronger.

“A specific goal that I would have is that we spend 12 months in a combat zone and the Soldiers go back as better Soldiers – not only in their job but in their character,” Johnson said. “They’ll realize there were ups and downs and hard times, but I hope they also become better persons for it.”

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U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Alex Licea, 3rd BCT PAO, 82nd Abn. Div.

Family Reunion

FORWARD OPERATING BASE LOYALTY, Iraq – 1st Lt. Eric Donahue (left), platoon leader for Company D, 2nd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, speaks with his father, Col. Scott Donahue, assigned to Multi-National Corps – Iraq, during a reunion Jan. 5 at Forward Operating Base Loyalty. The Fort Bragg, N.C., based father and son are currently deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.



Sgt. 1st Class
Nichole Bonham

Bonham's Blockbusters:

'The Duchess' & 'Death Race' = something for everyone

By Sgt. 1st Class
Nichole Bonham
MND-B PAO

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – I hate the term “chick flick.” It sounds so dismissive and demeaning. Unfortunately, even I have to admit there are some movies that just can't be accurately described any other way.

Take the movie “The Duchess” for example. You could say it's a British costume drama – and it is – but that wouldn't do it real justice. Any movie that gives a woman license to stand up and say: “You See! That's what we had to put up with. That's why men are jerks.” You really have to call it a chick flick just to give a guy fair warning.

And, since I'm into being fair, I say if you drag a guy to see a movie like “The Duchess,” it's only fair to go with him to a dude movie like “Death Race.” In this particular instance though, you'd be getting the better end of the deal.

“The Duchess” is a BBC Films movie based on a biography of Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, written by Amanda Foreman and released to American theaters Oct. 10. Keira Knightly plays the 18th-century title character with Ralph Fiennes as her husband, the Duke of Devonshire, and newcomer Hayley Atwell as Lady Bess Foster, the other woman in their marriage.

The film follows Knightly's character for a period of about ten years. It starts with the marriage arranged for her by her ambitious mother, played by acclaimed British actress Charlotte Rampling, and ends as she settles into the strange domestic life that has fascinated historians for years.

Of course, Knightly is no stranger to confining costumes or period dramas. She made her name wearing a corset in the “Pirates of the Caribbean” movies and was nominated for an Academy Award for her turn as Lizzie Bennet in 2005's “Pride and Prejudice.” But, she was a little out of her depth with this new movie.

Her portrayal of Georgiana as a hopeful and naïve young girl crushed by the reality of a loveless marriage is nicely done. And she is believable as a young woman who finds an outlet for her love with anybody she can – her husband's illegitimate children, her best friend who becomes her

husband's mistress, her own extra-marital affair partner, or even the adoring public that saw her as a fashion icon. Where the actress falters is in her inability to take the character beyond the tragic heroine stage. There's a glimmer of it toward the end but, all in all, the character was too one-dimensional to be really interesting.

On the other hand, Ralph Fiennes, a two-time Academy Award nominee for “Schindler's List” and “The English Patient,” does an incredible job as her husband. With very few lines and even fewer scenes that show any redeeming characteristics, he still managed to portray the Duke of Devonshire as a man just as much a victim of his times and circumstance as his wife. He was still a jerk, just not a shallow, uninteresting one.

On the polar opposite end of the movie-watching scale is “Death Race.” Universal Studios released the loosely-based remake of the 1975 cult classic, “Death Race 2000,” on Aug. 22. The story, originally inspired by Ib Melchior's short story “The Racer,” was revamped again, this time by Paul W.S. Anderson of “Resident Evil,” “Mortal Kombat” and “Alien vs. Predator” fame.

If you are offended by rough language and gratuitous violence, take my advice and stay away from this movie. Although, personally, my feminist principles were much more offended by the treatment of women in the other movie than by anything in this one.

“Death Race” stars Jason Statham, who first came to the public eye in the Guy Ritchie films “Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels” (1998) and “Snatch” (2000). He continued to build a reputation for rough, gritty but

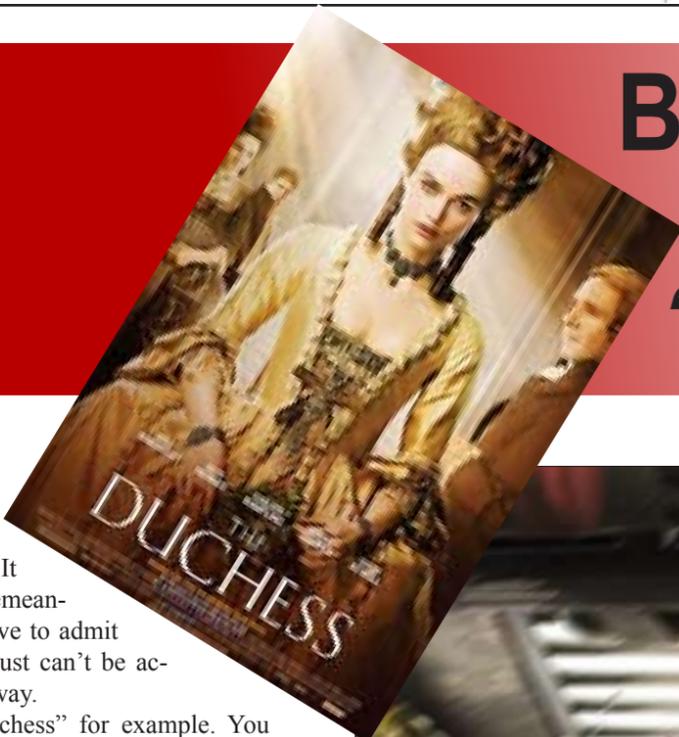
sensitive guys in three “Transporter” movies and, my personal favorite, “Crank” (2006). The Chinatown scene from that movie was reason enough to forgive him for 2008's horrible film, “In the Name of the King.”

Statham plays Jensen Ames, a racecar driver framed for the murder of his wife for the sole purpose of bringing him to the Terminal Island correctional facility, the site of a lucrative web-stream race show called Death Race. The warden of the prison, played to icy perfection by three-time Academy award nominee Joan Allen, manipulates Ames into taking on the role of race favorite “Frankenstein,” with the incentive that if he wins one race, he could win back his freedom – and his daughter. But first, he has to survive the race, no small feat even if the warden weren't stacking the odds against him, which she is.

Apart from the ending, which I felt was too neatly tied up – too pat – I really enjoyed this movie. The action sequences were well-shot and exciting. If NASCAR looked like this, aside from the body count of course, I might actually watch it. The movie didn't have as much potential for social commentary as the original continues to stir up, and most of the characters had very little depth or definition, but that wasn't the point of this movie. This movie was exactly what it tried to be – an entertaining romp where the good guy wins and the bad guy dies. Horribly.

So there you have it, two movies with almost nothing in common. One is set in the hoop-skirted past, the other a dark future. One revolves around a young woman who barely rises above the level of victim, the other around a man who embraces the role of avenger. The one tie that both films have in common is both contain characters who love their kids. One gave up love for her children, the other racked up an impressive death toll for his.

Maybe a strange comparison to take away from the two movies but, hey, I'm a chick. Deal with it.



Gaming Review: PRINCE OF PERSIA



Prince returns with magical sidekick, beautiful new world to save

By Sgt. Jason Thompson

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – Forget what you know about the Prince of Persia series. Let go the Sands of Time. Release your Warrior Within. Ubisoft has created a new Prince, in a new world, with a new female companion and a very different design philosophy.

The longer you hold on to the style of last generation's Prince of Persia, the harder it will be to master the new one. Embrace the change and you're likely to fall in love with the new Prince (or at least his lovely companion).

When we meet the new Prince, he hardly seems princely at all. Little more than a smooth-talking thief, the Prince gets lost in a sandstorm while searching for his donkey. Of course, this is no ordinary sandstorm. This mystical phenomenon transports the Prince to another land, one seemingly made more of myth than reality. It's here where he fatefully runs into Elika, a beautiful barefoot descendant of a clan sworn to guard the prison of the evil god Ahriman. As bad luck would have it, the two meet just in time to witness Ahriman's release from his prison inside the Tree of Life. His escape releases corruption across the four areas of the world. This corruption will spread further unless the Prince and Elika can heal the infected lands. And so begins your adventure.

This is a story about love. Not the love between the Prince and Elika, but between you and Elika. She is your constant guide, able to cast a spell at any time to show you the path to your goal. She's your greatest asset and far more likeable than the boorish Prince.

If Elika were just a little bit more real, or I was just a tad more insane, I'd marry her.

Elika is so significant to the story and gameplay that I found myself caring far more for her safety than that of my own character, the Prince. And the real genius is that Elika is as easy to control as pressing a single button.

In truth, Elika is really just a manifestation of actions we've been performing in games for years. We've all seen a double jump before and heroes who mix in magic with their swordplay. Now, these very standard gameplay elements have a physical form.

The rest of the Prince's actions are just as simple as commanding Elika. Each is assigned to its own button. There's one for acrobatics, your sword and your gauntlet. These work both while free running about the world and in combat.

When you're running about the world, performing acrobatic sequences, it's difficult at first to shake off years of training in action platformers. But Prince is actually simpler (and in many ways better) than previous iterations of the series or other action games.

To play Prince properly, you need to relax and feel the cadence of the Prince's movements. You will never furiously tap any button while free running. It's more like jump, pause, jump, pause, jump, use Elika, pause and jump. Finding the right rhythm can lead to some spectacular-looking and amazingly fluid sequences. When done right, you are treated to some spectacular animations both from the Prince and Elika.

Combat follows a similar philosophy to acrobatics. This is not a button masher. Button mashing is a sin in the world of Prince of Persia. Instead, combat is a rhythmic chaining of combos. You're not meant to be tensed up and leaned forward during battle. You're supposed to be relaxed, absorbing in the environment, the look of the enemy, and the Prince's incredible animations.

Getting the flow of combat is more difficult than getting into the acrobatics. It's going to be difficult, perhaps even impossible, for some to break their old habits. For those who can't get into POP's flow, the experience may be short-lived. Prince of Persia is not for everyone. You are either going to love it or just not get it at all. If you can embrace the idea that this is more about an experience than about the traditional "beating the game" mentality, then you are in for something special.

If the combat or acrobatics prove a challenge, don't worry. You can't die. At all. Ever.

Elika will always save you. If you fall, she'll grab your hand and pull you back to safety. If you're going to get squashed by an enemy, Elika will yank you to safety.

This steals some of the challenge from Prince of Persia, but it also offers some freedom for exploration. You can make leaps of faith in an attempt to get at a Light Seed knowing that failing won't penalize you.

Fans of the POP franchise know that there's a third element to compliment platforming and combat. There are indeed a handful of puzzle elements in Prince of Persia. The majority of these are very minor things – mostly moving plates to redirect where you can run. There are only two truly Prince-worthy puzzles. One has you changing the flow of a river of corruption so you can reach a new area, the other has you

manipulating some gates to reveal a series of magic plates. It would have been nice to have more puzzles or more ways to alter pathways up walls, but it's nice to at least have something.

As pretty as the world of Prince might be when covered in corruption, it's absolutely magical when healed. There are moments when I felt like I was running through a watercolor painting. The four areas of Prince are wholly unique in look and each manages to find the perfect balance between fantasy and reality. If you don't take some time out of your quest to stand on a plateau to admire the vista, you're missing out on POP's greatest gift.

The visuals aren't superficial. There's a story for every single area you visit. Elika's people abandoned this world long before Ahriman was freed and you can learn more of the history by speaking to Elika. There's a talk button, which you can use anytime you're stopped – or to talk smack to enemies. This adds optional conversations which give you more insight into Elika, the Prince, the bosses you're battling and the lands you're healing. The Prince is a bit too acerbic for my tastes and some of his lines are groan-worthy. But Elika and the bosses are well-voiced and make up for the Prince's deficiencies.

In every console generation, there are one or two games that, regardless of any flaws, hold tight in my memory even years later. I'm certain most long-time gamers have a few titles they treasure – the games they can never trade in.

Ubisoft's relaunch of Prince of Persia may just be such a game for me from this generation.

It's not the best game ever released on PC, PS3 or Xbox 360; it's not even the best game released this year. And yet, Prince of Persia is that rare game that has managed to tap into that part of me that would die parting with this title.

It has its shortcomings, but I already sense that Prince of Persia will be one of the few games from this generation that I carry with me for the next decade.

In the final game review for this deployment of the Ivy Leaf, I hold Prince of Persia high on my list and I'll award a very well deserved 5 combat patches out of 5.



Sgt. Jason Thompson

Soldiers of 4th Inf. Div., MND-B ring in New Year

By Spc. Benjamin Crane
MND-B PAO

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – Soldiers of 4th Infantry Division and Multi-National Division – Baghdad gathered together inside the Stadium in front of division headquarters on Camp Liberty to celebrate the arrival of the new year Dec. 31.

Being away from home doesn't mean that Soldiers need to also be away from holiday celebration, and with the help of the Quarterback Club and the 4th Inf. Div. Band, they didn't miss a beat.

The "Across The Nation" New Year's celebration helped many Ironhorse Soldiers feel like they were back at home by bringing a Vegas-like casino setting, a Texas house party setting and a New York 80's dance party theme to them.

"It's a New Year's Eve party that we put together," said Maj. Michael McGregor, a Roaring Springs, Pa., native, who serves as deputy director of the division human resources section, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B. "We have New York represented; we have Texas, which is kind of our home party; and then we have Las Vegas, which represents the western part of the United States.

"We kind of tried to appeal to all the people that might be coming. For guys that like to stay at home and watch TV, we have Texas. We have New York for guys that like big crowds, who like to be out there partying and having a good time. And then we have Las Vegas, with game tables where you can kind of chill out and do a little gambling."

Dance-offs, gambling and loud cheering were signs of Soldiers taking a break

to enjoy a night to kick up their heels and have a good time.

"We just want to boost the morale. This is our second New Year's here, and so we wanted to boost the morale of everybody in headquarters and have them come to have a good time," said McGregor.

Morale boosting was the name of the game on this night and the Soldiers who attended enjoyed every bit of it.

"I'm here to have a good time with the staff," said Staff Sgt. Keslet Cineas, a Miami native, who serves on the commanding general's personal security detail, Division Special Troops Battalion, 4th Inf. Div. "It's just to have great time with everybody."

Awards from the Quarterback Club for the entire past year's events were handed out to sections that had the best decorations for their offices. The Staff Judge Advocate section came away with the prize football and even displayed a little dancing ability.

"This evening clearly brought a lot of great morale," said Col. Peter Utely, chief of staff, 4th Inf. Div. and MND-B. "I tell you what, there were some awesome dancers out there tonight," he said with a smile. "Thanks to all of you for what you do every day because every one of you makes a difference."

After the countdown, the party poppers and the thrown confetti, the Soldiers streamed out, heading back to their rooms with smiles on their faces and maybe a glimmer of hope and comfort that next year they will be with their families, remembering where they were on this brand new day of another brand new year.



Sgt. Christopher Mitchell, a McGregor, Texas, native, who serves in the Ironhorse Visitors Bureau, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, throws some dice at the craps table while Sgt. Michael Nieves, a Fayetteville, N.C., native, who serves with Company C, Division Special Troops Battalion, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B, watches during "Across the Nation" New Year's celebration inside the Stadium in front of division headquarters on Camp Liberty Dec. 31.



U.S. Army photo by 2nd Lt. Cait Smith, 5th Sqdn. 4th Cav. Regt., 2nd HBCT, 1st Inf. Div. 1st Lt. Jared Lunt (top), Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 5th Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, sits atop a water tower while he and Spc. Antonio Holston, HHT, 5th Sqdn. 4th Cav. Regt., 2nd HBCT, 1st Inf. Div., MND-B, drain the tower in the process of making more room at Joint Security Station Ghazaliya I Jan. 8.

Troopers strive to improve Joint Security Station Ghazaliya

By 2nd Lt. Cait Smith

5th Sqdn. 4th Cav. Regt., 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div.

BAGHDAD – In recent weeks, Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers at Joint Security Station Ghazaliya I in northwest Baghdad took on tasks of improving their station to create a more functional, tactical and trooper-friendly environment.

The medics, Personal Security Detachment and Security platoon of Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 5th Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, are currently building a new entry control point, creating a new medical office and medical facility layout and entry, creating a new casualty collection point, repairing the rooms damaged by fire, building a new Morale, Welfare and Recreation trailer and installing sniper-screen roof tops.

Capt. Matthew Todd, commander, HHT, 5th Sqdn., 4th Cav. Regt., said he believes these developments are essential to the success of the mission in Iraq.

"These modifications will help facilitate our troopers in many ways. They improve the security of the JSS and the morale of the Soldiers," he said. "Improving a battle position consistently is a cornerstone of base defense: one we are taking very seriously on Ghazaliyah I."

The Troopers said they think the new MWR facility and the new medical area are the two most notable improvements to Ghazaliyah I. The new MWR trailer is full of furniture built by the troopers.

Some of the amenities include private phone areas, new couches and tables, computer and gaming equipment, a library and a game-playing table.

The HHT medics have been hard at work on several improvements to their current medical facility by adding a new office area, rearranging storage and shelving for maximum utilization, and creating double swinging doors to facilitate the movement of personnel during a mass casualty situation.

A new casualty control point is being constructed to aid troopers in the event of an emergency. The new CCP is more easily accessible to vehicles as they enter so casualties can be loaded in the evacuation vehicle with limited time loss and movement.

"The new CCP is placed in a way to minimize confusion and maximize the use of the limited time we have available to us between the casualties entering the JSS and when we have to evacuate them out," said Staff Sgt. Thomas Wisneski, 5th Sqdn., 4th Cav. Regt. "Each change we've made to our area has the patients' convenience and comfort in mind. Hopefully we won't need to employ any of them, but we are fully prepared to if the need arises."

The enhancements have raised the quality of life for the troopers at JSS Ghazaliyah I.

"Thanks to the diligence of the HHT commander and the troopers who work alongside him, the facilities of JSS Ghazaliyah I are improving daily," said Wisneski.

Mol's Wide World of Sports

Super Bowl Sunday – A true 'American Holiday'

By Staff Sgt. Michael Molinaro
MND-B PAO

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – Growing up as a kid we were always asked what our favorite holidays were: most kids said Christmas or Halloween, some said Easter or Thanksgiving. When the teacher came to me, without hesitation, I would say “Super Bowl Sunday!”

Some kids would look at me funny, but others would agree. I was born and raised in Pittsburgh, a city where football is religion. I am not joking. I remember going to noon mass on Sunday's and our pastor racing through his sermon. He wasn't doing it because he didn't have anything important to say – he was ensuring that he would be sitting in his recliner with a snack in time for the 1 p.m. Steelers kickoff.

That may sound blasphemous, but hey, when you come from a region in the United States that has produced the likes of Joe Montana, Joe Namath, Mike Ditka, Tony Dorsett, Dan Marino, Jim Kelly, Ty Law and countless others, well, you get my drift.

So, back to what I was saying – Super Bowl Sunday is my favorite holiday. And yes, it is a holiday. There are all kinds of holidays in our country and around the world. Holidays commemorate significant events and people in our history. Religions have holidays. Some people designate a day off from work a holiday.

I am not going to get into what each holiday is centered on and what it celebrates, but a quick snapshot of the major American holidays revolve around food, Family, friends and time off from work. Super Bowl Sunday certainly revolves around food. It is said to be the second-largest day of food consumption in the United States, with Thanksgiving at the top.

Families and friends often gather at someone's house to watch the game and spend the day together, even if their favorite teams are not playing. Kids all across the country get together to play some sandlot football before the game starts. Since it is held on a Sunday, a good number of people are fortunate to be off from work and able to enjoy the festivities. The day after the game has the greatest number of workers calling in sick than any other all year. It's a holiday.

I mentioned Namath before. From the same hometown as me, Beaver Falls, Pa., his New York Jets victory in Super Bowl III changed the Super Bowl from a sporting event to a national holiday.

The very first Super Bowl I remem-

ber anything about was Super Bowl XIV when my Steelers beat the Los Angeles Rams 31-19. I had no clue on the significance of the game, that the black-n-gold had won their unprecedented fourth Super Bowl trophy or that it was the beginning of the end of the greatest NFL dynasty of all-time. All that I remember is John Stallworth catching a long bomb from Terry Bradshaw late in the game for the winning touchdown and our phone ringing off the hook as everybody at my house was jumping up and down when the game was over.

I was hooked. I was five years old and I was hooked. I love Christmas as much as the next person but while others got the doldrums after the holidays were over, I got pumped up. It was playoff time, which would culminate with the biggest day of my year. The next few years, a Pittsburgh tie of some sort would be part of the game – Super Bowl XVI and Montana leading the 49ers to their first Super Bowl victory. XIX had Montana again go up against Marino and the Miami Dolphins.

Super Bowl XX was fun. Yes, another Pittsburgh tie with Ditka as the coach of the Bears, who steamrolled the opposition all season long, except for one Monday night in Miami against Marino. You had the Super Bowl Shuffle, the Fridge, Walter Payton and an imposing defense.

The Niners won a few more, the Giants grabbed one under Bill Parcells, the Raiders blew out the Redskins, who in turn blew out Denver. Then the 90s rolled around and you had Scott Norwood miss a field goal against the Giants, handing the Giants their second trophy, cursing the talented Bills and paving the way for the role of Ray Finkle in one of my all-time favorite movies. Again, Kelly, western Pennsylvania alum, was there.

Right around that time the Steelers hired Bill Cowher and we were back. There was a chance every season that we would make it back to the big game. My parents' generation got to enjoy four Super Bowl Sundays watching the Steelers – I was yearning for that feeling. I got it in 1996. What a day.

We reserved some adjoining hotel rooms, ordered a boatload of beverages and food, decorated the room in black and yellow streamers, everyone came home from out-of-town. It was everything I imagined. Dallas was the 14-point favorite and everyone said we had no chance. But as the game went on and the Cowboys never got a big lead you could feel it – the momentum had switched.

We were now playing like the favorites and after Bam Morris' rushing touchdown

midway through the fourth quarter. We were only down by a field goal and got the ball back again.

The stadium was a sea of yellow waving towels; the team was moving the ball; our room was destroyed; and then all of the sudden, Neil O'Donnell does the unforgivable and throws the worst interception I have still seen to this day. The Cowboys went on to win 27-17. I was nervous on how I would go on.

But you know what, having the chance to spend the day with all of my best friends, knowing the entire world was watching my team, and knowing with all of my heart that if it weren't for that stupid pass that we would have scored the winning touchdown and claimed number five, I was OK. Just like at Christmas, when you didn't get the gift you really wanted, it was still Christmas. It was OK.

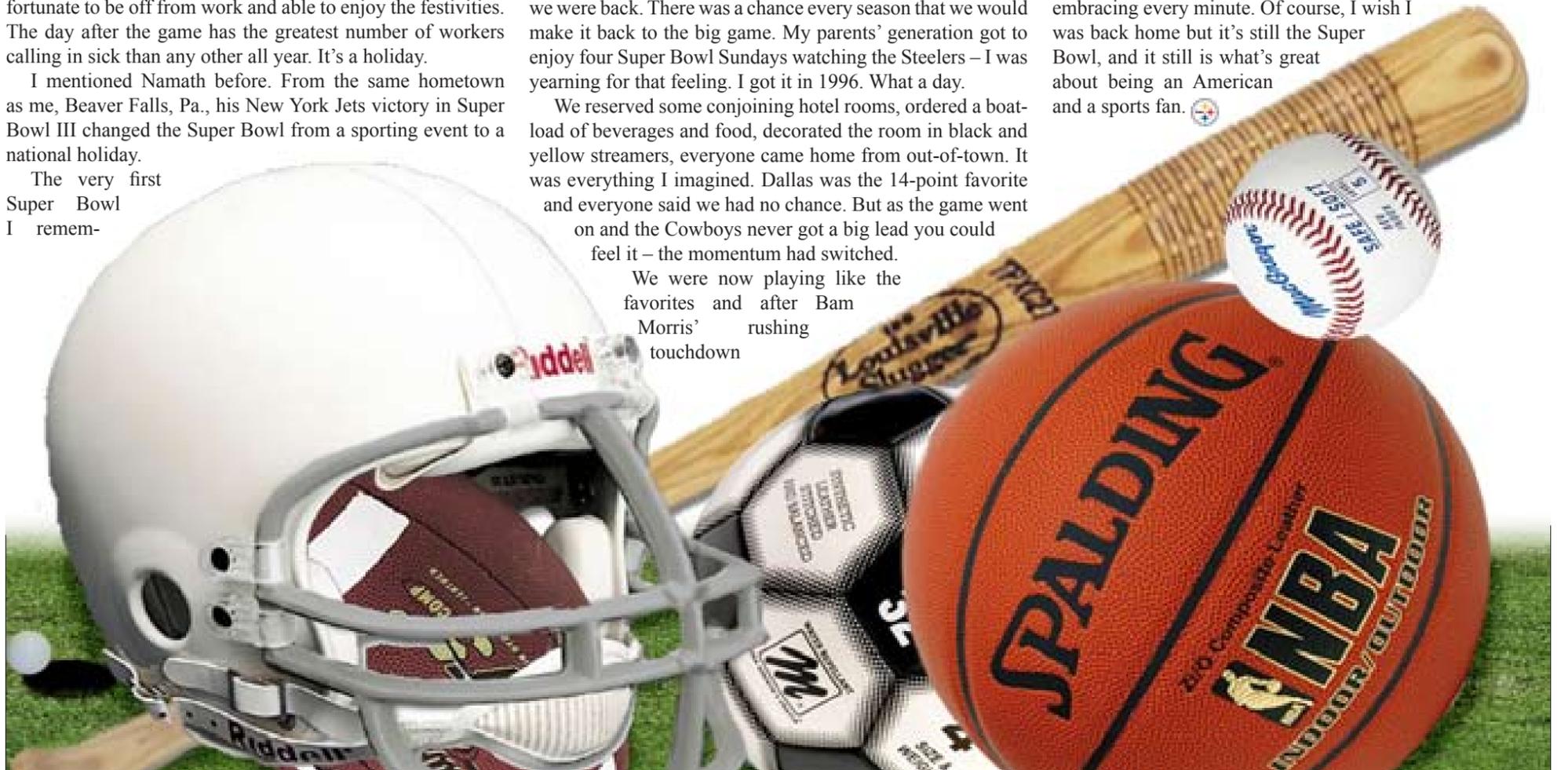
I watched Elway finally get his rings, Favre win one and Baltimore's defense single-handedly win one for their franchise before the cheaters took over the league and brought us Tom Brady. Law, who I guarded one time in a ninth-grade basketball game, returned an interception against the Rams to help them win the first of three. We had gotten so close so many times I began to wonder if we'd ever make it back. Well we did.

In 2006, I was stationed at FOB Kalsu south of Baghdad. No beer. No streamers. No day off from work. None of my childhood friends and surrounded by Steeler haters since they were all hapless Cowboys fans. But my boys, led by Jerome Bettis and Cowher, got the one for the thumb. I literally had to run and perform tower guard duty five minutes after the final whistle. But I tell you what – that was the best darn tower guard duty I had all deployment. It was still Super Bowl Sunday – and it was awesome.

No matter where I am at, whether it's in Pittsburgh, Texas, FOB Kalsu or Camp Liberty, Super Bowl Sunday will always be a special day. It is a holiday. No one can ever make me think otherwise. So, as we prepare to watch the game at three or four in the morning with our two beers, I will be the one embracing every minute. Of course, I wish I was back home but it's still the Super Bowl, and it still is what's great about being an American and a sports fan.



Staff Sgt. Michael 'Mol' Molinaro



Security agreement provides hope

Story and photos by Sgt. Whitney Houston

3rd BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

BAGHDAD – As Iraqis continue to take steps toward making their nation autonomous, Iraqis possess new hopes and expectations for better things to come.

Following new protocol outlined by the new security agreement, Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers, accompanied by their Iraqi Army counterparts, conducted a foot patrol Jan. 8, passing out fliers in the Sadr City district of Baghdad. The IA soldiers from the 45th Brigade, 11th Iraqi Army Division, and their American counterparts were helping to inform the people of a criminal supposedly in the area.

“All the patrols we do now are with the Iraqi Security Forces, be it the Iraqi Police or the Iraqi Army; we can’t just run patrols on our own anymore. It is very important that it be this way because they are in the lead now,” said 1st Lt. Kenneth Jura, a native of Gulf Breeze, Fla., serving with 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment “Wolfhounds,” 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team “Warrior,” 25th Infantry Division, currently attached to the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

The combined patrol mingled with the Iraqi people as they went. The patrol not only showed a friendly presence but also showed the populace the Iraqi Security Forces are becoming more apt to take control.

“The main part of the patrol was ... let the population see the IA taking part in a presence patrol to further increase trust between the ISF and the populace,” said Staff Sgt. Douglas Fischgrund, a native of Linden, N.J., also serving with 1st Bn., 27th Inf. Regt.

Jura went on to explain some of the advances that Coalition Forces have been able to make by gaining trust and showing the IA a military system that works. In consequence to this efficiency and trustworthiness, the IA began to organize and pattern their military after that of the U.S. military, which has enabled them to move forward in “leaps and bounds.”

Although the IA has made significant progress, this grand of scale takes time and attention to ensure solidarity.

“Just like with anything, this step forward will take time to develop – and it will evolve with time. But the security agreement is set up in spirit to enable these people to have the freest life possible,” Jura said.

Soldiers who have served multiple tours in Iraq have noticed the fruits of their labors unfold, leading to the new agreement.

“It’s been good to see that things have improved,” said Sgt. Jason Stalnaker, native of Newark, Ohio, serving with 1st Bn., 27th Inf. Regt. “Since my last deployment in ‘04 and ‘05, I’ve been able to see all the steps, and it’s been a total turn around. Being away for two years between my deployments and coming back to progression feels like something has been accomplished.”

With much still to do, the new security agreement provides a glimpse of hope in which Iraq will become a safe, secure and sovereign nation.



Spc. Franklin Walz, a native of Kansas City, Mo., patrols the streets of Sadr City Jan. 8 with an Iraqi Army counterpart from the 45th Brigade, 11th Division. Due to the new security agreement, Coalition Forces must operate directly with the IA operatives to do any kind of operation. Walz serves with the 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment “Wolfhounds,” 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team “Warrior,” 25th Infantry Division, currently attached to 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.



Spc. Franklin Walz, a native of Kansas City, Mo., pulls security next to a concrete barrier with his Iraqi Army counterpart during a patrol in Sadr City, Jan. 8.



Sgt. Jason Stalnaker, a native of Newark, Ohio, pulls security behind a concrete barrier in Sadr City as he and his Iraqi Army counterparts patrolled the area.