

Sunday,  
Feb. 15, 2009  
Issue 11

# The Desert Raven



81st BCT Command Information Newsletter

Soldiers across the brigade have been spreading goodwill in Iraq and at home. See pages: 6, 7, 9, 11, 17, 21 & 23 to find out how Soldiers have gone above and beyond.



*HHC, 1-185<sup>th</sup> Armor (CAB) gather for a photo at the stadium on COB Speicher, in Tikrit, Iraq. (Photo courtesy of 1-185<sup>th</sup> Ar. (CAB))*

**COB SPEICHER  
TIKRIT, IRAQ**

## 81<sup>st</sup> BCT Soldiers show their true colors

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## Message from 81<sup>st</sup> BCT Commander

By Col. Ronald Kapral  
81<sup>st</sup> BCT commander

Command Sgt. Maj. Sweeney and I recently completed a short visit with some of our units. It was great to see Soldiers executing missions in an outstanding manner. Everywhere we visited, the commanders had great things to say about our Soldiers. We look forward to seeing more of you in the near future. Keep up the great work.

Recently, the brigade published three FRAGOS related to future employment opportunities. We are very concerned about employment for Soldiers after this mission is complete. Many Soldiers were working on ADOS orders for various missions. When we get back, ADOS money will not be available, and with the state of the economy as it is, many Soldiers may be faced with unemployment.

The three FRAGOs give Soldiers options to continue with their active duty careers. They also provide detailed instructions on the application process. There is not a guarantee that you will be accepted. You must apply and be approved by The Adjutant General and then accepted by the gaining organization.

First Choice: Work for one year with the Training Support Brigades, who are part of the First Army. There is a TSB at Fort Lewis, and you may elect that choice, but you could be offered a position somewhere else. Soldiers will remain part of their National Guard unit. If you are assigned Fort Lewis, you will still be required to drill with

your parent unit.

Second Choice: Volunteer to remain in theater. The 155<sup>th</sup> Brigade, who is replacing us, will need additional Soldiers. You can apply to remain and work with them. Again, this is subject to the needs of the 155<sup>th</sup> and the Army. It will take approval from the TAG.

Third Choice: Apply for active duty. There are no guarantees and all will be dependent on the needs of the Army.

A new G.I. Bill goes into effect as we return home and has many new benefits for the Soldier. See your unit's retention NCO for more details on those benefits.

JFHQ is also working on additional education and employment opportunities. We have started a partnership with various trade unions, which will provide training to NG Soldiers. Consult your chain of command for more details.

You are doing a great job and we want to ensure you and your families are provided for in the future.

Thanks for all you are doing and be safe. 



81<sup>ST</sup> BCT  
COMMANDER  
COL. RONALD  
KAPRAL

## Message from 81<sup>st</sup> BCT Command Sergeant Major

By Command Sgt. Maj.  
Robert Sweeney  
81<sup>st</sup> BCT Command Sgt. Maj.

Another milestone has surpassed us during the deployment, the Super Bowl! I was one of those Soldiers up at 2 a.m. just to watch the game, which in the end turned out to be one of the better Super Bowls. To those at home in the states - watching the Super Bowl in Iraq is not the same as watching at home. We have one television network, the Armed Forces Network, which receives free programming, but is not allowed to show commercials. What's a Super Bowl without the commercials? The consolation prize for no commercials was being allowed to have two beers that day. I can tell you they tasted really good. It was a much-deserved reward for a job well done!



81<sup>ST</sup> BCT  
COMMAND  
SERGEANT MAJOR  
ROBERT SWEENEY

The commander mentioned in his comments that we completed a command visit to some of our battalions and units. I came away from the visit beaming with pride! Everywhere we went we heard nothing but accolades for all of our units. Everyone on the team, from the battalion on down to the individual Soldier, is working as team and accomplishing the mission!

This month we kick off a series of articles highlighting our NCOs and their families as part of the "Year of the NCO". These articles are designed to share some insights on the duties and responsibilities our NCOs are performing and the support and sacrifices made by their families. If anyone would like to nominate or write an article on one of your NCOs, please contact your unit public affairs representative.

To our families and friends at home, every Soldier in the 81<sup>st</sup> BCT wants to thank you for the support you have given us! The countless e-mails, letters and packages we receive keep us connected to you. We cannot wait until this deployment is over and we can begin our lives again. Not a day goes by that we do not think about being home with all of you.

Everyone, take care and please be safe. 



# Thank you from our Governor

To the Washington National Guard Soldiers in Iraq:

I want to take a moment to thank you for your service and for your gracious hospitality during my recent visit to Iraq. Your strength of character and courage in an extremely demanding environment is beyond compare. I am so grateful to see first hand your service to our country and our state. Sharing that important time with you was humbling as a fellow Washingtonian and extremely rewarding as your Commander in Chief.

While time demands didn't allow me to meet each of you serving in Iraq, I want all of you to know that every day I carry with me immense gratitude for the hard work you do and great pride in each and every one of you. You are always in my prayers.

Now as I move forward with the business of the state, I also want you to know that I am diligently working to ensure you will have opportunities to come home to and the continued support you and your families most certainly deserve.

Thank you and Godspeed.  
Gov. Christine O. Gregoire

## Gov. Gregoire honors 81<sup>st</sup> BCT family

By Sgt. Emily Suhr  
81<sup>st</sup> BCT Public Affairs

Washington Governor Christine Gregoire honored the family of Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Jerry Frazier, who is currently deployed to Camp Ramadi, Iraq, with Headquarters Company, 81<sup>st</sup> Brigade Combat Team, Washington National Guard, Jan. 15 at the Capitol building in Olympia, Wash., during her inauguration speech.

Fifteen-year-old Caitlin, 10-year-old Jerry Jr. and their mother Val were asked to stand during the governor's speech to be recognized.

After talking about her recent visit to see 81<sup>st</sup> BCT Soldiers in Iraq, the governor said: "...I am honored to introduce to you Jerry Frazier's wife Val, and their two children, Caitlin and Jerry Jr., who are here to represent all the families of the dedicated men and women of the 81<sup>st</sup> Brigade. These families care enough about this world to see their spouses and parents off to a dangerous war in order to help others, and us, maintain the freedoms we have."

Frazier, who serves as one of only two recruiting and retention noncommissioned officers for the 81<sup>st</sup> BCT, and his family were nomi-



Washington Gov. Christine Gregoire, her husband, Mike Gregoire, and The Adjutant General for The Washington National Guard, Maj. Gen. Timothy Lowenberg, pose Jan. 15 at the Capitol building in Olympia, Wash., with Caitlin, Jerry Jr. and their mother Val, the family of Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Jerry Frazier, who is currently deployed to Camp Ramadi, Iraq, with HQ Co., 81<sup>st</sup> BCT. (Photo courtesy of the Washington National Guard Public Affairs Office)

nated to represent the brigade by the 81<sup>st</sup> BCT commander and command sergeant major.

"It was a huge honor to attend Christine Gregoire's inauguration to represent the 81<sup>st</sup> Brigade," said Val. "Jerry is a fine Soldier and his family was extremely proud to be part of the recognition that Jerry and the brigade received. A big thanks to Maj. Gen.

Lowenberg for his hospitality and kindness. What a day!"

Along with being recognized, the family was treated to a special day at the Capitol that included a spin in the governor's chair.

"My family was treated like they were part of the Gregoire's," said Frazier, who added his own thanks to his wife and children. 



# Pass in review: the commander assesses his troops

Col. Kapral and Command Sgt. Maj. Sweeney visit with their troops around Iraq

By Sgt. Emily Suhr  
81<sup>st</sup> BCT Public Affairs

Col. Ronald Kapral, the commander of the 81<sup>st</sup> Brigade Combat Team, and Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Sweeney, the command sergeant major of the 81<sup>st</sup> BCT, made a three-day, 575-mile round trip to visit with their troops around Iraq.

The pair traveled to Contingency Operating Base Speicher in Tikrit to visit with Soldiers from California's 1-185<sup>th</sup> Armor (Combined Arms Battalion), COB Q-West near Qayyarah to visit Soldiers from 181<sup>st</sup> Brigade Support Battalion, 81<sup>st</sup> Brigade Special Troops Battalion and 2-146<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battalion, and COB Marez in Mosul to visit Soldiers from 2-146<sup>th</sup> FA. They apologized for not making it up sooner and said they will try to visit once a month for the remainder of the deployment.

While the commander and command sergeant major, stationed at Camp Ramadi, have traveled to Balad, Baghdad, Al Asad and Al Taqaddum to see their troops, this was the first time they were able to make it to the northern bases.



Spc. Joseph Marchand and Staff Sgt. Donald Coleman, both from HHB, 2-146<sup>th</sup> FA, listen as Col. Kapral and Command Sgt. Maj. Sweeney speak during a visit to COB Marez, Feb. 7, 2009. (Photo by Sgt. Emily Suhr)



Col. Ronald Kapral, the 81<sup>st</sup> BCT commander, speaks to 81<sup>st</sup> BCTB Soldiers during a visit to COB Q-West Feb. 6, 2009. (Photo by Sgt. Emily Suhr)

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**“Soldiers wearing the 81<sup>st</sup> Brigade patch are doing a phenomenal job.” - Col. Ronald Kapral, commander of the 81<sup>st</sup> BCT**

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“I just want to let you know we care about you, and we haven’t forgotten about you,” Kapral told Soldiers from Charlie Company, 1-185<sup>th</sup> Ar (CAB) during their first stop at COB Speicher. “Thank you for all you do.”

“God bless you and your families. Be safe out there,” Sweeney added.

While visiting, Kapral and Sweeney spoke to Soldiers from all three bases about what they could expect when they leave Iraq. The 81<sup>st</sup> BCT is scheduled to conduct their de-mobilization at Fort McCoy, Wis., where they mobilized from. Kapral said they were aiming to keep the de-mob

process down to five days. He said de-mobbing at Fort McCoy would mean Soldiers will be able to get off the plane in their home state and be free to spend time with their families, without having to worry about reporting back for de-mob. Soldiers can also expect to be able to take leave right away and not worry about drill until October. They explained how the last few drills of the year would go, including freedom salutes and yellow ribbon programs, where they will learn about the benefits they are entitled to and receive any medical care they need.

The two also spoke about the economy back home. “The economy is going to affect each and everyone one of us,” said Kapral.

Besides the stimulus programs being offered to returning Soldiers, Kapral and Sweeney presented a few other options, such as extending in Iraq, signing onto active duty upon return and going to work at Fort Lewis with First Army. They emphasized that active duty for operational support (ADOS) money would not be available for anyone, including those who were working on

See “VISIT” page 22



# 81<sup>st</sup> BCT welcomes NCOs into a time honored corps

By Sgt. Amanda Gauthier and Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Kristen Froelich

Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 181<sup>st</sup> Brigade Support Battalion, 81<sup>st</sup> Brigade Combat Team, based out of Seattle and HHC, 81<sup>st</sup> Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 81<sup>st</sup> BCT, based out of Everett, Wash., held a noncommissioned officers induction ceremony at the Sgt. Audie Murphy Room on Contingency Operating Base Q-West for six new members of the NCO Corps Jan. 31, 2009.

The week prior, 30 Soldiers from 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 161<sup>st</sup> infantry (Combined Arms Battalion) were also welcomed into the NCO Corps in an induction ceremony hosted by the 555<sup>th</sup> Engineer Brigade out of Fort Lewis, Wash., on Joint Base Balad Jan. 21, 2009.

The induction ceremonies included the charge to the noncommissioned officer, where the new NCOs' accepted their new duties and responsibilities, and the recitation of the NCO creed. Being inducted into the NCO Corps is a long-standing Army tradition. It is a rite of passage as a Soldier moves from junior enlisted to sergeant. A Soldier becoming a member of the NCO Corps holds great significance to fellow NCOs and junior enlisted alike.



Soldiers from 1-161<sup>st</sup> Inf. (CAB) recited the NCO Creed and NCO Charge during an induction ceremony held at Joint Base Balad Jan. 21, 2009. In all, 125 Soldiers were inducted in the ceremony, 30 were from 1-161<sup>st</sup> Inf. (Photo by Sgt. Amanda Gauthier)



Sgt. Marc Hoffman of 1-161<sup>st</sup> Inf. (CAB) records his name in the Noncommissioned Officers book during the NCO induction ceremony held on Joint Base Balad Jan. 21, 2009 (Photo by Sgt. Amanda Gauthier)



Inductees to the NCO Corps Sgt. Christian Gabriel, Sgt. Paul Nollette, Sgt. Susie Lopez, Sgt. Erin Hendrix, Sgt. Christian Harris and Sgt. Chad Hollopeter hold up their plaques next to a Washington State flag after a ceremony at COB Q-West Jan. 31, 2009. (Photo by Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Kirsten Froelich)

Sgt. Joel Stidham from 1-161<sup>st</sup> Inf. (CAB) holds up a framed copy of the NCO Charge he received from Command Sgt. Maj. Lawrence Wilson, the senior ranking NCO for Multi-National Force-Iraq, during the NCO induction ceremony Jan. 21, 2009 at Joint Base Balad. (Photo by Sgt. Amanda Gauthier)



Command Sgt. Maj. James Spencer, the command sergeant major for the 16<sup>th</sup> Sustainment Brigade, welcomes Sgt. Susie Lopez to the NCO Corps during a ceremony at COB Q-West Jan. 31, 2009. (Photo by Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Kirsten Froelich)



# February's featured NCO: Staff Sgt. Craig Darby

By Sgt. Amanda Gauthier  
81<sup>st</sup> BCT Public Affairs



Photo By Sgt. Amanda Gauthier

**S**oldiers of Headquarters, 81<sup>st</sup> Brigade Combat Team can sleep well knowing they will always have the equipment they need to complete their mission; that is if Staff Sgt. Craig Darby has anything to do with it.

"Staff Sgt. Darby is a very tenacious, dedicated NCO always striving to make sure the Soldiers always have the equipment and supplies they needed to complete their mission," said Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Joel Cornyer, who worked with Darby for more than three years.

As the company supply sergeant for HQ, 81<sup>st</sup> BCT, Darby can be responsible for several hundred thousand to millions of dollars of equipment and supplies. In his seven years as the HQ supply sergeant, he has never lost accountability for any supplies or equipment. He has built himself a reputation for being proactive and always completing his work ahead of time.

"He's the type to never procrastinate. Anytime there is a requirement or a deadline he's the type to get it done like a month in advance. So when we do the property book split, he's the first one done. When we



The newest addition to Staff Sgt. Craig Darby's Family, Sophia, born Dec. 30, 2008. (Photo courtesy of Kari Darby)

have to turn in excess equipment, he's the first one done," said 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Buddy Francisco, the commander of HQ, 81<sup>st</sup> BCT.

Not only is Darby known as a good noncommissioned officer, he is known as family man as well. Soldiers in the company will see photos of his daughters and drawings they made him proudly displayed around the office.

"He's just the typical role-model type NCO you would want to expect of all NCOs. Also he's a family man. He constantly talks about them. He just seems to be an all around good guy," said Command Sgt. Major Robert Sweeney, the 81<sup>st</sup> BCT command sergeant

major.

Darby and his wife, Kari, have been married 10 years and are parents of four girls, 9-year-old Megan, 8-year-old Hannah, 3-year-old Klara and their youngest, Sophia, who they welcomed into the world Dec. 30, 2008. The lack of his

presence has given Kari a new appreciation for her husband.

"I had no idea how much he does without me asking," said Kari. "He never complains about doing stuff."

Somehow Darby finds time for his family in spite of his tireless hard work for the 81<sup>st</sup> BCT. He can often be found working late hours, weekends and sneaking in on days off just to make sure things are done.

"Numerous times when he would have a day off, especially back home, or when he's on leave, he is notorious for still coming in and trying to sneak some work in. So he has a ridiculous sense of duty as far as getting his work done," said Francisco.

Darby has shown HQ, 81<sup>st</sup> BCT how to be a leader regardless of duty position. He helps all Soldiers, whether in his charge or not.

"There is not enough you can say about Staff Sgt. Darby. As far as competency and getting the job done. He's tireless. He certainly cares about Soldiers, not just the Soldiers in his charge, but all Soldiers in the company," said 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. Charles Lia, the first sergeant for HQ, 81<sup>st</sup> BCT.

Darby has even spent time helping other units around Camp Ramadi, not because he has to, but because that is the kind of person he is.

"When I first came here, Staff Sgt. Darby was willing to help. I really appreciate that because, I went around the whole FOB trying to get assistance from anyone else and it was kind of like pulling teeth," said Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Alphanso Coleman, the supply sergeant for the National Police Transition Team, currently stationed on Camp Ramadi. "He didn't have to do it. He could easily have said 'no, I am sorry I can't help you,' but he was willing to help me and I really appreciate it 'cause he didn't have to. If I was junior, E-5 or E-4, he's the guy I'd look up to."

Living by the NCO Creed and accomplishing the mission are top priorities, according to Darby.

"A good NCO lives by the NCO Creed while a poor sergeant just wears the rank," Darby said. "Taking care of Soldiers and accomplishment of the mission are always key."

"His ability to look forward, and really have a genuine concern in doing a quality job and taking care of the Soldiers. He takes pride in providing the services of a supply sergeant. I think he sets the example for other supply sergeants within the brigade to emulate, a constant professional ready to go and ready to answer the call to duty," said Sweeney about why Darby was an NCO who embodied what the Year of the NCO is about.



Staff Sgt. Craig Darby and his family. (Photo by Seth Park)



# January's featured NCO: Cpl. Adam Cross

By Sgt. Amanda Gauthier  
81<sup>st</sup> BCT Public Affairs



*(Photo courtesy of 81<sup>st</sup> BSTB)*

Cpl. Adam Cross fulfilled his military obligation and received an honorable discharge Jan. 3, 2008 from the New York Army National Guard. After learning his good friend Spc. Christopher Vanbrenk was deploying to Iraq with the 81<sup>st</sup> Brigade Combat Team, Cross enlisted in the Washington Army National Guard with the specific intent of joining his friend on a 12-month mobilization to Iraq. Cross went to military occupational specialty school to become an infantryman and fulfill mission requirements prior to mobilization. He was quickly selected as a team leader in his platoon and placed in charge of other E-4s, and even some sergeants.

He is assigned the role of dismount team leader, but often pulls other duties.

"I am a dismount team leader, but I usually fill holes wherever is needed, as people are on leave, driving, gunning, or TC," said Cross.

Cross was selected as the only E-4 in the battalion to be recommended for a battlefield promotion, a credit to his extraordinary leadership abilities. He is among hand-picked Soldiers in 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon who conduct dismounted, as well as mounted, patrols, a testament to his physical fitness and overall stamina.

He also spends much of his energy perfecting his squad and building the Warrior Ethos, according to Capt. Forrest Horan, the commander of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 81<sup>st</sup> Brigade Special Troops Battalion.

Cross has infused the force protection company with his no-nonsense focus on what will accomplish the mission with trained Soldiers. His approach to training and completing tasks is revolutionary as it is based on immediate outcome and not on worn out ineffectual paradigms, according to Capt. Jacqueline Baird, the battalion S-1 for 81<sup>st</sup> BSTB.

He was not always setting a good example. In fact for a time, his life was headed in the wrong direction.

"In high school I was suspended three times and eventually expelled. I left home at a fairly

young age and had quite a few run-ins with the law. Eventually I spent 309 days, when I was 17, in a brutal juvenile detention center in the Dominican Republic," said Cross.

Though he has not yet accomplished everything he would like to, he has turned his life around and is proud of his accomplishments.

"I put the needs of other people above my own, and often sacrifice my own comforts, time and money to take care of people who are usually overlooked. I'm proud of the relationships I've built and how I've helped poor and downtrodden people my whole life without ever needing or wanting to be recognized. I am proud that I am the most selfless person I know," said Cross.

"One of the many things that make me proud of Adam is his unfaltering perseverance in the face of adversity," said Vanbrenk. "If I know anything about Adam's life, it is that it has been anything but easy, but the one thing that constantly impresses me about Adam is his ability to rise above whatever challenges he is facing and never lose sight of his end goals."

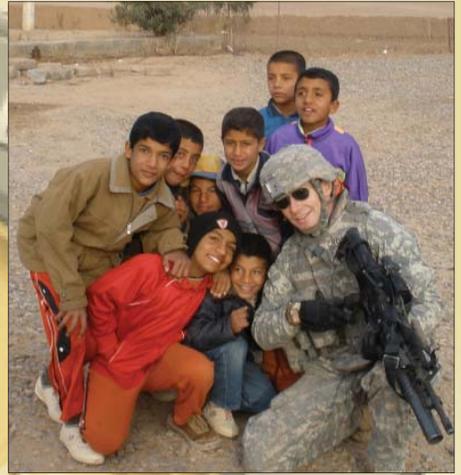
Of all the people in his life, his wife of six years, Janey, is the proudest.

"I don't think I need any other reason to be proud of Adam besides the fact that he is my husband. It is a great honor to be married to someone who is so giving and committed to helping those who need it," she said.

He believes that 2009 being the Year of the NCO is an opportunity to enhance the NCO Corps.

"This year will be the year that the younger generation gets their chance to prove themselves in leadership positions. My hope is that my efforts promote a change within the Army and my work ethic and the Army's values are shown through my hard work," said Cross.

"A good NCO works harder than the people on their equal level to inspire those who have been placed under them. A good NCO should be driven to move up in rank, not for the extra money or for the extra power, but so that they can fix the problems that they see in the military." 



*Photo of Cpl. Adam Cross and Iraqi school children during a visit to their village. During the visit he passed out candy and soccer balls. (Photo courtesy of 81<sup>st</sup> BSTB)*



*Cpl. Adam Cross, gives an Iraqi child a ride on his shoulders during a visit to a village. (Photo courtesy of 81<sup>st</sup> BSTB)*



# Finding work after deployment

By Tom Riggs

WANG J-1, Deployment Cycle Support

**W**ashington National Guard J-9 has set up an online Resume Writing Application for your use in preparing for a civilian career.

If you are serious about finding a new civilian career after deployment, or if your old job just won't be there for you when you get back, you need to start developing a resume and a master job application now. We are committed to helping you with that endeavor. We have partnered with WOIS/The Career Information System to provide you with an excellent tool. Here's how it works:

Go to: [www.wois.org](http://www.wois.org). In the left-hand column in the Site Key box, enter ZTW768 and click on the "Use WOIS" button. This will take you to the Washington National Guard WOIS site. (The site may remember your computer for up to two weeks and take you directly to this site.) Otherwise, keep this Site Key, ZTW768, someplace accessible in case you need to log on again to this site.

In order to create a resume, you will want to maintain a portfolio on this system. At the upper right hand corner of the page, directly under Washington National Guard and above the Log In button, click on create a new Portfolio. There are four screens:

- ❖ Getting Started
- ❖ Security and Privacy
- ❖ Age Verification – click the box indicating you are over 13 years old
- ❖ Portfolio; Create New Portfolio

Only the fields with the \* are required to create your portfolio

Grade\*: you can put "other" unless you are actively enrolled in a post – secondary educational program.

## Employment opportunities in California

**C**heck out the California Guard's website for job opportunities.

[www.calguard.ca.gov](http://www.calguard.ca.gov)

There is a tab at the top of the page that says jobs. On the drop down there are the following links:

Active Duty for Special Work (ADSW) Announcements, Air National Guard Recruiters, Army National Guard Recruiters, Contract Services Counter Drugs etc.

Create a password according to the directions – five to 20 characters; and use only numbers and letters.

Once the user name and password are entered and confirmed, click on the Create Portfolio button in the lower left-hand corner of the screen and you are ready to get to work on your resume and portfolio. In the left hand column click on Resume and you will be linked to a set of instructions and How to Write a Resume.

We will be happy to work with you on your resume, so as you develop it, please don't hesitate to contact us with questions. We are working now with more than 256 apprenticeship programs and discovering new ways for you to gain certification in a wide range of fields. We are also arranging for new assessment tools to help you discover optimum career paths. Our goal is your successful transition to full, rewarding employment very soon after your safe return. 



## Maintaining vehicles for convoy security

**S**pc. Soledad Siordia, a driver with Bravo Company, 1-185<sup>th</sup> Armor (Combined Arms Battalion), 81<sup>st</sup> Brigade Combat Team, performs maintenance on her vehicle Feb. 6, 2009 at Contingency Operating Base Speicher.

The 185<sup>th</sup> Ar. (CAB) provides convoy security in northern Iraq.

"Overall, our missions can go and return without anything happening," said Capt. Paul Metts from San Diego, the battle captain for 1-185<sup>th</sup> Ar (CAB). "It's definitely a rare occasion when something does happen. There's luck and skill involved. You can't avoid everything, but the guys are aware of the threats and we get a lot of those mitigated before they get out the gate." (Photo by Sgt. Emily Suhr)



## Spreading joy in Iraq: 2-146<sup>th</sup> Soldiers bring toys, candy to Iraqi Children

By Sgt. Blayden Wall  
2-146<sup>th</sup> FA

With laughter in the air and smiles on their faces, nearly 600 children greeted the 16 Soldiers of Alpha Battery, 2-146<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery, 81<sup>st</sup> Brigade Combat Team and the 18<sup>th</sup> Combat Support Sustainment Brigade who visited the Tilkabar Elementary School in Zakho, Iraq, Jan. 29, 2009 to pass out toys, candy and clothing that had been collected by fellow Soldiers over the past few months.

The humanitarian mission was put together by Chaplain Gerald W. Woodford of the 18<sup>th</sup> CSSB with assistance from a few Soldiers from A Bat., 2-146<sup>th</sup> FA and Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Donald Davis, the first sergeant for Logistic Task Force Alpha stationed at Haburgate. Yahya Sami, the deputy manager of the Hezil Company, made the arrangements with the Tilkabar Elementary School for the delivery of the items collected by the Soldiers.

For the Soldiers of A Bat., it was the first time they were able to interact with the Iraqi citizens. Surrounded by happy children filled with amazement and admiration, most of the Soldiers found themselves taking away something special from the mission.

"It's probably the most beneficial thing I've done in the Army," said Spc. Kyle Ringeisen of Centralia, Wash. "It was a huge moral booster that will probably hold me over through the whole deployment."

The Soldiers conducted the humanitarian mission during their rest period between convoy missions while at the Ibrahim Khalil Customs Facility in the Haburgate community. During the mission, Soldiers delivered three shipping containers filled with stuffed animals, clothing, small toys, candy, Arabic comic books and other items for the children.



Spc. Kyle Ringeisen of Centralia, Wash., gives the thumbs up sign, posing with the children in one of the classrooms Jan. 29, 2009. Ringeisen described the humanitarian mission as one of the most beneficial things he has done while in the military. (Photo by Sgt. Blayden Wall)



Staff Sgt. David Richerson of Bothell, Wash., uses his height to his advantage as he passes out items in a sea of children. Richerson said the mission was a real eye opener for him. He was amazed at the enthusiasm and the intensity of the children. Richerson said: "It was a real joy to see the smiles on the kid's faces." (Photo by Sgt. Blayden Wall)

Woodford described the mission as a "magnificent display of team work with 2-146<sup>th</sup> and the Kurdish citizens." He went on to say: "People were very welcoming and gave us a sense of purpose with our mission of being here. It definitely brought a sense of humility to myself, and I am sure the Soldiers who were with us as well. It was just a joy for me to see the excitement on the Soldier's face and the way they connected with the children and their family members."

Davis spoke very highly of the mission also. When asked about it, he stated: "You guys are helping me foster our relationship with the Kurdish people." He also said he is looking forward to participating in more of these missions.

Sgt. Jeremiah Marsh of Grayland, Wash., was very excited about the completion of the mission.

"For me, the mission was a life changing experience and has made the whole deployment worthwhile. The kids were incredible," he said.

The Soldiers who collected the items for the children found people back home were eager to give. Marsh received 76 boxes of goods, mailed to him from citizens of his community. The boxes were sent to him after his wife passed out a flyer at St. Paul's Catholic Church, which they both attend. The church went as far as setting up a processing station to help with mailing the boxes to Marsh. Marsh said he decided to seek donations for Iraqi children after hearing about non-lethal engagements (humanitarian orientated missions) during the initial briefings when he first arrived in Mosul.

Ringeisen said he also decided to collect items for the children after attending the same briefings as Marsh. He collected six boxes of clothing, toys and candy after registering on the website, [anysoldier.com](http://anysoldier.com). Many other Soldiers collected items from friends and family members.

Woodford is working on putting together more humanitarian missions to be conducted over the next few months. He advises Soldiers who are interested in participating in these types of missions to contact their unit chaplain.



# TAX TIME IN A COMBAT ZONE

By Capt. Kurt Rorvick  
81<sup>st</sup> BCT S-1

**T**ax time is upon us for tax year 2008. A reminder that all members of the Armed Forces serving in a combat zone automatically qualify for an extension past the normal April 15 deadline to file their tax returns. The extension to file is 180 days from the date of the service member's last day in the combat zone. If they choose, service members do not have to exercise this right to an extension and may file their tax returns between now and April 15 as well.

Servicemembers' deadline for taking actions with the IRS is extended for 180 days after the latter of:

1) The last day you are in a combat zone, have qualifying service outside of the combat zone, or serve in a contingency operation (or the last day the area qualifies as a combat zone or the operation qualifies as a contingency operation), or

2) The last day of any continuous qualified hospitalization (defined later) for injury from service in the combat zone or contingency operation or while performing qualifying service outside of the combat zone.



## Finance Tips

By Maj. Todd H. Bonham  
HQ, 81<sup>st</sup> BCT

**M**any people have asked me about what they should do to get started investing.

First of all, most Soldiers can benefit from serving in Iraq by participating in the DOD Savings Deposit Program (SDP). The SDP was established to provide members of the uniformed services serving in designated combat zones the opportunity to build their wealth. Amounts up to \$10,000.00 may

be deposited, earning 10% interest per annum. This is an excellent vehicle for short-term money. Most investors benefit from having a short-term fund available for emergencies because it allows them to forgo liquidating long-term investments for short-term needs.

The rule-of-thumb for emergency money (short-term funds) is three to six months of bill paying power. Usually, cash and cash equivalents pay very little interest in return for liquidity. That's what makes the SDP a great deal.

Deposits can be made by allotment, check, eagle card or cash. Deposits may not be more than the unallotted pay and allowances per month. Additionally, deposits may not be less than \$5.00 and must be in multiples of \$5.00 and no interest is earned on amounts exceeding \$10,000.00. 

The 180 day extension is automatic; no forms need to be filled out. The service member should attach a copy of their deployment orders or DD 214 with their tax return when they file, however, showing qualifying service.

Spouses of individuals who served in a combat zone or contingency operation are entitled to the same deadline extensions with two exceptions:

1) The extension does not apply to a spouse for any tax year beginning more than two years after the date the

area ceases to be a combat zone or the operation ceases to be a contingency operation.

2) The extension does not apply to a spouse for any period the qualifying individual is hospitalized in the United States for injuries incurred in a combat zone or contingency operation.

If your base does not have a tax center and you have questions or need further assistance, contact your legal section. 

## Useful Tax links for deployed Soldiers and their families

- To download your W-2: <https://mypay.dfas.mil/NotificationforW2s.htm>
- For military-specific tax information from the IRS on issues ranging from new IRA rules for servicemembers to details on provisions relating to combat-zone service: <http://www.irs.gov/individuals/military/index.html>
- For guidance on tax relief provided to military members serving in combat zones — from tax-free pay to deadline extensions: <http://www.irs.gov/newsroom/article/0,,id=107467,00.html>
- Under the Heroes Earned Retirement Opportunities Act of 2006, troops can now count tax-free combat pay when determining whether they can contribute to either a Roth or traditional IRA: <http://www.irs.gov/individuals/military/article/0,,id=161266,00.html>
- For the Military OneSource guide to taxes: [https://www.militaryonesource.com/skins/MOS/display.aspx?action=display\\_page&mode=User&ModuleID=8cde2e88-3052-448c-893d-d0b4b14b31c4&ObjectID=1642cb55-91cd-4a82-89bb-246cc5de1951](https://www.militaryonesource.com/skins/MOS/display.aspx?action=display_page&mode=User&ModuleID=8cde2e88-3052-448c-893d-d0b4b14b31c4&ObjectID=1642cb55-91cd-4a82-89bb-246cc5de1951)
- Military OneSource Tax Hotline - 1-800-730-3802



# Continuing the fight to save lives

**After volunteering for 6 tours in Iraq, this 181<sup>st</sup> BSB medic isn't finished**

*By Sgt. Emily Suhr  
81<sup>st</sup> BCT Public Affairs*

**S**gt. Jonathan Laureles, a medic with the Washington Army National Guard's 181<sup>st</sup> Brigade Support Battalion, 81<sup>st</sup> Brigade Combat Team, is on his sixth tour in Iraq, but not once did anyone tell him he had to go. He volunteered for every one of the tours away from his family, friends, and home. He didn't do it for the glory or honor; he did it because he knows as a medic he can save lives.

Laureles, a native of Cleburne, Texas, was working as a medical assistant in the Dallas/Fort Worth area, but felt he could do more, so he joined the Texas Army National Guard in 2003.

After completing basic training and Army medic school in San Antonio, he felt ready to deploy. He found out from his recruiter that the Washington Army National Guard's 81<sup>st</sup> BCT was deploying to Iraq. He volunteered.

He spent that first deployment in Balad as a medic at the base's North Gate with the 181<sup>st</sup> BSB, 81<sup>st</sup> BCT. When they left in April 2005, Laureles wasn't ready to go. He linked up with the Hawaii National Guard, who was replacing the 181<sup>st</sup> BSB, and stayed in Iraq for a second tour.

Throughout his first two deployments in 2004 and 2005, many wounded and sick Iraqis descended upon Joint Base Balad's North Gate in search of medical care.

Laureles and his team of medics kept a wall locker up at the gate stocked with burn creams and bandages, as well as a field am-



*Sgt. Jonathan Laureles, a medic with the 181<sup>st</sup> BSB, 81<sup>st</sup> BCT, at the hospital at Joint Base Balad where he volunteers his time during his sixth deployment. (Photo by Sgt. Emily Suhr)*

balance, to help the Iraqis needing help who didn't qualify for hospital care on the base.

"I always made the effort and it was nice to work with other medics

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**"...it's just the love of my job. I feel comfortable here. I don't feel like I've been here for four years." Sgt. Jonathan Laureles**

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that made the same effort. It started to become a trend. As that trend grew with the medics wanting to help local nationals, the trend grew for local nationals coming to us for help. So we started to see more and more people, but we liked it. We loved being able to help them."

After the tour with the Hawaii National Guard ended Laureles went home to Texas, but still felt a calling to be in Iraq. His family, knowing what it meant to him, supported the decision.

"My family back home, just like any Soldier's family, wants to see me

and wishes I were home, but they also know my intentions here and are very supportive and they just say they're proud of me and whatever I feel is in my heart is what I should do. I have a lot of love and support from my family."

Laureles returned to Iraq twice more with the Wisconsin and Michigan National Guards.

During his fourth tour, he earned a purple heart. While traveling on a night convoy, Laureles' vehicle was struck by an improvised explosive device. His hand was wounded and bleeding, but he saw his driver and gunner were worse off than he was, so he pushed his own pain to the side and aided them first. Everyone made it out okay.

"It was nice to be there in that same vehicle and treat them right away. It was a great feeling," he said.

After going home for about a month,

Laureles returned to Iraq with the Washington D.C. National Guard. He went to Baiji, north of Tikrit, where he worked with the Police Transition Team training Iraqi Police.

*See "LAURELES" Page 26*



# A Trp, 1-303<sup>rd</sup> Cav. receives last shipment of improved vehicles

By Capt. Ian McConnell  
1-303<sup>rd</sup> Cav.

**A**lpha Troop, 1-303<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Regiment, 81<sup>st</sup> Brigade Combat Team, located in Al Asad Air Base, Iraq, has finally received the last shipment of Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles to support their mission of convoy security across Iraq.

Located in the flat desert lands of western Iraq, A Trp., 1-303<sup>rd</sup> Cav. performs an often unseen and underappreciated job: convoy security. With the addition of the MRAP vehicles, the Soldiers can move with a little more confidence in the perpetual race to out-perform the constantly evolving techniques of the enemy to engage Coalition Forces. That their missions are little heard of is actually a credit to the Soldiers who perform countless missions over hundreds of miles experiencing often ambiguous scenarios.

With new security agreements in place and Iraqi forces gaining more and more autonomy, Coalition Forces actually perform operations under the clearance of Iraqi authorities. What does that mean for the Soldier in A Trp., 1-303<sup>rd</sup> Cav. going on missions? A lot. Because of the new transitions in authority, the Soldiers must constantly test each other to ensure a clear understanding of their evolving Rules of Engagement and Escalation of

Force guidelines. Though the actual details of which are considered sensitive, there is an obvious struggle that Soldiers of A Trp., 1-303<sup>rd</sup> Cav. are enduring, trying to do their best to observe and obey the guidelines.

The Soldiers must adapt their Tactics, Techniques and Procedures as well as Standard Operating Procedures to respect new guidance from Iraqi authorities. Traditionally, this would pose a serious problem for the military Soldier who is drilled over and over to memorize and execute SOPs without effort. To change the rules every couple of months and expect the Soldier to perform proficiently is a tall order for any military unit. The Soldiers of A Trp., 1-303<sup>rd</sup> Cav. have set themselves aside in their professionalism by respecting the local authorities and accepting certain risks to themselves.

Many of the Soldiers were deployed in 2004-05 with the Washington National Guard, and many of them are finding it difficult to reconcile their previous experiences with the new ones. In 2004-05, enemy contact was frequent and often intense. Despite many strong feelings from that time, A Trp., 1-303<sup>rd</sup> Cav. Soldiers are not showing their discomfort, and are displaying a look of confidence and mutual support to local citizens and authorities.

These new MRAPs are a well-deserved reward of added protection for their efforts. 



*A line of MRAPs and other military vehicles await the Soldiers of 1-303<sup>rd</sup> Cav. (Photo by Capt. Ian McConnell)*



# Highlanders return to former battleground

By Sgt. David Isaac  
1-161<sup>st</sup> Inf. (CAB)

Tankers from the Pasco, Wash., based Delta Company, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 161<sup>st</sup> Infantry, 81<sup>st</sup> Brigade Combat Team returned to an area of Baghdad near Forward Operating Base Prosperity Feb. 6, 2009 as part of a mission to move combat vehicles north to Forward Operating Base Warrior.

Part of the convoy security movement included Route Irish, a stretch of road very familiar to veterans of the battalion's first deployment to Iraq in 2004 and 2005.

"I haven't been here in a long time," said Sgt. Tim Hollingsworth, a D Co. assistant convoy commander from Walla Walla, Wash. "It's much quieter; a lot cleaner." Hollingsworth conducted foot patrols in an area a few miles away during his first deployment.

The Soldiers loaded the vehicles in a historic location, the Crossed Sabers. It was there Saddam Hussein raised a shotgun in celebration as he watched his army pass in review. The wide-open, paved parade route was ideal for loading, but also provided an opportunity to sightsee.

After loading vehicles, the Spartans got word they would remain overnight and move their cargo the next day. The delay allowed the Highlanders to explore the area, tour the Iraqi Army Tomb of the Unknown and stand in the spot Saddam Hussein did nearly two decades ago.

"The last time I was here was ugly," said 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. An-



Trucks escorted by the 1-161<sup>st</sup> Inf. (CAB) -- The Highlanders -- stand ready to move vehicles from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Squadron, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry under the Crossed Sabers in Baghdad, Iraq. (Photo by Sgt. David Isaac)

drew Manke, the D Co. first sergeant. As a platoon sergeant during his first deployment, Manke was escorting Soldiers from FOB Liberty to FOB Prosperity to relieve the site security team at a building in the Green Zone when a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device detonated near the entry control point. "It was the worst thing I've ever seen," he said.

This trip was far different. On the FOB, Soldiers confidently played football as contractors, government employees and other Soldiers casually walked the streets of FOB Prosperity. 

## Keeping things private; TriWest Protects you

By Diane R. Mayer  
TriWest Healthcare Alliance

We all know that it's important to protect your personal financial information, such as your social security number, bank account number and credit card number. It is equally important to protect your personal and potentially sensitive health information.

TriWest Healthcare Alliance wants you to rest assured that we are hard at work keeping your private information private.

TriWest has recently updated the [www.triwest.com](http://www.triwest.com) terms and conditions to include information on the use of electronic signatures. These terms and conditions and the TriWest privacy policy also include details regarding the use, review and correction of personal information.

To further protect your privacy,

TriWest established a standard of confidentiality for information about a range of medical conditions that are considered sensitive. Information that is deemed to be "sensitive health information" is anything related to the treatment of:

~Reproductive health ~Sexually transmitted diseases ~Substance abuse  
~Mental health ~HIV ~Abuse ~Rape

The detailed list of all specific sensitive diagnoses is available at [www.triwest.com](http://www.triwest.com)>Beneficiary Services>Auths/Referrals>Popular Links.

Personal health information about the range of medical diagnoses that are considered particularly sensitive is not available to registered users of [www.triwest.com](http://www.triwest.com). Beneficiaries with a secure [www.triwest.com](http://www.triwest.com) account will receive QuickAlert e-mails only for non-sensitive authorizations and referrals. The restriction of access to sensitive diagnoses information is just

one of many ways TriWest protects the privacy of TRICARE beneficiaries.

Sensitive diagnosis information will be mailed to the beneficiary or it may be requested by calling 1-888-TRIWEST (874-9378).

**New Feature Online:** TriWest has recently expanded the viewing capability of sponsors on [www.triwest.com](http://www.triwest.com). Previously, authorizations, referrals and other information about family members age 12 and older were not accessible. Sponsors now have the ability to view all non-sensitive diagnosis authorization, referral and claims information about family members under age 18.

To see non-sensitive information for spouses and family members age 18 and older, specific access must be granted by the spouse and family member. 



Staff Brig. Gen. Adel, the commander of the Iraqi army's QRF 1, headquartered at Camp Ali, and U.S. Army Col. Ronald Kapral, the commander of Camp Ramadi and the 81<sup>st</sup> BCT, sign a memorandum of agreement turning Camp Ramadi over to the Iraqi government Jan. 20 at Camp Ali, Iraq. (Photo by Sgt. Amanda Gauthier)

## U.S. military signs over Camp Ramadi

By Sgt. Amanda Gauthier  
81<sup>st</sup> BCT Public Affairs

Camp Ramadi was signed over to the Iraq government in a memorandum of agreement signed by Iraqi army and U.S. military officials at Camp Ali, Iraq Jan. 20, 2009.

Camp Ali is a segment of Camp Ramadi occupied by the Iraqi army. The MOA was signed by Staff Brig. Gen. Adel, the commander of the First Quick Reaction Force Brigade, Iraqi army, headquartered at Camp Ali, and U.S. Army Col. Ronald Kapral, the commander of Camp Ramadi and the 81<sup>st</sup> Brigade Combat Team, Washington Army National Guard. The memorandum was a tenant agreement of sorts. It outlined the areas that will be used by Coalition Forces through

2011.

The signing over of Camp Ramadi is a step toward Coalition Forces pulling out and handing complete responsibility and control back over to the Iraqis.

"Signing over of Ramadi is more symbolism than it is an actual event," said Kapral. "It shows that the U.S. military and the Coalition Forces are starting to prepare to turn over and demilitarize the bases that we have been using for the past five years. If you look at what has been done in the past five years, the Iraqi army has started taking responsibility for their actions. They're starting to support themselves. They are proving training we have given them over the past three years is starting to pay off. The Iraqi army wants to take charge of their country, wants their bases and wants to provide the security for the people of Iraq that they have been lacking up until we came in and started a democracy in Iraq."

Ar Ramadi was a center of Sunni insurgent resistance in the years following the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003. The area is now better known as one of Iraq's biggest success stories.

Coalition Forces took possession



Staff Brig. Gen. Adel, the commander of the Iraqi army's QRF 1, headquartered at Camp Ali, signs a memorandum of agreement turning Camp Ramadi over to the Iraqi government Jan. 20 at Camp Ali, Iraq. (Photo by Sgt. Amanda Gauthier)

of Camp Ramadi, formerly known as Camp Junction City, in 2003 shortly after the ground offensive. Since the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Ar Ramadi has had a handful of bases occupied by Coalition Forces returned to the Iraqi government. Camp Ramadi is now one of the last Coalition-only bases left in the Ar Ramadi area.

Although the signing marks a big step for the Iraqi government and leaders of Coalition Forces, the majority of the troops stationed on Camp Ramadi will notice little

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**"It is the beginning of the end. We are posturing to give back bases to the Iraqis."**

**Lt. Col. Kevin McMahan**

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change, if any.

"For those of us who physically live on Camp Ramadi, it really doesn't change the normal day-to-day operations. What it does mean, from a long-term perspective, is that Coalition Forces are giving back the bases and land to the Iraqis, due to their sovereignty," said Lt. Col. Kevin McMahan, the Camp Ramadi operations officer.

Force protection measures will not be changed. All camp improvement projects will continue. Iraqis will take a look at the buildings on Camp Ramadi to see if it is something they want to keep. The physical structures built on camp Ramadi will either be prepared to be handed over in 2011 or torn down. Part of the agreement is for Coalition Forces to put the base back to the way they found it.

The Iraqi army and the Iraqi Police have been taking control much more, as Coalition Forces have been stepping into the background.

"From my personal opinion, it is the beginning of the end. We are posturing to give back bases to the Iraqis. This will allow us to take a more supportive role," said McMahan. 



# The other working dogs of Iraq

By 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Caleb Christians  
1-185<sup>th</sup> AR

**C**anis Familiaris, Fido, dog. Whatever you may call them, man's best friend is undeniably as much a part of Americana as football, cheeseburgers and the Fourth of July. They are an irreplaceable part of many American families. They go with us on vacation, hunting trips, long days at the beach and short walks around the neighborhood. We take them almost everywhere we go, even to war.

Dogs have been a part of the U.S. military since World War I. Since then, they have been on countless missions spanning the globe. Many toil daily in harm's way providing support that technology cannot.

In Iraq, dogs perform a number of roles. Military working dogs (MWD) sniff out explosives and look for people. They work on and off the leash. Recently, Soldiers from Delta Company 1-185<sup>th</sup> Armor (Combined Arms Battalion) transported an explosive detection dog named Jer-



*Spc. Patricia Lara of Delta Company, 1-185<sup>th</sup> Ar. (CAB) shares a moment with Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Boe (Photo courtesy of 1-185<sup>th</sup> Ar. (CAB))*

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## **For Soldiers of 1-185<sup>th</sup> Ar. (CAB), Boe provides a warm distraction from everyday life at COB Speicher.**

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sey with her handler to Joint Base Balad. Other dogs perform a less tactical, but equally important job. Enter Boe.

Boe is a 4-year-old English Labrador Retriever. She lives on Contingency Operating Base Speicher and works as a therapy dog. Boe was donated by the Guide Dog Foundation/America's Vet Dogs. She accompanies Capt. Cecelia Najera, who is an occupational therapist with the 528<sup>th</sup> Medical Detachment at COB Speicher. Boe, who also holds the honorary rank of sergeant first class, makes the rounds visiting the different units that reside on the base.

"Her purpose is to bring Soldiers a reminder of home and offer a sense of comfort and well being," said Najera.

The use of animals for therapeutic purposes goes as far back as 1699 when the English philosopher John Locke suggested the importance of children interacting with animals. The U.S. military began pushing for the use of therapy dogs in 1919 after success with World War I Soldiers.

Today, therapy dogs fall under the category of Animal Assisted Therapy. Such animals are used for both physical and psychological medicine. Psychological benefits include the reduction of stress, anxiety and the overall improvement of morale. On the physical side, Animal Assisted Therapy increases range of motion, strength and balance and minimizes the need for preoperative medication.

Today, it is not uncommon to see therapy animals roaming the halls nursing homes. For Soldiers of 1-185<sup>th</sup> Ar. (CAB), Boe provides a warm distraction from everyday life at COB Speicher.

Pfc. Stephen Driedger enjoys the

presence of Boe: "It's fun to have her around."

Cpl. Matt Brown, the D Co. 1-185<sup>th</sup> Ar. (CAB) ammunition noncommissioned officer in charge, finds her presence "very relaxing." "It's nice throwing her dog treats," he added.

Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Frank Hatcher from D Co., 1-185<sup>th</sup> Ar. (CAB) Headquarters Platoon thinks therapy dogs are a great idea. "They bring a little taste of home," he said.

If the consensus at COB Speicher is any indication of how well dogs like Boe are received, Animal Assisted Therapy has a bright future in the Army. 🐾





# THE RAVEN GALLERY



Sgt. Casey Holbrook, a chaplain's assistant with HQ, 81<sup>st</sup> BCT, races in for a run during a softball game Jan. 31, 2009 at Camp Ramadi, Iraq. (Photo by Sgt. Emily Suhr)



Cpl. Randal Howard with 81<sup>st</sup> BSTB takes a break during training in Q-West, Iraq, Feb. 6, 2009 (Photo by Sgt. Emily Suhr)



Staff Sgt. Wheat, Spc. Rouleau and Staff Sgt. Peters with B Bty, 2-146<sup>th</sup> FA reenlist in the Army National Guard this month at COB Marez, Iraq. (Photo courtesy of 2-146<sup>th</sup> FA)



Spc. Don Graham from Stevenson Wash., an infantryman with HHB, 2-146<sup>th</sup> FA, is presented with the Army Commendation Medal for spotting an IED at COB Q-West, Iraq, Jan. 12, 2009. Graham was also awarded the Combat Action Badge for an IED attack that struck his vehicle Dec. 2, 2008. (Photo courtesy of 2-146<sup>th</sup> FA)



E Co, 1-185<sup>th</sup> Ar. (CAB) shows their brigade and state pride outside their work area on COB Q-West, Iraq. (Photo by Sgt. Emily Suhr)



# LEYDE SHOULD BE SPELLED L-U-C-K-Y

By Sgt. Alex Snyder  
123<sup>rd</sup> MPAD, AZ Army National Guard

He's been called Bruce Wayne, Lucky and The Million Dollar Baby. His name is Sgt. Wayne Leyde, and he has experienced what some could call a string of good luck over these last few years. When asked about it though, he responded: "Actually, I don't believe in luck. I think I'm thoroughly blessed."

Leyde, a team leader with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 161<sup>st</sup> Infantry (CAB), 81<sup>st</sup> Brigade Combat Team, from Spokane, Wash., and an investment banker in civilian life, made the news in February 2008 when he purchased a winning lottery ticket after a chance stop at a convenience store. Leyde purchased a number of tickets and scratched a few of them right away, though none of them were winners.

Later that night however, just before bed, Leyde decided to scratch one last ticket. This one was a winner. The prize? One million dollars. "At that point, there was about three seconds of dead silence and then I exploded out of bed and had to go wake everybody up," Leyde said.

But Leyde's "luck" has extended beyond monetary gain.

Leyde, who is now on his third tour in Iraq, said he's had several close calls with the enemy. During his second deployment, which he describes as the toughest of his two previous deployments, Leyde personally experienced six improvised explosive device attacks on his vehicle.



Sgt. Alex Snyder interviews Sgt. Wayne Leyde, the "lucky" Soldier who won the lottery before deploying (Photo by Sgt. David Isaac)

One such attack came in July 2006 when he was part of an armored convoy near Iskandariyah, a city southwest of Baghdad. On that particular night, Leyde's convoy halted after the first tank in the convoy spotted a suspicious hole near the road.

Using a clearing method known as "recon by fire," the first tank shot into the hole to clear it of any possible threat.

When nothing happened, the hole was deemed clear. The first tank scooted to the left of the hole and Leyde's tank was told to follow.

As his tank passed the hole, Leyde, who was filling in as the track commander, leaned over the edge of his turret with a spotlight to make sure the hole was actually clear.

"For some reason," Leyde said, "something hit me that said, 'this is probably the silliest thing you have ever done,' so I started to jerk back."

As Leyde jerked back, an IED exploded, blowing the spotlight out of his hands, ripping his glasses off his face and pushing him against the side of the tank. Leyde's tank, not badly damaged, rolled on.

Although his right ear bled for nearly an hour, Leyde said he experienced no hearing loss and no lasting injury.

Recently, Leyde was traveling north on a convoy when he discovered an IED before it detonated. Moments before he saw the black square object sitting in the road, Leyde said there was a strange feeling in the truck.

"We had a gut feeling that something wasn't right ... It really up'd our situational awareness," Leyde said.

Leyde's vehicle slowed down, identified the threat and began backing away from the device, which was about 20 meters away when something exploded.

"The minute we threw our truck in reverse," Leyde said, "... they detonated it."

But the main charge didn't blow. The blasting cap – the device used to set off the main charge – had been pulled free of the IED. When the insurgents detonated the bomb, the main charge sat unexploded.

Leyde expresses doubt the IED would have done much to his vehicle, he said it probably would have given everyone in the vehicle a headache.

Though Leyde said he doesn't believe in luck, Staff Sgt. Matthew Stayrook, a squad leader for 1-161<sup>st</sup> Inf. (CAB), sees it a bit differently.

"I would have to say Sgt. Leyde is probably one of the luckiest guys I've met," Stayrook said, adding: "He's definitely the best scout we have in our company, and I'd roll with him any time."

Leyde said after he won the lottery he was given the option of getting out of the Army. He said he had made the decision to deploy before winning the lottery and decided to stick to it.

"I'm coming back, for the most part, for the guy on my left and right. That's the reason why I'm here," Leyde said.

"I don't think any amount of money would ever change my mind." 



# A DREAM REALIZED

America celebrates its  
first black president

By Staff Sgt. Francisco Velez  
81<sup>st</sup> BCT EO

**They had a dream...**

**O**n February 12, 2009, the NAACP marked its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Spurred by growing racial violence in the early twentieth century, and particularly by race riots in Springfield Illinois in 1908, a group of African American leaders joined together to form a new permanent civil rights organization, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). February 12, 1909 was chosen because it was the centennial anniversary of the birth of Abraham Lincoln.

That 100 year vision is becoming clearer. As we listened to the news from Washington D.C., at the Lincoln Memorial, our first black president was just inaugurated. The equal rights movement marches on. We have an African American



**"I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character."  
Martin Luther King, Jr.**

President.

It was not an earth-shaking event for me at first. Okay. He was elected. End of story. But then as I watched some of the elderly in the crowd this event became more significant to me. I watched the eyes of those who had seen the oppression and hate first hand. I watched the tears and the pride, the memories, the pain. What really happened this day?

Racism has not disappeared, but in its faint shadow is a bright light of hope. A hope that all Americans regardless of race, color, gender, religion, or national origin can succeed.

February is Black History Month. Take the time to learn something you didn't know about one of the cultures that molded America into the great nation that we defend. 



**"There is not a liberal America and a conservative America - there is the United States of America. There is not a black America and a white America and Latino America and Asian America - there's the United States of America."  
Barack Obama**

## QUICK FACTS

~ Black History Month began as "Negro History Week," which was created in 1926 by Carter G. Woodson. It became a month-long celebration in 1976.

~ February was chosen for Black History Month to coincide with the birthdays of Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln.

~ The black population of the U.S. in 1870 was 4.8 million; in 2007, the number of black residents in the U.S., including those of more than one race, was 40.7 million.

~ It wasn't until after WWII that the U.S. armed forces became integrated, under a 1948 executive order by President Harry S. Truman



# 2-146<sup>th</sup> FA's Team Halo Secures Convoys to Irbil

By Spc. Joshua Medford  
2-146<sup>th</sup> FA

On the morning of Jan. 21, 2009, Soldiers from 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon and HQ Platoon, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 146<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery, 81<sup>st</sup> Brigade Combat Team, embraced the cold January air in their motor pool in Q-West, Iraq, working tirelessly to complete last-second checks before they moved out on their mission.

The day's mission was to escort fuel and supply trucks to Camp Zaytun, in northeastern Iraq, near the city of Irbil. Led by the convoy commander, Staff Sgt. Jeff Balam, from Lacey, Wash., the convoy security elements completed necessary vehicle maintenance, inspections and final communications checks. After completing crew-served weapons testing and a convoy briefing, the Soldiers of Team Halo embarked on an exhausting mission that would span more than two-hundred miles round trip.

The sun rose that morning like a shimmering golden coin, despite clouds that covered the eastern sky. Upon arrival at the Tigris River, the security team safely moved the convoy over the bridge. The scout vehicles broke out ahead of the main body to perform the route clearance. The lead scout vehicle, crewed by the driver, Spc. Matthew Hanson from Rochester, Wash., the gunner, Sgt. Terrell Fox from Burien, Wash., and the truck commander, Sgt. Terry Meyers of Vancouver, Wash., kept a watchful eye ahead for improvised explosive devices and other obstacles. The second scout vehicle, driven by Spc. Josh Medford from Olympia Wash., with HHB's first sergeant, 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. Robert Beale, also from Olympia, as gunner, and Staff Sgt. Justin Cain from Renton, Wash., commanding, trailed close behind. The second vehicle provides additional security for the first scout and watches out for primary and secondary IEDs.

After crossing a mountain pass, the convoy reached the busy city of Irbil. Shortly after negotiating a few traffic lights, being careful to show proper courtesy to locals along the way, the convoy reached its destination and delivered its cargo of supplies. Once the supplies were downloaded, the Soldiers of Team Halo enjoyed a relaxing lunch in the Camp Zaytun dining facility. The remainder of their stay at Camp Zaytun involved vehicle maintenance and communications checks.

With the supplies downloaded and the convoy ready to roll, the scouts hurried to their posts, some distance ahead of the convoy, to lead everyone out of Camp

Zaytun, onto the road, and back to Q-West.

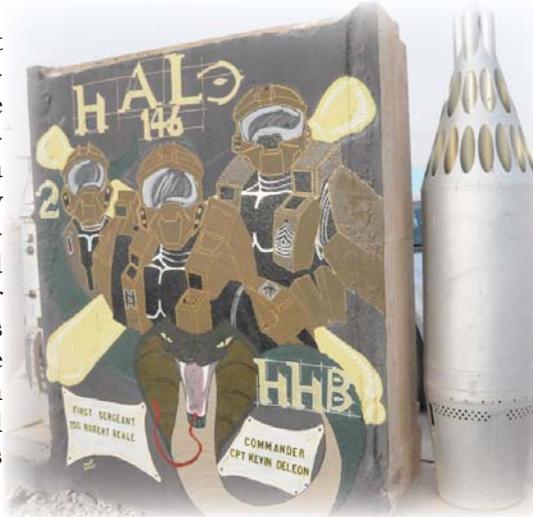
As the sun settled in the west and the light waned, it became more difficult to watch for roadside bombs. By the time the convoy reached the gates of Q-West darkness had settled in for the evening.

After refueling their trucks, the Soldiers once again performed maintenance on the vehicles, using their flashlights to inspect fluid levels and belt tensions just as they had earlier that morning. With maintenance completed, the teams assembled in the weapons cleaning tent to service individual and crew-served weapons.

During the cleaning party, Balam held an after action review, asking the Soldiers for recommendations regarding what actions to sustain and which to improve to make the mission better the next time.

The mission spanned roughly 17 hours from beginning to end and the Soldiers of 2<sup>nd</sup> Plt., HHB 2-146<sup>th</sup> FA, knowing that very soon they would be called upon

to repeat the process all over again, marched back to their houses, or CHUs as they are called here, to get a well-earned night's rest. 🏠



## Sudoku

4			7			1		
						6	4	
		1					8	7
			3	8				
	1		9				2	8
	5	9			1			
	8	3		1				4
	7				3	9		
2	4							

By 1LT Joseph Cluever

See page 27 for the solution to this month's puzzle



# Washington Guardsmen sharpen skills with VIT

By Capt. Jacqueline Baird  
81<sup>st</sup> BSTB

Guardsmen from the 81<sup>st</sup> Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 81<sup>st</sup> Brigade Combat Team out of Everett, Wash., conducted vehicle interdiction training in order to maintain an aggressive stance while conducting patrols and assisting Iraqi Security Forces in their area of operations.

The Force Protection Company is responsible for the force protection of Contingency Operating Base Q-West. They conduct mounted and dismounted patrols of the area surrounding the COB. It is essential for the Soldiers to continue their training, as they have a critical mission to protect the Soldiers and civilians operating on the base.



(Photo courtesy of 81<sup>st</sup> BSTB)

“Squads were trained to stop vehicles, force the enemy from their vehicle, eliminate immediate threats and search vehicles according to both U.S. Army and SWAT standards,” said Capt. Forrest Horan, the commander of HHC, 81<sup>st</sup> BSTB. “The training focused on identification of

suspicious vehicles, sensitive site exploitation and detainee operations. The training will culminate in a squad live-fire exercise.”

This kind of exercise keeps complacency down and offers the Force Protection Soldiers realistic training to accomplish their mission. 

## Family services and Family Readiness Groups

By Korina Huddleston  
WA Family Readiness Support Assistant  
(253) 512-8506

Encourage all of our Soldiers and their families to check out these first two wonderful resources.

\* [WWW.MILITARYONESOURCE.COM](http://WWW.MILITARYONESOURCE.COM)

24/7 resource for military members, spouses and families. To include money management, tax services, Healthy Habits Health Coaching Program, iCan Achieve Teen Weight Management Program, and Military Spouse Career Advancement Accounts.

\* [WWW.MILITARYHOMEFRONT.DOD.MIL](http://WWW.MILITARYHOMEFRONT.DOD.MIL)

Department of Defense website for official military community and family policy (MC&FP) program information, policy and guidance designed to help troops and their families, leaders and service providers. Whether you live the military lifestyle or support those who do, you'll find what you need!

\* [WWW.ARMYFRG.ORG](http://WWW.ARMYFRG.ORG)

A great way to communicate to family readiness groups and families with timely, accurate information.

\* [WWW.GUARDFAMILY.ORG](http://WWW.GUARDFAMILY.ORG)

Are you registered and receiving the weekly update? Webinar Feb. 19, 2009.

FRG Leadership Workshop... Renew & Re-Energize Feb. 21 and Feb. 22, 2009 Ocean Shore WA - Hotel TBD

State Family Programs Volunteer Workshop April 24-26 Location TBD

All volunteers, family members and Soldiers are en-

couraged to attend free child care and youth events

Family Readiness Group (FRG) Meetings

Feb. 10 HHB, 2-146<sup>th</sup> FA Olympia 7 p.m.

Feb. 12 A Trp 1-303<sup>rd</sup> Cav. 6:30 p.m.

Feb. 17 B Bty., 2-146<sup>th</sup> FA Longview 6 p.m.

Feb. 19 HHB, 2-146<sup>th</sup> FA Vancouver 7 p.m.

FRG potluck Feb. 28 at 2 p.m. hosted by B Trp, 1-303<sup>rd</sup> Cav. EVERYONE is invited

Please update the vFRG for anything FRG

Battalion commanders, if you have approved a meeting time/place or function, please have your FRG update the calendar portion of the website. 

## Family Coordination contact information

Camp Murray

Tia (253) 512-7755

Denise (253) 512-8367

Centralia

Jacqueline (360) 628-7195

Everett

Garey (425) 317-3527

Longview/Vancouver

Julie (360) 577-2120

(360) 750-4075

Kent/Seattle

Deborah (253) 945-1869

Moses Lake

Doug (509) 630-0701

Olympia

Diana (360) 704-6707

Pasco/Walla Walla

Betsy (509) 546-4384

Port Orchard

Ron (360) 356-2407

Spokane

Buzz (509) 532-2775

Yakima

John



*Sgt. Samuel Curameng says goodbye to his daughter Nayeli just before mobilizing with 1-185<sup>th</sup> Ar (CAB) (Photo courtesy of Sgt. Samuel Curameng)*

## Soldier finds happiness, child finds family

*By Sgt. Emily Suhr  
81<sup>st</sup> BCT Public Affairs*

**E**ach morning before she goes to school, 4-year-old Nayeli gets to talk to her dad, Sgt. Samuel Curameng, through the webcam on her computer. As she begins her day at the children's hospital in Los Angeles County, her father is settling in for the evening at COB Spiecher, Iraq.

The children's hospital is caring for Curameng's daughter during his 12-month mobilization in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, though the precocious preschooler is no stranger there. Nayeli suffers from an underdeveloped respiratory tract and requires a tracheostomy to breathe. She has spent much of her young life in the hospital.

"They've done so much to help

me out because they know how the military situation is. They offered to take her in as if she were just back there. She's fine, because she's used to the kids and the other girls so it's like nothing's ever changed, except daddy's not there every day," said Curameng, who is on his second deployment with Charlie Company, 1-185<sup>th</sup> Armor (Combined Arms Battalion), 81<sup>st</sup> Brigade Combat Team.

While Nayeli may not be the typical youngster, her dad is not the typical father either. The 25-year-old single Curameng adopted Nayeli after meeting her at the hospital while training to become a licensed vocational nurse.

"When I was going through school, (the children's hospital) was one of my clinical sites and I just fell in love with the girl," said Curameng.

"She would follow me around and everything, and I made it my absolute duty to try and get hired by that place. The nurses and the nurse director actually remembered me."

After starting work at the children's hospital, a special bond was formed between Curameng and Nayeli. While working the night shift one Christmas eve, Curameng played Santa Clause and filled her hospital room with toys and gifts. Shortly after, he began the eight-month process to legally adopt her.

"It was really painstaking. It was a lot of paperwork. I had to go through a couple boards. I had to prove that I actually had the means to support her, and the time. People would look at a 25-year-old, single male as partying and this and that.

*See "CURAMENG" Page 25*



## VISIT continued from Page 4

the temporary orders before they left for Iraq.

They also spoke about post-deployment leave, NCO, officer and MOS courses, the new G.I. Bill and post-deployment education, Active Guard Reserve jobs, suicide prevention, re-enlistment and the type of training units will be doing in 2010.

Kapral and Sweeney answered questioned and spent time visiting with the troops. They expressed their pride and thanks in all their Soldiers.

“Soldiers wearing the 81<sup>st</sup> Brigade patch are doing a phenomenal job,” Kapral said, praising his Soldiers from Washington, California and Texas. “Everywhere I go, their commanders are coming up to me and telling me they have no concerns with our Soldiers and that they’re doing a great job.”

“You’re making this rotation incredibly easy,” he added. 

## HEALTH CORNER

By Lt. Col. Stephen Anderson  
81<sup>st</sup> BCT Surgeon Cell

**M**ost of us in the 81<sup>st</sup> are nearing our six month deployment mark. I would like to take this opportunity to encourage everyone to try and improve their health before we go home. If you need to get in shape, loose some weight, improve your eating habits, or simply get more rest at night, now is a good time to get into good habits. This website can help you get started:

<http://www.hooah4health.com/>

Also, at the six month mark, don't forget to renew your prescription medications if you have not done so. Go to this link to get started:

<https://member.express-scripts.com/web/member/loginreg/loginStart.do>

If you have lost or broken any of your prescription eyewear, use this link to re-order:

<https://g-eyes.amedd.army.mil/Default.asp?session=3%3A15%3A08+AM>

Please continue to make our remaining deployment time as safe and productive at the first half has been. 

## HELP US MAKE THE DESERT RAVEN BETTER!

Do you have a story to tell?

What is your platoon doing?

Do you know a Soldier who has gone above and beyond?

Please send your photo and story submissions to [emily.suhr@us.army.mil](mailto:emily.suhr@us.army.mil) by the 10<sup>th</sup> of each month.

# Peanut butter product recall

Story courtesy of MNF-W

**A** recent outbreak of Salmonella has been reported to have infected 488 persons (as of Jan. 21, 2009) from 43 states in the United States. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration are currently investigating the outbreak.

Preliminary analysis indicates that peanut butter is the likely source of the bacteria causing the infections. To date, no association has been found with major national brand name jars of peanut butter sold in grocery stores. A recall has been issued for products containing peanut butter and peanut paste produced under the brand King Nut by a Peanut Corporation of America facility in Blakely, Ga.

The list of products that may be affected is still being determined and is incomplete at this time. However, a list of products known to be implicated at this point in the investigation can be found at:

<http://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/peanutbutter-recall/index.cfm>

Multi-National Forces - West food inspectors have addressed this incident, inspecting DFAC and AAFES facilities to ensure recalled products are not being used or sold in theater. MNF-W personnel cannot however, inspect the care packages individuals receive from the U.S.

Please take the time to read through the recalled products list to determine if you may have received any of these products. If you have received, or do receive in the immediate future, a care package containing any of the recalled products, the CDC and FDA recommend the following:

\* Do not eat products that have been recalled and throw them away in a manner that prevents others from eating them.

\* To determine if commercially-prepared or manufactured peanut butter/peanut paste-containing products (such as cookies, crackers, cereal, candy and ice cream) are subject to recall, consumers are urged first to visit FDA's website and check the searchable database of recalled products.

\* For information on products containing peanut butter from companies not reporting recalls, consumers may wish to consult the company's website or call the toll-free number listed on most packaging.

Information consumers may receive from the companies has not been verified by the FDA.

\* If consumers cannot determine if their peanut butter, peanut butter/peanut paste-containing products or institutionally-served peanut butter contains PCA peanut butter/peanut paste, FDA recommends that they do not consume those products.

Thank you for your attention and cooperation in this matter. 



# Showing solidarity for one of their own

By Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Kristen Froelich  
81<sup>st</sup> BSTB

In December 2008, while deployed to Iraq, Sgt. Beau Froelich found out that his father, my brother, Karl Froelich, was diagnosed with Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma. Not only is Karl related to 81<sup>st</sup> Brigade Soldiers, he himself was a sergeant in the 81<sup>st</sup> Brigade Combat Team from 1981-1987, assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 81<sup>st</sup> BCT, based out of Seattle, Wash., as a communications specialist.

When Beau was home on leave in January, his dad started chemotherapy treatments. Beau, his dad, a neighbor and Beau's 1-year-old son all went to the local barber shop. Beau's son received his first hair cut and the others showed their support by shaving their heads. I was able to see the pictures almost immediately as Karl is blogging his cancer on Facebook.

Because my brother is blogging about having cancer, it has made it



*Lt. Col. Kenneth Garrison starts the party by shaving Sgt. Beau Froelich's head. Eleven Soldiers of the 81<sup>st</sup> BSTB Base Defense Operations Center shaved their heads in support of Froelich's dad's battle with cancer. (Photo by Sgt. Kyle Chaplin)*

much easier for me to follow his diagnosis and experience while being here in Iraq.

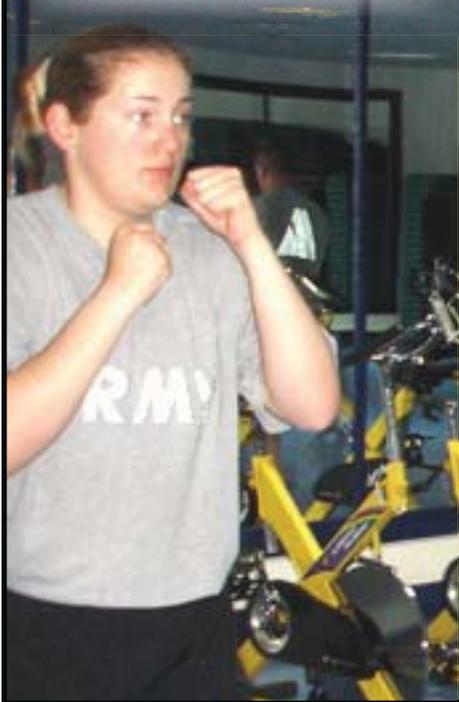
On Feb. 8, 2009, the 81<sup>st</sup> Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 81<sup>st</sup> BCT had a head-shaving party to show their support for my brother, Beau's father. In all, 10 Soldiers within the Base Defense Operations Center, 81<sup>st</sup> BSTB and one Soldier from Company B, 16<sup>th</sup> Special Troops Battalion, 16<sup>th</sup> Sustainment Brigade, shaved their heads.

The Soldiers were led on this adventure by Lt. Col. Ken Garrison, the 81<sup>st</sup> BSTB commanding officer and Command Sgt. Maj. David Nunn, the 81<sup>st</sup> BSTB command sergeant major.

The rest of the participants were Maj. Kevin Harmon, Capt. Chris Blanco, Capt. David Raines, Master Sgt. Erik Nelson, Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Wesley LeBarge, Staff Sgt. Erik Brown, Sgt. Kyle Chaplin, Pfc. Caleb Meyers and Sgt. Beau Froelich. 

## 81<sup>st</sup> BSTB kicks PT up a notch

By Capt. Jacqueline Baird  
81<sup>st</sup> BSTB



Soldiers from the 81<sup>st</sup> Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 81<sup>st</sup> Brigade Combat Team based in Everett, Wash., have found an unusual way to do physical training and have fun at the same time.

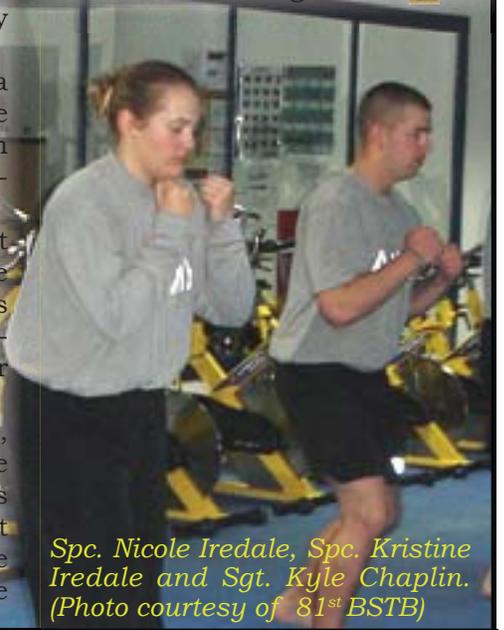
Lt. Col. Kenneth Garrison, the 81<sup>st</sup> BSTB commander and karate instructor, has started a karate class for Soldiers on Contingency Operating Base Q-West, Iraq.

The class is taught three times a week at the Q-West MWR Gym in the aerobics room and features a warm up, strength training and instruction on basic karate techniques.

"It's a lot of fun and is a great excuse to go to the gym three days a week," said Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Kirsten Froelich, the Force Protection Cell Noncommissioned Officer in Charge.

"The class teaches Goju Ryu, which is a traditional Okinawan style of karate. Goju Ryu, which means hard soft style, is a defensive art that traces its roots to Southern Chinese martial arts. The result is a style

that focuses on proper breathing, fluid movement, remaining rooted in stances and drawing power up from the ground," said Garrison. "The class is sponsored by the Goju Ryu Karate Dojo of Vancouver, Wash. The dojo provides technical support, instructional videos and lots of encouragement." 



*Spc. Nicole Iredale, Spc. Kristine Iredale and Sgt. Kyle Chaplin. (Photo courtesy of 81<sup>st</sup> BSTB)*



## CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

By Lt. Col. Carl Steele  
81<sup>st</sup> BCT Chaplain

If you start from Annual Training last July, we are seven months into this deployment. A lot can happen in that period of time. One of the things I hope has happened is that you have built relationships with others in your section. These relationships will last for a long time after we leave Iraq. Your fellow Soldiers become a sounding board, a safe place to vent and can be a lifeline. Take care of yourselves and take care of each other.



Part of the Soldier's Creed says: "I will never leave a fallen comrade behind." If we saw that someone was injured, we would do our best to get them the help they need. We all know how to stop bleeding with pres-

sure and a cravat or tourniquet. Those with combat lifesaver skills even know how to put in an IV. What about when some is injured and it is not visible. I was asked the other day if the training we do for suicide prevention works. The answer is that it works if we care about and build those relationships with our fellow Soldiers.

**Ask your buddy:** Have the courage to ask the question, but stay calm. Ask the question directly, e.g. Are you thinking about killing yourself?

**Care for your buddy:** Remove any means that could be used for self injury. Calmly control the situation; do not use force.

**Escort your buddy:** Never leave your buddy alone. Escort to the chain of command, a chaplain, a behavioral health professional or a primary care provider.

It takes a buddy to save a life. 

## Heart Attacks: All Hearts are NOT Created Equal

By Diane Mayer  
TriWest Healthcare Alliance

You may have heard that heart disease is the number one cause of death in the United States. What people may not know is that women are less likely to survive heart attacks than men. In fact, 38 percent of women, compared with 25 percent of men, will die within one year after a heart attack, according to the American Heart Association.

Despite these facts, many women believe that heart disease is not a real problem for them. In fact, a study by the American Heart Association revealed that only 13 percent of American women know that heart disease and stroke are their greatest health threats, demonstrating the lack of knowledge and understanding most women have for their most serious health threat.

In addition, despite the fact that minority women face the highest risk of death from heart disease and stroke, studies indicate that they have lower awareness of the risk factors.

Here are some key facts:

- More women than men die of stroke.
- The risk of heart disease and stroke increases with age.
- Diagnosis of heart disease presents a greater challenge in women than in men.

As with men, women's most common heart attack symptom is chest

pain or discomfort. However, women are more likely than men to experience some of the other common symptoms, such as shortness of breath, nausea or vomiting and back or jaw pain. Additionally, women tend to delay longer than men in getting help for a possible heart attack.

Many women delay because

they don't want to bother or worry others, especially if their symptoms turn out to be a false alarm. But when you are facing something as serious as a possible heart attack, it is much better to be safe than sorry. Most hospitals have clot-busting medicines and other artery-opening treatments and procedures that can stop a heart attack, if given quickly. These treatments work best when given within the first hour after a heart attack starts, making immediate care for a suspected heart attack even more vital.

When you get to the hospital, don't be afraid to speak up if you experience any of the symptoms listed above. You have the right to be thoroughly tested and examined for a possible heart attack.

The best way to survive a heart attack is to prevent having one in the first place. For both men and women, the biggest risk factors that contribute to heart disease are smoking, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, family history and age. Take a moment to look at your lifestyle, family history and your general health.

Need more information? Visit [www.triwest.com>beneficiary services>Healthy Living>Condition Management>Heart Disease](http://www.triwest.com>beneficiary services>Healthy Living>Condition Management>Heart Disease). Other valuable Web resources are the American Heart Association ([www.heart.org](http://www.heart.org)) and the National Heart Lung and Blood Institute-NIH ([www.nhlbi.nih.gov](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov)). 

### Heart Attack Symptom

Men and women may experience some common symptoms. But there are differences.



**women**

- Nausea/vomiting
- Jaw pain
- Back pain



**men**

- Chest discomfort
- Arm pain
- Shortness of breath



## Curameng continued from page 21



*Sgt. Samuel Curameng at work as a gunner for C Co., 1-185<sup>th</sup> Ar. (CAB) at COB Spiecher in Iraq. (Photo courtesy of Sgt. Samuel Curameng)*

Really, I work six days a week.”

In fact, it was his coworkers and supervisors who helped him seal the deal.

“They totally backed me up. They know I love that girl to death,” said Curameng.

Part of the process involved observing Curameng with her to ensure he could handle her medical requirements. Though, he says: “If you met her, you probably wouldn’t even notice anything’s wrong with her. She acts like a normal toddler. She runs around, she makes trouble. She fights with other kids, she’s selfish sometimes. She’s real protective of me.”

For Curameng, the shift from nurse to daddy was an easy one, “It’s just one of those things that popped up and jumped at me, and it just felt like it was meant to be part of my life. It just came all the sudden, so naturally.”

For Nayeli, whose biological parents weren’t able to care for her, it was a little more difficult. “When I took her home, she couldn’t really adapt that well because she was so used to all the little children playing around,” said Curameng. To combat the problem, he began bringing her to work at the hospital with him.

“I would do whatever I needed to do for her care, along with my other patients. My work place understands my situation, so they pair me up to have the patients that used to be her roommates. So they’re all in the same room, they’re all playing, they go nap together. It’s like nothing’s ever changed.”

Curameng’s parents offered to take in Nayeli while he was in Iraq, but he felt leaving a rambunctious toddler with them would be too much of a burden. He said they were shocked when he told them he was adopting a daughter, but they now pester him about getting married and having more children.

“That’s one of those things I’m not really thinking about now,” Curameng said of marriage. “I go out on dates and stuff like that, but it’s not anything serious and they understand that. I don’t have time for that kind of relationship.”

When in the states, Curameng is happy just staying at home with his daughter and Army, his German Rott-

weiler. Their big outings are to the gym or the beach.

While in Iraq, Curameng takes his role as a noncommissioned officer to heart in the same way he has taken on the role of fatherhood.

“I’m fortunate that I’m in Charlie Company because everything is Soldier care, if something’s wrong with a Soldier, we stop everything. Whether it’s pay issues, family issues, kids getting sick, we’ll pull a guy off a mission just so he can call his family,” said Curameng who serves as the commander’s gunner, assistant administrative NCO and the retention NCO for C Co.

“The NCO leadership here is pretty much all about talking, and finding out what’s wrong with our Soldiers. I like to joke around with my guys. I don’t like to have them view me as that sergeant you have to stand at parade rest for and everything else, and be really strict. I like to be that big brother, where I have the respect, but I can mess around with them, where they can be comfortable talking to me about anything they need to talk about. And that’s pretty much how it is with everyone here.”

Though Curameng has found success and comfort in Iraq, he is looking forward to returning to his Mission Hills, Calif., home and begin work on his registered nursing degree and eventually his masters in nursing. He said he also looks forward to going back to drill, which he calls “my time.” But mostly, he’s looking forward to enjoying some quality time with his little girl, who will be turning 5 shortly after his return. 



*Sgt. Samuel Curameng's daughter Nayeli offers her dad a hug just before his mobilization with 1-185<sup>th</sup> Ar (CAB) (Photo courtesy of Sgt. Samuel Curameng)*



## Laureles continued from page 11

During that tour, a Soldier was shot in the head by a sniper and lay bleeding on the rooftop of an Iraqi police station. The call went out for a medic and Laureles raced to the Soldier's aid. The sniper was still out there, so Laureles ducked behind a small wall and pulled the injured Soldier under it. After an initial assessment, Laureles assisted the coherent Soldier down the stairs and off the roof. The Soldier's Kevlar helmet had protected him from a likely fatal injury.

"He was okay. We got him out of there as quickly as possible. During that time, I was able to go inside the (troop medical clinic) with him and help treat him while he was there, and then every day after and change his dressing," said Laureles, who added that normally he treats a traumatic injury on the scene and then never sees the victim after they are evacuated. "I really liked treating him because I was able to keep doing it, and see the progress, and talk to him and make sure he was okay."

Laureles again left Iraq, only to return home and find out that the 81<sup>st</sup> BCT was once again deploying. Prior to his past deployments, he had attended a one-week pre-mobilization training at Fort Benning, Ga., but this time he decided to do the whole mobilization process. After training in San Antonio for about a month with the other medics, he met up with the rest of the 81<sup>st</sup> BCT in Fort McCoy, Wis.

"It was like a reunion with the brigade. I haven't seen any of them since the first tour and I wanted to get reacquainted with them before we got back into country. I just thought it would be a great opportunity," Laureles said of why he went through the nearly three-month mobilization process.

Now on his sixth tour, Laureles is again working with the 181<sup>st</sup> BSB in Balad. Their mission has changed since the last deployment, though,

and Laureles is assigned to escorting third-country nationals around base. Not that that keeps him from doing what he loves.

"Since there's not really a medical mission for me and my company, I volunteer my free time here (at the hospital) so that I don't lose my skills. Ultimately, being a medic, and doing my job as a medic, is the only reason I've chosen to stay here so long. I love my job. I'm very passionate about doing my job. I try to do it any way I can. Right now, since I have a little extra time after work or on my days off, I come here," he said.

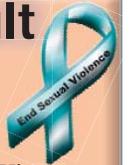
Besides volunteering his limited free time at the hospital, Laureles takes online college classes and is working toward a nursing degree. He hopes to one day work for an organization like Doctors without Borders.

For now, though, he isn't quite done in Iraq.

"I would like to stay until the big pullout in 2011, if that's possible," he said. "Before, I never really questioned why I wanted to stay, because, like I said, it's just the love of my job. I feel comfortable here. I don't feel like I've been here for four years. But now that the security situation is so much better and there's less of a threat, it seems like it's about time for me to go home. It's almost over, but I would like to see things through. The experiences and opportunities that I've gotten have been really great. I feel really blessed to be a part of such a significant part of history."

"My decision to stay deployed this long does not allow me to live an average life," he said. "It isn't always easy, but it is always rewarding knowing that I am doing something that I love, and that what I am doing is helping others. The sacrifices that I have made are far out-weighed by the blessings that I have received in choosing this path. A smile from a recovering casualty after tireless efforts to save a life beats the typical Saturday night back home any day." 

## Sexual Assault Response Coordinator



By Master Sgt. CathyJo Wings  
81<sup>st</sup> BCT, SARC

**T**here are things you can do to reduce your chances of being sexually assaulted.

Follow these tips from the National Crime Prevention Council.

- Be aware of your surroundings
- Walk with confidence.
- Don't let drugs or alcohol cloud your judgment.
- Be assertive, don't let anyone violate your pace.
- Trust your instincts. If you feel uncomfortable, leave.
- Don't prop open doors.
- Lock your door and your windows.
- Watch your keys. Don't lend them. Don't lose them. And don't put your name and address on the key ring.
- Know who's on the other side of the door before you open it.
- Avoid isolated spots, like underground garages, offices after business hours.
- Avoid walking or jogging alone, especially at night. Vary your route. Stay in well-traveled, well-lit areas.
- Have your key ready to use before you reach the door; home, car, or work.
- Park in well-lit areas and lock the car.
- Drive on well-traveled streets, with doors and windows locked.
- Keep your car in good shape with plenty of gas in the tank.
- In case of car trouble, call for help on your cellular phone. If you don't have a phone, put the hood up, lock the doors, and put a banner in the rear mirror that says, "Help. Call police." 

81<sup>st</sup> BCT SARC Master Sgt. CathyJo Wings

[cathyjo.wings@ar.mnf-wiraq.usmc.mil](mailto:cathyjo.wings@ar.mnf-wiraq.usmc.mil)

DSN 344-0932 VOIP 696-5171



*Happy  
Valentine's  
Day*

## Crazy Laws

- ☞ In Alaska it is forbidden to push a moose out of a plane in motion.
- ☞ In California it is illegal to set a mousetrap without a hunting license.
- ☞ In Sterling, Colorado it is Unlawful to allow a pet cat to run loose without a taillight. (in Berea, Ohio this applies to any animal)
- ☞ In Oklahoma Whale hunting is strictly forbidden throughout the entire state.
- ☞ In Washington all lollipops are forbidden
- ☞ In Lowes Crossroads, Delaware, it's a violation of the local law for any pilot or passenger to carry an ice cream cone in their pocket while either flying or waiting to board a plane. (also in Kentucky)
- ☞ In Florida elephants tied to a parking meter must pay a regular parking fee.
- ☞ In Baltimore, Maryland. It is illegal to take a lion to the movies
- ☞ In North Carolina, its illegal to take a deer swimming in water above its knees.
- ☞ In Topeka, Kansas, its against the law to annoy squirrels
- ☞ In Jonesboro, Georgia. It is forbidden to say "Oh, boy".
- ☞ In North Dakota it is illegal to go to bed wearing boots or shoes.
- ☞ In Wilbur Washington. Its illegal to ride upon the streets on an ugly horse.

### Solution to this month's puzzle

Solution								
4	6	2	7	8	9	5	1	3
7	3	8	1	5	2	6	4	9
5	9	1	6	3	4	2	8	7
6	2	4	3	7	8	1	9	5
3	1	7	9	6	5	4	2	8
8	5	9	4	2	1	3	7	6
9	8	3	2	1	6	7	5	4
1	7	5	8	4	3	9	6	2
2	4	6	5	9	7	8	3	1

### 81<sup>ST</sup> BCT PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE



MANAGING EDITOR

SGT. EMILY SUHR

EMILY.SUHR@US.ARMY.MIL

ASSISTANT EDITOR

SGT. AMANDA GAUTHIER

AMANDA.R.GAUTHIER@US.ARMY.MIL

TO SUBMIT ARTICLES, PHOTOS, OR STORY IDEAS  
E-MAIL EMILY.SUHR@US.ARMY.MIL  
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PLEASE INCLUDE A MICROSOFT WORD DOCUMENT.  
IDENTIFY WHO IS IN THE PHOTO, WHO TOOK THE  
PHOTO, WHEN AND WHERE.  
(IDENTIFICATION = FULL NAME, RANK, UNIT, DUTY  
POSITION AND HOMETOWN).