

THE DAGGER EDGE



January 2009 Volume 2, Issue 1

Reaching out to northwest Baghdad

ISF take control of
Joint Security Sites

Dagger helps give marketable
job skills to
citizens

A Camp Victory
Christmas

Messages
from home



There are an estimated 8.9 million sheep in Iraq. Sheep are primarily herded and raised for food. Sheep fur is also used to make blankets and other clothing in Iraq.

(Photo by Spc. Dustin Roberts, 2nd HBCT PAO)

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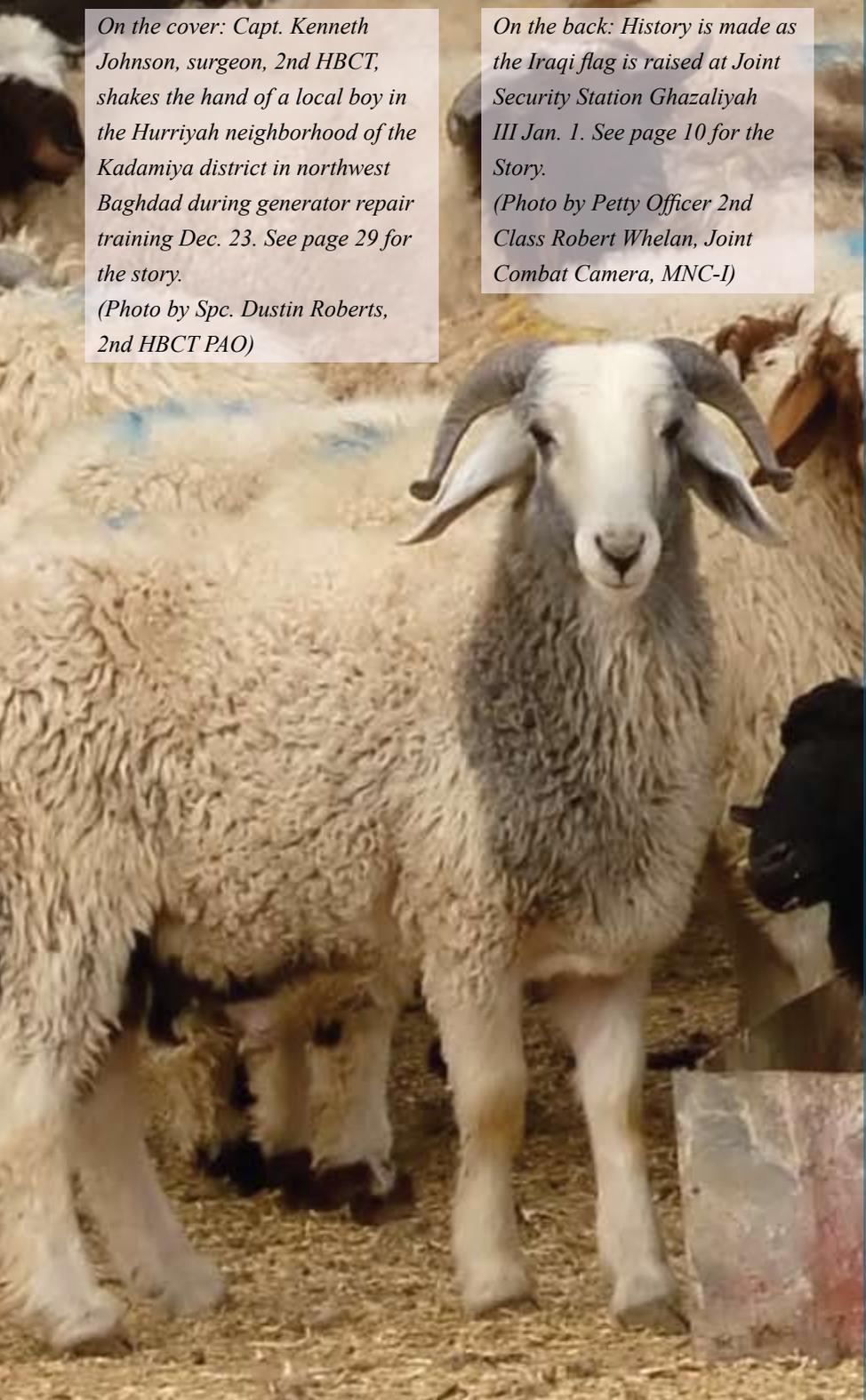
On the cover: Capt. Kenneth Johnson, surgeon, 2nd HBCT, shakes the hand of a local boy in the Hurriyah neighborhood of the Kadamiya district in northwest Baghdad during generator repair training Dec. 23. See page 29 for the story.

(Photo by Spc. Dustin Roberts, 2nd HBCT PAO)



On the back: History is made as the Iraqi flag is raised at Joint Security Station Ghazaliyah III Jan. 1. See page 10 for the Story.

(Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Robert Whelan, Joint Combat Camera, MNC-I)



The Dagger Edge
Informing the Dagger Community on the
issues and events throughout the brigade.

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DAGGER SIX

2HBCT COMMANDER
COLONEL JOSEPH M. MARTIN



A historic month to remember



▲ Col. Joseph Martin, commander, 2nd HBCT, walks to greet Dagger Soldiers to wish them a Merry Christmas Dec. 25. (Photo by Sgt. Brian Tierce, 2nd HBCT PAO)

Fellow Daggers, The month of January has been historic in every regard. The Security Agreement between the United States and Iraq is now in place and we operate more closely with our Iraqi Security partners than ever before! We support their success and it is by, with, and through these courageous Iraqi heroes that the future of Iraq will be secured. What follows are some of my thoughts for you to integrate into daily operations and enable the continued success of this great brigade combat team.

Continue to learn and grow as you operate in Iraq. We're approaching our first 100 days in Iraq—mid-February—and that is historically the time when units are fully acclimatized to their mission sets. Read "The First 100 Days" series from CALL and compare your current experiences with what the Army has historically observed. We must maintain basic standards and discipline to defeat enemy actions and protect the Iraqi

people, while honing our skills and leadership as we adapt to our environment.

Maintain contact with the Greater Fort Riley Community. Those stalwart Families, Friends, and Soldiers back at Fort Riley are a significant echelon of our formation. They need your feedback and constant communications to be effective. I don't want anyone to forget what they do for the team and help them to sustain the hope of our Family members during the deployment.

Be able to tell the Army's Story. The pace of media operations has accelerated rapidly. We're now in the center of the maelstrom for information operations. You must be vigilant, but comfortable with the media in order to accurately tell the brigade's story. Remember to review all Public Affairs guidance for a moment before engaging a journalist—it's your right and your duty!

Sustain safe practices for force protection. We need to move beyond "being safe"—we need to actively reduce risk. Negligent discharges, accidents, and "rushing to failure" are the most common causes of non-battle injuries right now. I expect leaders to ALWAYS check and constantly be assessing the environment to mitigate risks for their Soldiers.

Be polite, professional, and prepared to kill. Our Iraqi counterparts and the average citizens deserve our most professional image while we work amongst them. They deserve our most professional approach to problems. If there's an imminent threat—escalate force appropriately until lethal force is required. You're the best trained Soldiers compromising the most powerful Army in the world—trust in your training, your equipment and your instincts!

Remember our history. January 2009 commemorates some of the greatest achievements of our Nation. The inauguration of our 44th President resonated around the world as a testament to America's cultural strengths, as does the Martin Luther King remembrance period. We are in our most historic role ever in the Middle East and finally—who can forget the Super Bowl!

I continue to be the proudest officer in the Army as your commander, and it is with great pride that I strap into my IBA each day to meet you at the decisive points around our area of operations. Daggers! Ready Now!

COL. JOSEPH MARTIN

Dagger 6
"Ready Now!"



DAGGER SEVEN

2HBCT COMMAND SERGEANT MAJOR
DONALD L. BATTLE



Happy New Year From Dagger 7

Dagger Soldiers, I hope every Soldier in the Dagger Brigade was able to take some time during the Holiday Season and reflect on all the tremendous things we are doing each and every day for our country. I also hope everyone had the opportunity to talk to family or a love one back home to wish them Happy Holidays.

The end of the Holidays season brought about not just a change in the year from 2008 to 2009 but it also ushered in a new era in Operation Iraqi Freedom. With the implementation of the Security Agreement signed in November and enacted on 1 January 2009, our mission continues—no change. We will continue to protect the Iraqi people along with our Iraqi Security partners. I have full faith in the Soldiers of the Dagger Brigade to set the Standard in compliance with the Security Agreement.

The Iraqi Flag is flying proudly over the Joint Security Stations throughout your operational areas. Just think about how proud this makes your counterparts feel to know that they are making history side by side with great warriors as yourselves.

The Iraqi Security Forces have taken the lead and it is our job as Soldiers to ensure we set them up for success in each and every mission we execute together. Ensure you are enforcing standards daily



▲ *Command Sgt Maj. Donald Battle, 2HBCT, wishes a Merry Christmas to 1st Sgt. Ronald Gaines, Company D, 1st Combined Arms battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, 2nd HBCT Dec. 25. (Photo by Sgt. Brian Tierce, 2nd HBCT PAO)*

and that Soldiers truly understand their mission every time they go outside the wire. We cannot afford to lose a Soldier through complacency or lack of discipline. I challenge each of you to apply the Iron Horse Big 8 in every mission as it applies to you. Rehearse and talk about Escalation of Force as part of your briefs.

Don't take short cuts or allow your Soldiers to take them. Be the standard bearer. I encourage you to think first and don't rush or allow your Soldiers to rush to failure.

I would also like to remind you all about the importance of safety and accountability of equipment. We really have to tighten our chin straps on safety. When you peel back the onion on every safety incident, 90% were leader failure. Sergeants, take the lead. We are better than this.

COMMAND SGT. MAJ.
DONALD L. BATTLE

DAGGER 7

The Chaplain's Corner



▲ Chaplain (Maj.) Peter Johnson (right), 2nd HBCT, wishes a Merry Christmas to Chaplain (Capt.) Darrell Harlow-Curtis, 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, 2nd HBCT Dec. 25.

What will we make of it?

By Chaplain (Maj.) Peter Johnson, 2HBCT Chaplain

“Don't bother about genius. Don't worry about being clever. Trust to hard work, perseverance and determination. And the best motto for a long march is, 'Don't grumble. Plug on!'”
-- Sir Frederick Treves.

As I walk through offices and work stations throughout the brigade an item I frequently see is a large container of some body building supplement. One day as I thought about this I thought, cool, this person has a goal; he wants to be better when he returns home than when he left. This is worth thinking about.

We have a long march ahead of us and a great question is what will we make of it? Will we be any different on the day when we board that plane for home? Will we be better than when we

arrived in Iraq? If we aren't thinking about this now it will be too late to make much of a difference later – goals worth pursuing take time.

Obviously our primary focus must be to our assigned mission, we have both an obligation and a duty to do our utmost. Failure is not an option. However, our perseverance and determination doesn't necessarily need to be limited to our specific mission at hand. In fact, a noble personal pursuit has a way of enhancing what one does professionally. Some may call this balance, broadening our horizons, or adding depth to life. The Army once called it, “Be all you can be.”

I know personal time is an issue, for some it's more crucial than

For your local worship service coordinate with your unit chaplain for location and times.

others. If all one can do with personal time is get a few hours of sleep – than one must sleep. But it is amazing what we can add to our life with just 15 minutes of effort. For example, I have talked with many Soldiers who said they would like to learn to play the guitar while they are here, but they tell me they don't have the “genius,” or time to do it. They find it hard to believe when I tell them if they practiced for 15 minutes a day that when they redeployed they wouldn't just be playing – they would be “jammin.”

Where do you want to improve? What about that book you always wanted to read – read it! You say you want to get promotion points by doing correspondence courses – sign up! If you're thinking about the Soldier of the Month Board or Promotion Board – get ready! Maybe you want to improve your PT score or just get “huge” – make it happen! Some may want to deepen their faith – just do it! This list is limited only by your passion, determination, and perseverance, but don't sell yourself short by believing that you don't have the “genius” or that you're not “clever.” Don't grumble. Plug on for 15 minutes and you will be surprised what you can accomplish. If we redeploy without being “better” individuals we only have ourselves to blame. Get HUGE!

Busting common exercise myths

By Capt. Kenneth Johnson, 2HBCT Surgeon

The Dagger Brigade is full of motivated Soldiers, many of whom have set lofty goals for their physical conditioning during this deployment. Through exercise we can combat stress, build morale, and be prepared to engage the enemy when it is required of us. As you set your own goals for this deployment, keep some of the following thoughts in mind:

MYTH: The best way to lose fat is to eat very few calories.

FACT: Starving your body will cause it to shut down its metabolism and store any available calories as fat. Your body's main

objective is to survive. It doesn't care if you want to lose body fat. In fact, it would prefer to increase fat in case of famine. If you eat very little (less than 1,200 calories), the body perceives an emergency and will accommodate you by holding onto stored body fat.

As well it should, because it has no idea when it will be fed again.

MYTH: Weight lifting will cause the body to "bulk up" and we should really just run if we want to lose weight.

FACT: Excessive aerobic exercise will strip muscle as well as body fat. Once you begin stripping muscle tissue, your body becomes less efficient at burning body fat. Muscle is metabolically active, which simply means it stimulates the metabolism. For each pound of muscle you put on your body, you will burn up to 50 additional calories per day.

MYTH: All you need to get a washboard stomach is to do a bunch of sit-ups.

FACT: It is physiologically impossible to lose weight in an isolated area.

You can't lose only in one area of the body because body fat comes off all over the body.

Typically, the first place you tend to gain is the last place you lose. Doing exercises to build your abs and strengthen your core is important, but the fat

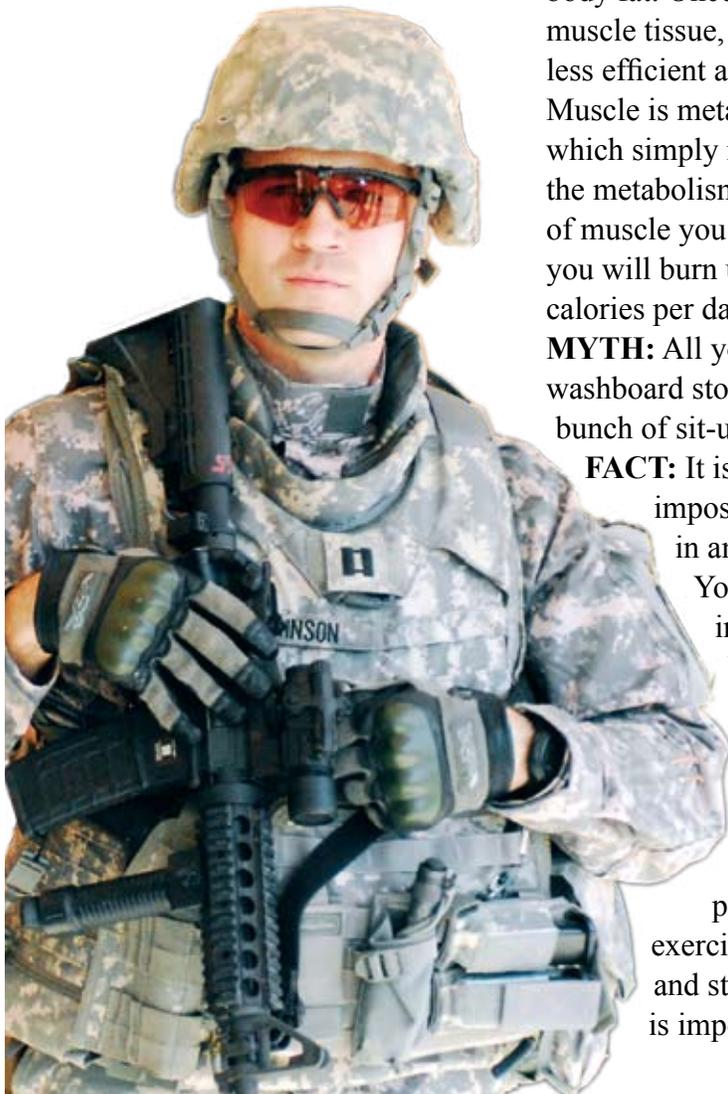
consumed will come equally from all your fat stores.

MYTH: Lifting lighter weights will make your muscles more defined and toned.

FACT: Muscle responds to overload. If you lift heavier weight with sufficient intensity, you will create microscopic tears in the muscle. When the muscle recuperates, it will become tighter and stronger. However, your diet must support your workouts. Reduced body fat is a result of efficient weight training, proper amounts of cardiovascular exercise, and nutrition that places you in a mild caloric deficit.

TIPS FOR A GOOD EXERCISE PROGRAM:

- **Work out with a buddy: Whether running or lifting, having a buddy lets us workout harder and safer.**
- **Don't get hurt: If you push your body too hard, it will push back. Remember your priorities. If today's workout prevents you from doing your job tomorrow, the whole team suffers.**
- **Track your progress: Keep a workout journal. You can use it to set realistic goals and you'll gain satisfaction from knowing how far you've come.**
- **Remember: Sweat shed now saves blood shed later.**



◀ Capt. Kenneth "Trip" Johnson
2nd HBCT Surgeon

MESSAGES



**Staff Sgt. Travis
Blackwelder
HHC, 2HBCT**

Honey, I just want to wish you a safe and Merry Christmas and let you know that Wesley and I are doing great and miss you very much! We love you and think of you always! Be good, Be safe and think of us always! Love your wifey, Candice.



**Sgt. Thomas Koelder
Troop C, 5-4 CAV**

Hi Thomas! Mom, Mark, Serrie and Maddie send their love. Mom and Mark say that they're getting no heavy lifting done without you around! Ike and I miss you and love you so much...we are taking good care of one another. We cannot wait for you to come home and hang out with us: watching movies on our BCC isn't the same without you! Be safe and be good and never forget how much you are loved. All my love, EGK.



**Sgt Shane Fletcher
Company F, 1-18 Inf.**

Hey Honey, we wanted to say that we are so proud of you and we miss you and that every second of every day we wish you were here. We love you so much baby! We Can't wait to see you on your R & R. Stay Safe Baby love you always,
Jessica, Trent & Hollie Fletcher.

**To all the
Soldiers of the
Dagger Bde.**

We miss you all.
Be safe and see you when you return.

2nd BDE FRSAS
Brandi,
Kristi, Liz,
Linette, Mimi,
Liza, Julie



FROM HOME



Capt. Andrew Chovancek
Company D, 1-18 Inf.

Dear Andrew, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. In our hearts we will always be together. We miss you and love you very much. Be safe and we are proud of you. Always and forever yours,
Tanja & Isabella.



SPC Ralph Sutton
Battery A, 1-7 FA

We love and miss you very much, stay safe!
Love - Your Girls.



SPC Thomas Vasquez
HHT, 5-4 CAV

Hello honey! I wanna say happy holidays, happy anniversary and happy b-day :) I know it's a tough year being without you but we will make it through this together as a family. We miss every kiss, all the hugs, getting all cuddled up together and just all the tlc from you. You are missed every second, minute, hour of our life. I want you to stay strong and always walk around with your head up. I am always going to be holding it down for you at home with the kids. Don't worry we are safe! We love you so much & miss you :(lots of xoxoxox from your wife and kids. Take care and god bless:)



Sgt. John McKenna
HHT, 5-4 CAV

Hello DuckButt! I'm not going to be original because frankly I don't have the time! lol I love you honey and I miss you! Nothing new there right?!? I miss your sarcastic remarks and our old married couple arguments in Wal-Mart! Don't worry people still stare, just not because you are coming back with the usual quips! It's because I'm fabulous...and talking to myself! It's not the same shopping without you telling me I'm cut off...I just keep spending money! lol ok so I guess I was original, just my luck! lol But on the real Fruitcake, I love you 4 sure and miss you mostester plus infinity times 4! Ha beat that! lol be safe Stay Short and make a big sandcastle! You know we don't have sand in KS! lol With everything I am and everything I will be, Sweetcheeks! P.S. I know other people are reading this and I hope Giffin is taking a picture of how red you are right now!!!

Making History: ISF takes the helm of Joint Security Stations

Story by Sgt. Brian Tierce, 2nd HBCT PAO

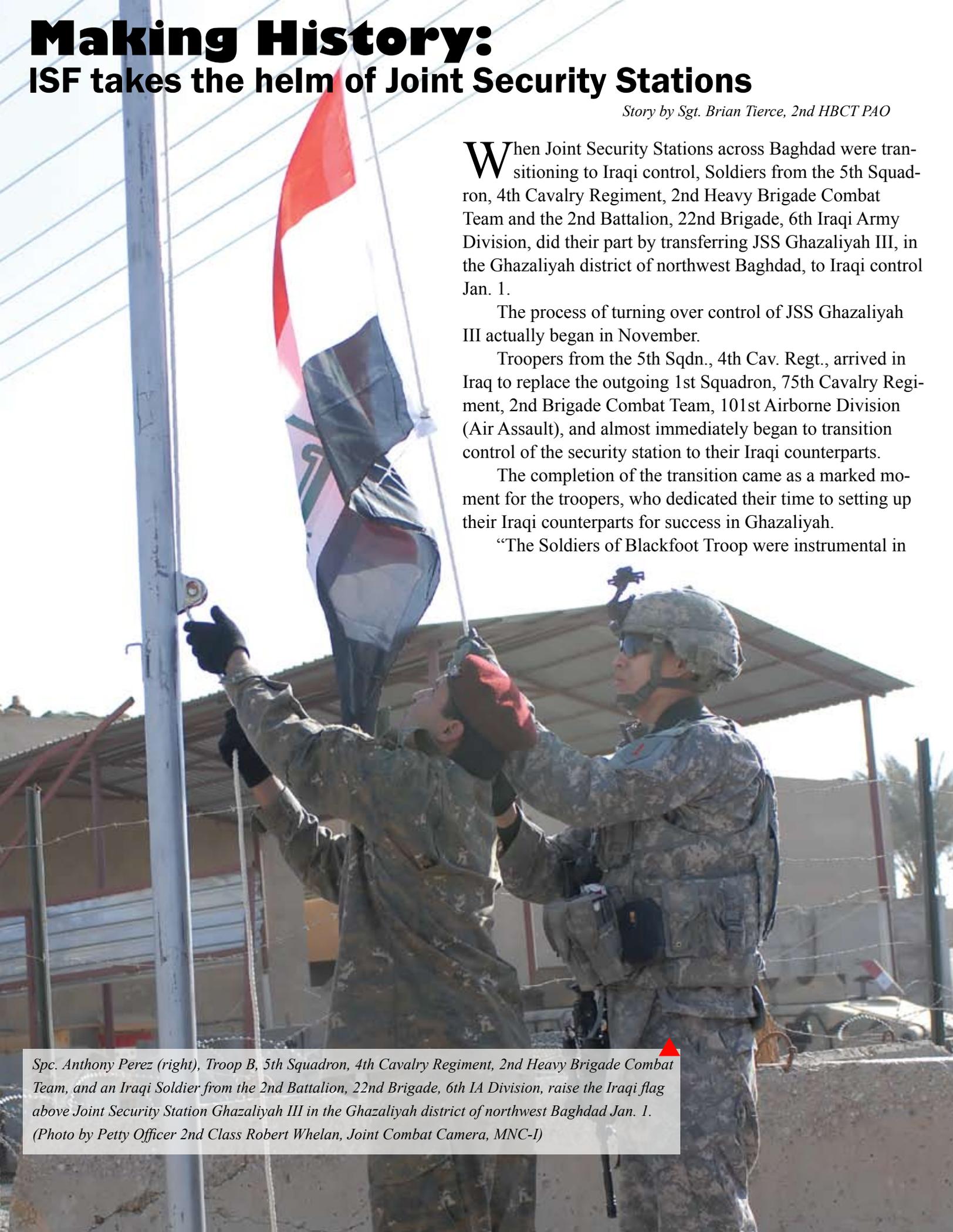
When Joint Security Stations across Baghdad were transitioning to Iraqi control, Soldiers from the 5th Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team and the 2nd Battalion, 22nd Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, did their part by transferring JSS Ghazaliyah III, in the Ghazaliyah district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

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

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

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

“The Soldiers of Blackfoot Troop were instrumental in



Spc. Anthony Perez (right), Troop B, 5th Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, and an Iraqi Soldier from the 2nd Battalion, 22nd Brigade, 6th IA Division, raise the Iraqi flag above Joint Security Station Ghazaliyah III in the Ghazaliyah district of northwest Baghdad Jan. 1. (Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Robert Whelan, Joint Combat Camera, MNC-I)

completing the transfer on time,” said 1st Lt. Patrick Howlett, officer in charge of the November transition. “We will now focus our efforts towards assisting our Iraqi counterparts in order to better prepare the Iraqi Army to take full control of Ghazaliyah.”

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

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

“This was a monumental occasion for the Iraqi

Security Forces in Baghdad,” said Howlett.

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

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

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

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



▲ Lt. Col. John Richardson, commander, 5-4 CAV, shakes hands with Lt. Col. Abdullah after handing over Joint Security Station Ghazaliyah III Jan. 1. (Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Robert Whelan, Joint Combat Camera, MNC-I)



▲ Iraqi Soldiers, and Soldiers from 5-4 CAV (far right), salute the Iraqi flag after it was raised at Joint Security Station Ghazaliyah III Jan. 1. (Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Robert Whelan, Joint Combat Camera, MNC-I)



▲ An Iraqi Soldier salutes the Iraqi flag as it is raised at Joint Security Station Ghazaliyah III Jan. 1. (Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Robert Whelan, Joint Combat Camera, MNC-I)

1-18th Infantry Regiment "Vanguards"

Hurriyah security improvements highlighted in walk through

Story and Photo by Spc. Dustin Roberts, 2HBCT PAO

More than 30 Sheiks from the Baghdad neighborhoods of Hurriyah and Tarmiyah gathered at a mosque Dec. 3 in a neighborhood that was once filled with sectarian violence to see for themselves how the security situation has changed.

The religious leaders from both the Sunni and Shiite tribes met at the al-Farooq Mosque in Hurriyah, where the 1st Battalion, 22nd Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, with the help of the 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team displayed how safe the neighborhood is.

Many of the Sheiks from Tarmiyah had once lived in Hurriyah and relocated because sectarian violence dramatically increased from around February 2006 to February 2008, said Maj. John Breland, human terrain team leader, attached to the 2nd HBCT.

"The Sheiks (from Tarmiyah) were surprised and amazed by the progress that had been made in Hurriyah over the last two years," Breland said. "They were under the impression that Hurriyah was still a very dangerous place, and as they witnessed for themselves, that is not the case."

Iraqi Army Maj. Adhab Imam al- Giussy Hussein, commander, 1st Battalion, 22nd Brigade, 6th IA Division, formally welcomed the visitors and spoke of the effectiveness of the battalion's tactics against sectarian violence in Hurriyah.

"The displaced Sheiks saw the houses that they once lived in before they were forced to move away and were grateful for the invite from the Hurriyah Sheiks and the Iraqi Army," said Breland. "Maj. Hussein explained that despite the reputation of Hurriyah, anti-resettlement violence is almost non-existent and the situation is still improving."

After Hussein talked about the security mission, he described the procedures of how Tarmiyah attorneys can come back and work with the IA to help facilitate relocation. He then turned the discussion over to the Sheiks.

"The Iraqi Security Forces were not the main players in this meeting – the main effort and discussion was actually led by the Sheiks," said Maj. Todd Auld, civil affairs officer, 2nd HBCT. "That was historic because a year ago, they wouldn't have been able

to have that conversation, and they wouldn't have wanted to talk to each other about it."

Because Sheiks are leaders the people of Iraq usually trust and look up to, Auld said they were the right group of people to show how Hurriyah has changed.

"They also got to go through very fundamental conflict mitigation steps that will help reconciliation and accommodation," he said. "The people are tired of the violence and want it to end."

After having the opportunity to hear Hussein speak, and following several discussions amongst themselves, the Sheiks were escorted by the Iraqi Army to Dolai, a neighborhood they were also concerned about.

The Sheiks thought the IA did not have a strong presence in Dolai and were able to see how security has improved there as well.

One of their concerns expressed was that of the Abass Mosque, which they heard was destroyed during the course of the sectarian violence. To their relief, they were able to tour the mosque, touch its walls and see that it was never disturbed.

A Soldier of the 1st Battalion, 22nd Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, stands guard outside the Al-Farooq Mosque Dec. 3 in the Hurriyah neighborhood of northwest Baghdad. The Iraqi Army battalion works in concert with the 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment in Hurriyah. ▼



“This went a long ways toward convincing them that a lot of things they heard about Hurriyah were not correct,” Breland said. “Our hopes are that they will carry what they learned to Tarmiyah so the citizens there, who are displaced, will know that a lot of the things they’ve heard about Hurriyah are no longer true and it’s safe for them to come home.”



Lt. Col.
John Vermeesch

Vanguards:

My hope today is that every Vanguard, is able to take a moment and reflect on the incredible contribution you are making every day. I also hope that during the holidays you were able to take a break from the daily routine, count your blessings and call your Family.

The Vanguards continue to work diligently each day to bring increased stability and prosperity to the Kadamiyah Security District in Northwest Baghdad. In partnership with the ISF, we continue to win the right way every day. The people of Kadamiyah, Hurriyah, Shulla, Chircuk, Fajr, Atafiya, and Salaam are experiencing a better life than they have in years. Our next big task will be assisting the Iraqis in providing security for Ashura and the upcoming Provincial Elections. I know that every Vanguard will tackle these tasks with the same exceptional courage, competence, and commitment that we have come to expect in all that we do.

The new year will not, bring any change to our primary focus of partnering with the ISF, preventing the return of sectarian violence, and preventing insurgents from regaining a foothold in our part of Baghdad.

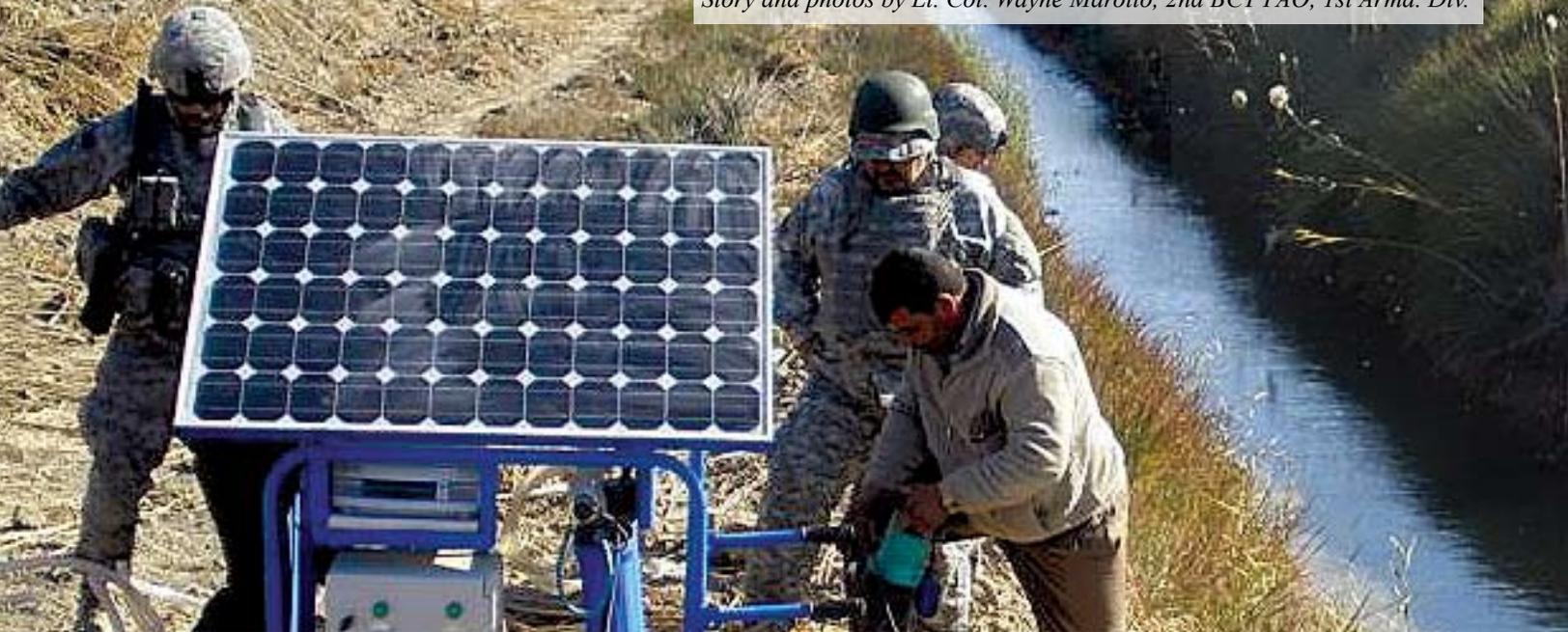
I remain exceptionally humbled to be your commander. I would like to thank all those whose tremendous outpouring of kindness, love, prayer and support during the holiday season helped to bring the holidays, and a little part of home, to each of us here in Baghdad. Thanks for everything you do each day to assist the Iraqi people, and thanks for your continued honorable service to our great Nation!

Vanguard 6

I-63rd Combined Arms Battalion "Dragon"

Dragon Soldiers bring clean water to rural villages in Mahmudiyah

Story and photos by Lt. Col. Wayne Marotto, 2nd BCT PAO, 1st Armd. Div.



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

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

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

Leaders from 1st Battalion, 63rd Combined Arms Battalion worked in partnership with the lo-

cal government determine the best sites for the two water filters. One filter was placed near an Iraqi Army checkpoint in a rural area of with a population of 200. The other filter was located in another rural area with a population of 200.

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

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



▲ 1st Lt. Robert Bowe, a native of Helena, Mont., civil military affairs officer, 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 63rd Armor Regiment, tests the canal water after being filtered by a recently installed solar powered water filtration unit in Lutifiyah Nahia, Iraq Dec. 16.

◀ Soldiers from 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 63rd Armor Regiment, and residents of Chaka 1 work to install a solar powered water filter in Chaka 1, Lutifiyah Nahia Dec. 16 in order to bring clean water to this rural village.



*Lt. Col.
Jim Bradford*



**To the Soldiers of
1-63:**

By the time this magazine is released we will have passed the 90-day mark in our deployment and so it is important to note the incredible things this battalion has completed and accomplished in such a short time in country. We have executed our assignments professionally and to standard but many of us do not realize that as a whole we have come a long way pretty quickly.

Since our arrival in Iraq we have facilitated the arrest and detention of over 30 individual, we have removed over 40 caches of weapons and demolitions off of the battlefield and we have performed countless offensive missions to ensure the safety and security to the people of Mahmudiyah. Inside the FOB, our dining facility has prepared and cooked thousands of meals, to include two fantastic holiday meals; we performed maintenance and services on hundreds of vehicles and Company E, along with our supply representatives, have ensured we all have plenty of supplies to execute our daily missions.

We have executed combat logistics patrols, counter IED patrols, compliance inspections, check point inspections, FOB protection improvements and EML runs since our arrival. There are too many missions and operations to name them all, but each of them were performed professionally and with an offensive mindset in place.

We have done this; we have allowed the people of Mahmudiyah, Yusifiyah, Rashid and Lutifiyah to go about their daily lives with security and safety while continuing to support the Iraqi Police and Army. We have spent well over 500K in the Mahmudiyah County on civil military projects to enhance the lives and essential services to the Iraqi people.

1-7 Field Artillery "Lightning"



Photo essay: Predator Plt. patrols streets of Baghdad

Photos by 1st Lt. Mark Peek, 1-7 F.A.

The "Predator" Platoon of Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 1st Battalion, 7th Field Artillery Regiment, in concert with Iraqi Security Forces, patrolled the streets of northwest Baghdad Dec. 10.

The Soldiers dismounted and walked to meet with representatives from the Iraqi Police, Iraqi Army and 'Sons of Iraq.'

1st Lt. Jonathan Bingham, leader of the "Predator" Platoon, spoke to the ISF leaders about mission readiness and staying alert while on patrol.

Staff Sgt. Eric Bowman, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 1st Bat. 7th F.A. Regt. was in constant contact through the radio with his platoon throughout the dismounted portion of the patrol.

Spc. Robert Koll, infantryman of the "Predator" Platoon, guarded the entrance to an apartment building in order to make sure no one entered or exited the building during the meeting.

After the meeting, the platoon successful convoyed back to Camp Victory, Iraq.



Lt. Col.
Robert Bailes

FIRST LIGHTNING – Guarding the Guardians!

I would first like to wish each and every First Lightning Soldier a happy New Year.

With a new year comes a new challenge for the Soldiers of the lightning Battalion, Soldiers are serving throughout the Dagger Operational Area in all capacities ensuring the mission of securing the people of northwest Baghdad, assisting the resettlement and preparing for the upcoming elections. Not for one second do I take the hard work that each and every First Lightning Soldier is doing every single day for granted.

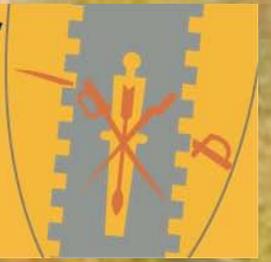
You are operating in an unfamiliar environment with professionalism and courage and your efforts are recognized by the leaders of the First Lightning Battalion. Know that you are taking part in a truly historic time for the Iraqi People and the accomplishments we achieve we share with the free people of northwest Baghdad.

By the time you are reading this we will be past the 100 day mark and this is a significant achievement in and of itself. Continue to carry on the proud legacy of the Lightning Battalion and remember that CSM Hunt and I support you in everything that you do while deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. I look forward to continued success for the Lightning Battalion.



1ST BATTALION, 7TH FIELD ARTILLERY REGIMENT

5-4 CAVALRY "LONG KNIFE"



Iron Dagger aims to improve Ghazaliyah, Shulla

Story By Spc. Dustin Roberts, 2nd HBCT PAO

As the security in Iraq improves significantly following the U.S. troop surge of early 2007, Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers from the 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team (Dagger), 1st Infantry Division, now focus on an operation that will make long-term neighborhood improvements along its western operational environment.

In the areas of Ghazaliyah and Shulla, Operation Iron Dagger, in concert with Iraqi Security Forces, will emphasize making improvements in the area, with programs such as route sanitation, essential service improvements and better communication with the local populace.

"The purpose of this operation is to execute a focused non-lethal effort with integrated programs to improve security, disrupt the enemy in the area and fill the gap between the population and the Iraqi government," said Col. Joseph Martin, commander, 2nd HBCT.

"Most people know there is a problem with electricity in Iraq," said Maj. Todd Auld, Dagger Brigade civil affairs officer. "What we're going to do in Ghazaliyah, Shulla and throughout Baghdad is what we have started in Ameriyah; putting up solar-powered lights and increasing the quality of life."

Auld said solar lights are advantageous because where there is light, businesses can stay open later and the streets can be illuminated, resulting in the economy to improve.

Troopers from the 5th Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd HBCT are patrolling the streets of Ghazaliyah daily with Iraqi Security Forces.

"The Soldiers have been engaging the local leaders in meetings and the populace when they go on patrol to get a feeling of what Ghazaliyah needs," said Lt. Col. John Richardson IV, commander, 5th Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment. "We have been working hard to make sure we know what the people need."

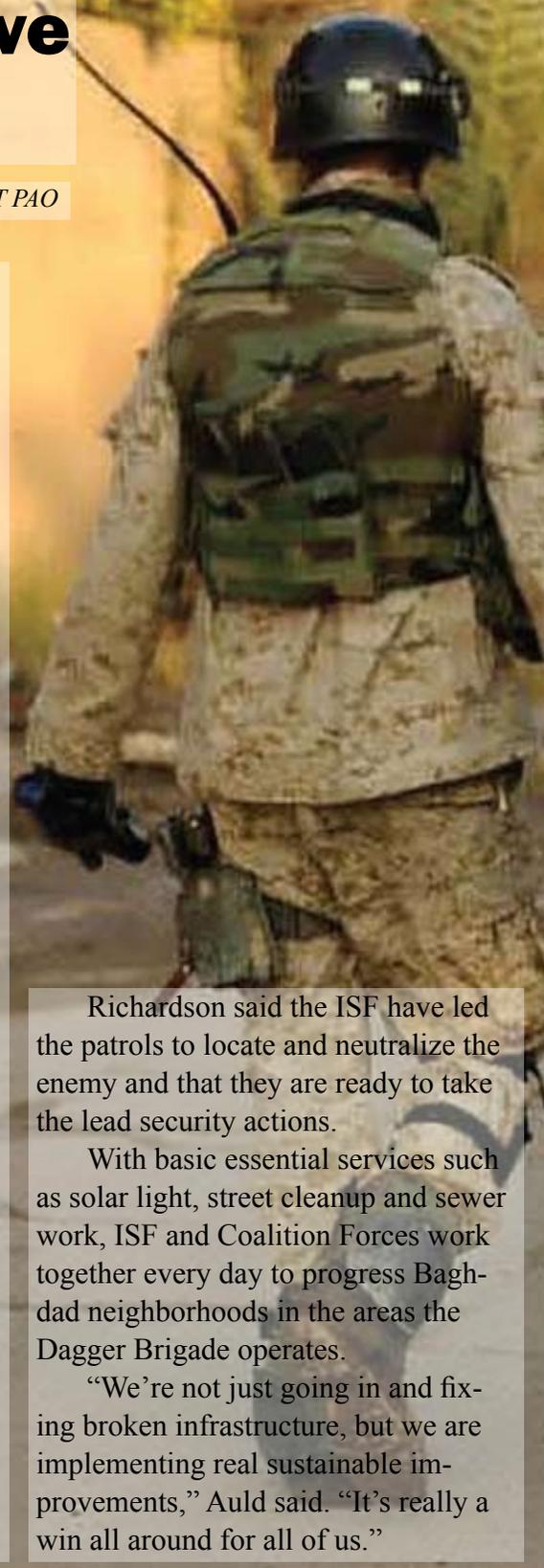
As the Iraqi government, ISF and Coalition Forces continue to improve security and life conditions throughout Baghdad, al-Qaeda in Iraq and extremist groups try to find new places to base their operations in.

"Terrorists will be driven out of Ghazaliyah and eventually they will have no place to go," Attar said. "They will be forced out of Baghdad and ultimately out of the country."

Richardson said the ISF have led the patrols to locate and neutralize the enemy and that they are ready to take the lead security actions.

With basic essential services such as solar light, street cleanup and sewer work, ISF and Coalition Forces work together every day to progress Baghdad neighborhoods in the areas the Dagger Brigade operates.

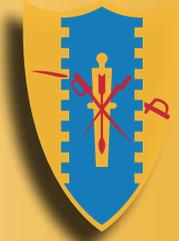
"We're not just going in and fixing broken infrastructure, but we are implementing real sustainable improvements," Auld said. "It's really a win all around for all of us."





▲ *Soldiers from the 5th Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team return from a patrol in the Ghazaliyah district of northwest Baghdad. Coalition Forces and Iraqi Security Forces show their presence daily to ensure the safety and security of the local neighborhoods. (Photo by Sgt. Brian Tierce, 2nd HBCT PAO)*

◀ *Iraqi Army Sgt. Hidar helps an Iraqi child down the street to her home in Ghazaliyah Dec. 1. (Photo by Senior Airman Daniel Owen, Joint Combat Camera, MNC-I)*



Lt. Col.
John B. Richardson IV
From the SCO to the Soldiers:

Troopers, let me begin by saying EXCELLENT job thus far. Whether your job is patrolling, guarding the JSSs, supplying the Squadron, or executing support and administrative functions you are all doing it well and the mission is getting accomplished.

Our mission is to help the Iraqi Security forces secure the population of Ghaziliyah in order to emplace social institutions and help to grow the economy and stability of the communities. The Security Agreement is now in full effect and as we patrol the streets with our Iraqi counter-parts in the lead. From this perspective we can see how conditions truly are and work with local leaders to improve and sustain the many good things already happening here. As you know, we had six of our Troopers injured in two separate RKG-3 attacks. The CSM and I visited them in the hospital. They are in high spirits. I would ask that you keep them and their families in your prayers as they face the daunting road to recovery.

Keep your spirits up. Christmas was a merry day with all sorts of joys and goodies shared among us. I enjoyed coming to each JSS and seeing you all. You all deserve to have the happiest and brightest of New Year's. I wish the same for your families and friends at home. Please continue to call and write to those loved ones. They miss you and need to hear from you, just as you do from them.

Let us ring in the New Year with as much vigor and enthusiasm as we left the old one. HOOAH!

5TH SQUADRON, 4TH CAVALRY REGIMENT

299th Brigade Support Battalion

299TH BSB

"LifeLine"

SERVE

Lifeline lights candles, lifts spirits on Christmas Eve

Story and Photos by Spc. Dustin Roberts, 2HBCT PAO

Soldiers of the 299th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team celebrated the Christmas season thousands of miles from home, but they celebrated with smiles on their faces.

In a candlelight service Dec. 24, the LifeLine Battalion sang songs of worship in unison and read verses from the Bible that told of Jesus Christ's birth.

"I enjoyed the music and getting the chance to play," said Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Briscoe, 299th BSB, who played the guitar during the music portion of the service. "I also really enjoyed the chaplain's sermon; it was a lot of fun."

Also on Christmas Eve, Command Sgt. Maj. Julia Kelly and other leaders in the battalion delivered stockings full of goodies to LifeLine Soldiers in Operation "Sugar Plum."

"We used gators to move six boxes full of stockings and we sang 'Jingle Bells' before we delivered the stockings," said Kelly. "I also gave every Soldier a hug."

The battalion's Support Operations Office threw a party as well.

The Soldiers ate food brought from the dining facility and exchanged gifts through the "Secret Santa" method, in which Soldiers drew other Soldier's names from a hat and bought them a Christmas gift.

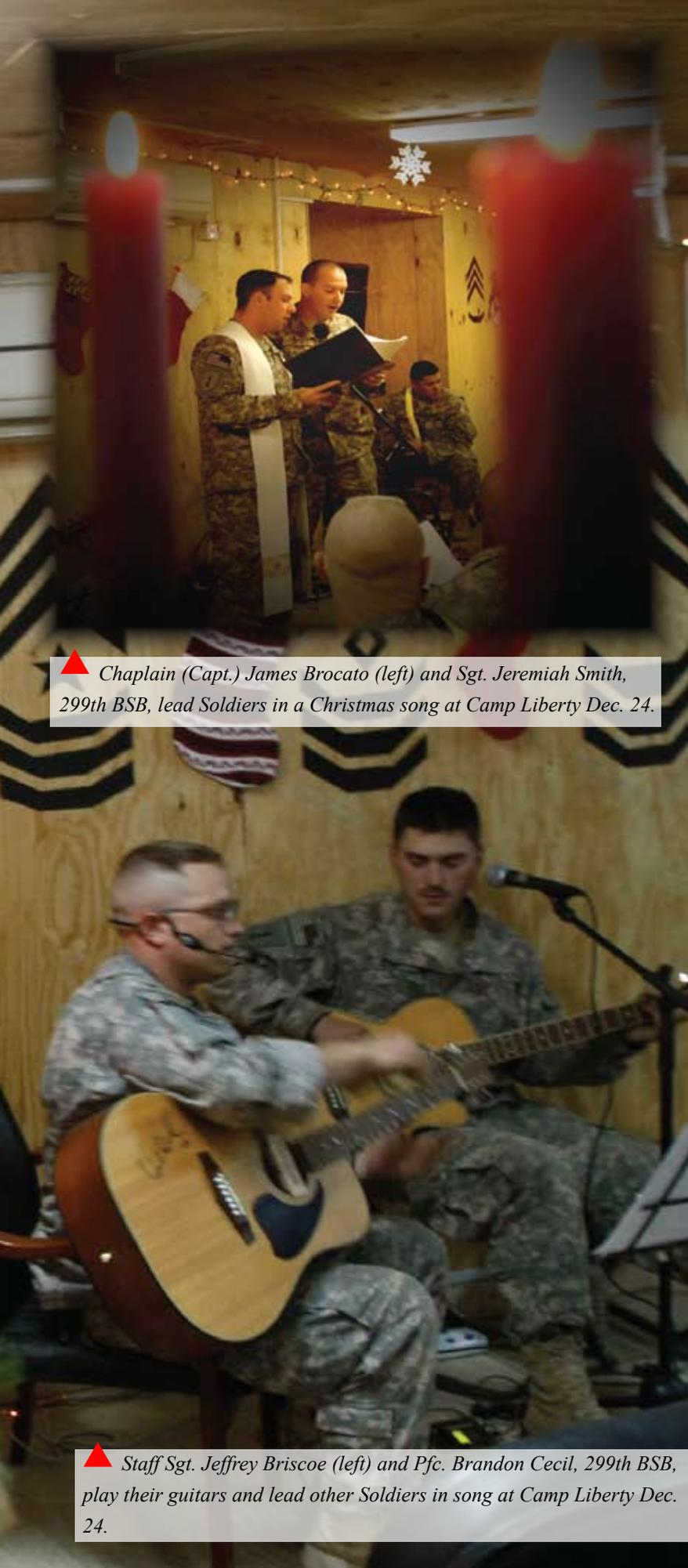
After the Soldiers opened their gifts they found out who bought their present.

The celebration ended with the famous Latino Christmas song, "Feliz Navidad," cheers and a round of applause.

"It was a chance to get together as a group and try to enjoy Christmas," said Briscoe. "Since we are away from our families in the States, it helped give us a little piece of home."



1st Sgt. Robert Hobson, Company B, 299th BSB, prepares to light the smaller candles the Soldiers are holding in the battalion's candlelight service at Camp Liberty Dec. 24.



▲ *Chaplain (Capt.) James Brocato (left) and Sgt. Jeremiah Smith, 299th BSB, lead Soldiers in a Christmas song at Camp Liberty Dec. 24.*



*Lt. Col.
Brian Tempest*

**To all 299th BSB
Soldiers:**

As the Battalion Commander of the 299th Brigade Support Battalion, I must say that I am thoroughly pleased with our overall professionalism, work ethic, and willingness to adapt as we continue to grow as an organization. Over an 18 month period, we have stood up the Battalion, trained to standard, and prepared ourselves to provide logistical support to our Brigade in a theater of operations. With the implementation of the Security Agreement, our mission will remain the same. We will continue to provide world class logistical support for the 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team.

I challenge all leaders and Soldiers in the 299th BSB to continue to maintain and set the standards that have made us a successful organization. I ask that all leaders continue to mentor and train our young Soldiers so that they may build the confidence to excel and become the leaders of tomorrow. I ask that all Soldiers continue to grow and learn from their leaders; taking their knowledge and applying it to our everyday operations.

I realize that the transition from garrison to a war zone environment has been difficult for some to adjust to. I want to let everyone know that we are doing an exceptional job and that I am extremely proud of each and every member of our 299th family. Continue to set and enforce the standards, which develop the good habits of the organization and leads to the good order and discipline of the unit, as we contribute to the history of the 299th Brigade Support Battalion. On Call To Serve.



299TH BRIGADE SUPPORT BATTALION

▲ *Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Briscoe (left) and Pfc. Brandon Cecil, 299th BSB, play their guitars and lead other Soldiers in song at Camp Liberty Dec. 24.*

2-1 BRIGADE SPECIAL TROOPS BATTALION

“GRIFFIN”

‘TITANS’ KEEP DAGGER BRIGADE TALKING

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Rachael Cargill, 2-1 STB

Signal Soldiers from Company B, Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team have made it possible for the Dagger Brigade to be successful while fighting the war on terror.

The signal platoon has come a long way from building a new team, to getting hands-on training at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif., and now actually fighting the war in Iraq.

The entire platoon is in charge of setting up, monitoring and providing all communications for the 2nd HBCT on Camp Liberty, not to mention helping and monitoring communications for other remote locations.

“Because of hands-on training the Soldiers were prepared to do their job in Iraq. Our section was trained in setting up the Joint Network Node before

we got to Iraq,” said Sgt. John Vozzelli, JNN team leader, 2-1 STB. “We are learning as we go and are becoming more and more familiar with this equipment as the deployment goes on.”

The JNN team, after conducting a quick relief in place with their 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) counterparts, is currently responsible for maintaining 24 hour network operations and for troubleshooting any problems that others JNNs and command post nodes may have with their equipment.

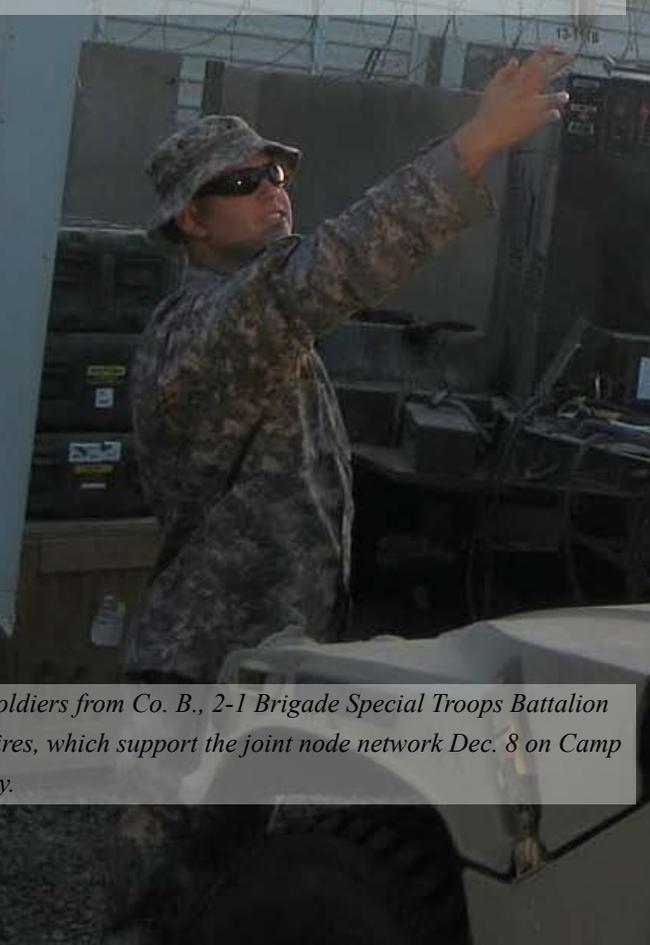
“The JNN Operations section ensures communications are being provided for the brigade tactical operation center and also allows communications to flow within Camp Liberty as well as on other Forward Operation Bases,” said 2nd Lt. Auguste Badiel, JNN platoon leader, 2-1 STB. “The JNN team is supported by a high capacity line of sight, direct line of sight and satellite transportable terminal team.”

Badiel also added that without the signal teams, the brigade would not be able to operate effectively because there would be no phones, no radio communication, and no internet access, which is the base of most communication for today’s military.

“To make things more understandable our mission is to provide and manage communications and information systems support for the command and control of combined arms forces,” said Badiel.

Signal support includes network operations, information assurance, information dissemination management, network management and management of the electromagnetic spectrum.

“Our support encompasses all aspects of installing, operating, and maintaining information networks to include communications links, and other components of local and wide area networks. We also plan, install, operate, and maintain voice and data



▲ Soldiers from Co. B., 2-1 Brigade Special Troops Battalion run wires, which support the joint node network Dec. 8 on Camp Liberty.



▲ Signal Soldiers serving with Co. B., 2-1 Brigade Special Troops Battalion work in the signal operations center Dec. 8 on Camp Liberty.

communications networks that employ single and multi-channel satellite, switching, messaging, videoconferencing, and other related systems,” said Badiel.

All these systems integrate tactical, strategic and sustaining base communications, information processing and management systems into seamless global information network that supports the ‘Dagger’ Brigade.



Lt. Col.

David S. Imhof

**Happy New Year
Griffins!**

As we begin 2009, I want to extend a heartfelt Thank You to every Soldier in our formation. Your efforts and mission focus are truly making a difference each and every day.

With the implementation of the Security Agreement, Iraqi Provincial elections, SOI monthly payments, and several RIP/TOAs at the battalion and division level, the first couple of months in 2009 will be filled with many changes. Given these changes, we all need to continue to maintain the same focus and vigilance that you have exhibited in the first 90 days in Iraq. I challenge every Soldier to maintain the mission focused attitude and discipline that have been the hallmark of the Griffin battalion.

We will continue to support our Iraqi partners in the establishment of sustainable security, and we will continue to maximize opportunities to advise and support our Iraqi Security Force partners by conducting EOD and route clearance partnerships. The training opportunities and combined patrols from these efforts will make every Soldier better as each Soldier, U.S. and Iraqi, gain greater tactical and technical proficiency in their specific mission areas while sharing effective Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures and lessons learned.

I can not emphasize enough how establishing sustainable security by training with our Iraqi partners and conducting effective combined patrols will make 2009 a highly successful year.

There will be challenges in the coming year, but I know through your hard work and efforts, 2009 will be even greater than 2008. **GRIFFINS! POINT OF THE DAGGER!**



4th Squadron 10th Cavalry "Blackjack"



Community rejoices as sports club reopens

Brilliant smiles and celebration broke out in Baghdad's Hai Al-Adel community as its newly renovated sports club reopened to the public Dec. 3.

A few months ago, the Al-Adel Sports Club was an old run-down building with only one functional weight room. Confronted by the dilapidated facility, Coalition Forces and local contractors decided it to be a worthy endeavor of the Commanders Emergency Relief Fund and struck up a deal to reconstruct the gym.

"The Al-Adel Sports club was a pretty run down building, it had holes in the walls, in the ceilings, all the glass was in pretty bad shape and the only thing in use was the weight room," said Capt. Kelly Lanphere, a native of Santa Fe N.M., 4th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, operationally attached to 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team.

"It just needed a lot of stuff, in fact, more than we could provide. We chose to focus on the main building which ended up costing \$117,600 of CERP funds."

The unsullied building will provide an opportunity of an active lifestyle through an array of sports training offered. The gym will

Story and photos by Sgt. Whitney Houston, MND-B PAO

also engage youth in meaningful activities, keeping them aloof of wayward influences that exist throughout Baghdad.

"Basketball, volleyball, handball, indoor and outdoor soccer, taekwondo, weight training and body building will be available for youth and adults," said Lanphere. "The idea behind these kinds of projects is to give them (the youth) something else to do, something to look forward to, occupy their time and promote a healthy lifestyle. They'll learn some key things that will help them stay away from crime."

As the crime rate has reduced significantly throughout Baghdad the people have gained a sense of normalcy and general happiness allowing these types of community improved contracts to be set in motion.

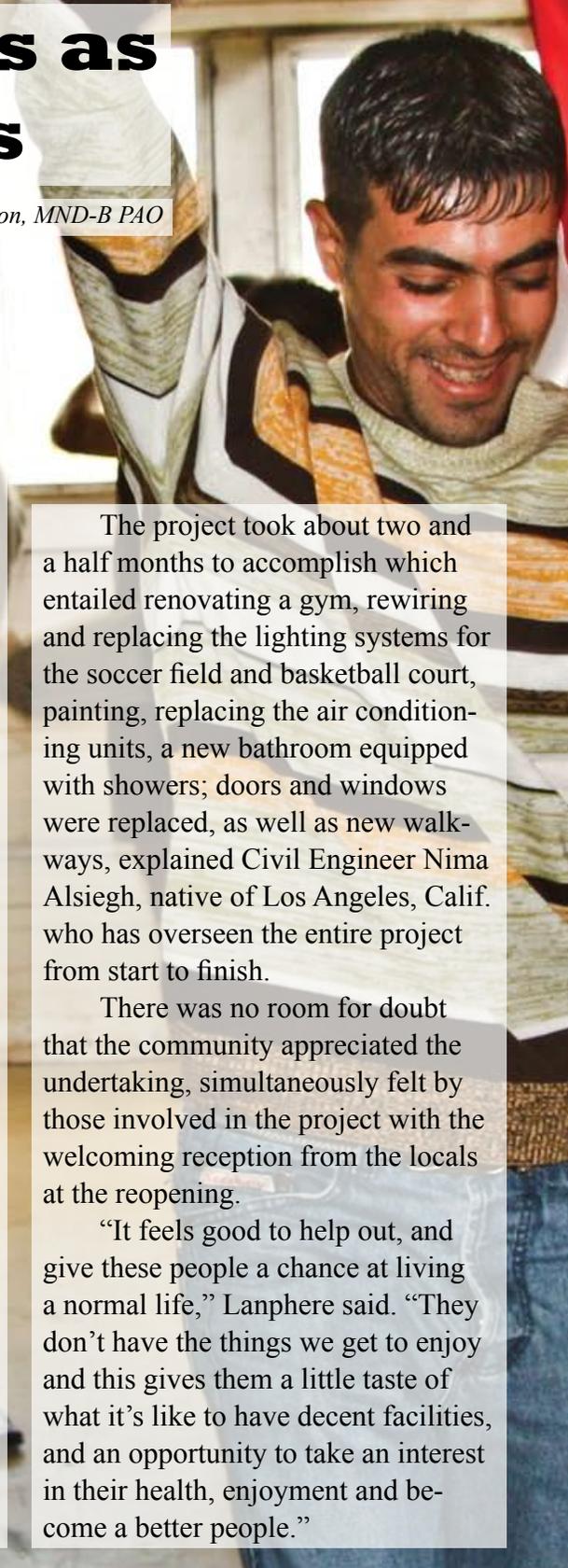
"Because of the improvement in security we were able to establish contracts and see these projects through," said overseer and local contractor Samir Sabar.

"When the people heard about it, it made them very excited because the building was old and run down, and they were very happy to know they were going to get a new building."

The project took about two and a half months to accomplish which entailed renovating a gym, rewiring and replacing the lighting systems for the soccer field and basketball court, painting, replacing the air conditioning units, a new bathroom equipped with showers; doors and windows were replaced, as well as new walkways, explained Civil Engineer Nima Alsiegh, native of Los Angeles, Calif. who has overseen the entire project from start to finish.

There was no room for doubt that the community appreciated the undertaking, simultaneously felt by those involved in the project with the welcoming reception from the locals at the reopening.

"It feels good to help out, and give these people a chance at living a normal life," Lanphere said. "They don't have the things we get to enjoy and this gives them a little taste of what it's like to have decent facilities, and an opportunity to take an interest in their health, enjoyment and become a better people."





▲ *Taekwondo students practice their moves in front of their sensei at the Al-Adel Sports Club Dec. 3. The practice preceded the ceremony to reopen its doors to the public.*

▲ *Local nationals from the Hai Al-Adel community of Baghdad dance in celebration Dec. 3 for their newly reopened sports club after lying for years in dilapidation.*



*Lt. Col.
Monty Willoughby*

Troopers of Blackjack:

With the passing of 2008 the New Year brings the Blackjack Squadron one step closer to mission accomplishment. The New Year also brings new hope for the Iraqi people as Coalition Forces transfer more responsibility for security to the Iraqi Security Forces and implement the conditions of the security agreement. This hope has been provided by the dedication, hard work and sacrifices of the Soldiers. In the future this hope will be maintained by the ISF we have partnered with throughout our deployment.

Fourteen months ago the squadron arrived in Kuwait; through RIP with 1-5 CAV, expansion of battle space with 1-64 AR, transition to Iraqi Army control, the Son's of Iraq program, and thousands of combat patrols; the Soldiers of this Cavalry Squadron are proud of their accomplishments. Our Soldiers demonstrated how a professional, flexible, well trained and resilient organization can adapt to every situation and accomplish any mission.

As the squadron prepares for redeployment we remain focused on the task at hand; continuing to partner with the ISF, defeating AQI, IP primacy, pushing improvements in economics and improving governance. The Soldiers are determined to finish strong. I am proud of what our Soldiers have accomplished.

READY AND FORWARD

4TH SQUADRON, 10TH CAVALRY REGIMENT

4-42 Field Artillery

Park celebration draws large crowd

More than 1.2 million Iraqi citizens passed through the gates of Zawra Park in the Karkh district of northwest Baghdad as they gathered with friends and family to celebrate the Eid al-Adha Dec. 8-11. This is a time of year when many families come together; and this year, those families chose to spend time together by visiting the park or touring the Baghdad Zoo to take in many of the recently opened exhibits.

Dr. Adel Salman Mosa, the zoo's director, expressed his happiness and excitement over the size of the crowds during the past week.

"During the Eid celebration in Zawra Zoo, the new reptile exhibit was what most people were interested in seeing," said Adel. "Everyone loved the newly added crocodiles, chimpanzees, snakes and tortoise exhibits."

According to several reports broadcast on local media outlets, the crowds in Zawra park were some of the largest ever seen for the Eid celebration.

"The task to ensure that the Iraqi experience in the park and zoo was a safe one required the combined planning and execution efforts of numerous agencies," said Capt. Michael Roscoe, Iraqi Security Forces coordinator, 4th Battalion, 42nd Field Artillery Regiment, operationally attached to the 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team. "Col. Geaber Nema Shnawa, the Zawra Park security director, was just one of several leading figures in this critical effort."

Roscoe said the leaders of the 54th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, several local Iraqi Police stations and the Zawra Park's 160 facilities protection service officers, all contributed to this highly successful venture.

As the crowds grew with each passing day, each of the security agencies ensured their people were ready to support the task at hand and adjusted focus as necessary.

In addition to the work on the part of the ISF, Coalition Forces provided security enablers to support the daily effort of securing the local populace.

"It was checking and searching people one by one

Story and photos by Sgt. Brian Tierce, 2nd HBCT PAO

that created such a safe environment during the Eid celebration," said Geaber. "Also, my guards were able to pass out gifts and candy to children, who came to the event, and if they needed a ride home, we were able to provide them with taxi fare."

Military working dog teams and patrols from 4th Bn., 42nd FA Regt., swept the main entry points to the park in the early dawn hours of each morning to ensure the areas were free of explosives.

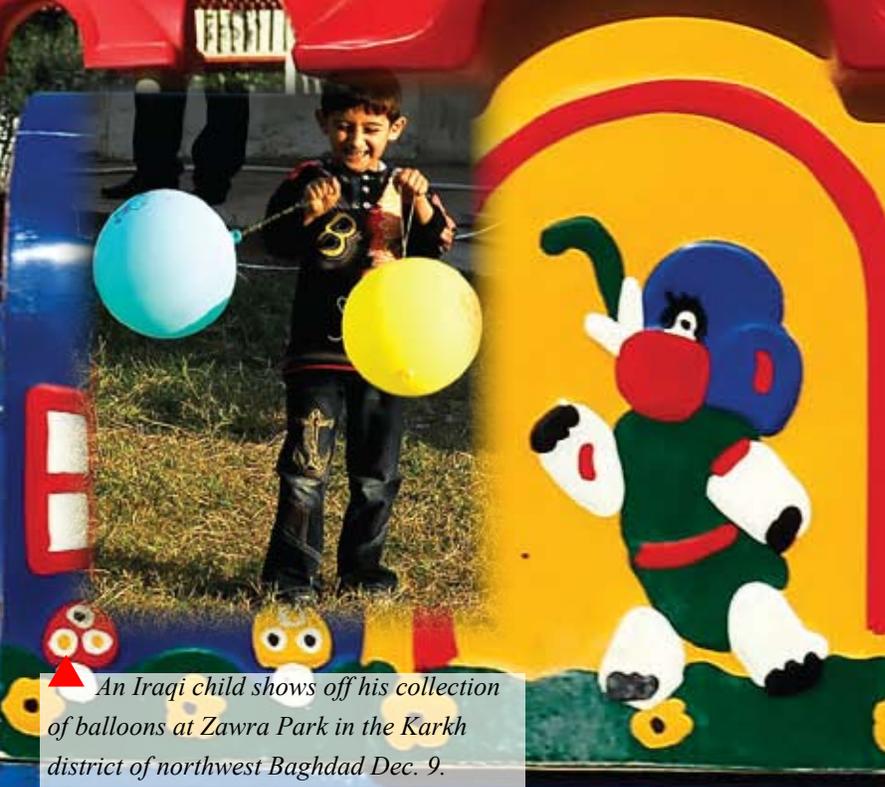
"We were happy to be clearing Zawra Park and doing our job," said Staff Sgt. Matthew McCummins, a military dog handler. "We were happy to be able to provide for a safe and successful celebration in the park."

The unit also had a quick reaction force on call daily to support the ISF in the event of an attack. Several MND-B Military Transition Teams and Police Transition Teams worked in close coordination with their Iraqi counterparts to ensure they had the latest intelligence or other force multipliers they might need to successfully complete the mission.

"The five-day Eid celebration in the park marks the third in a series of highly successful events hosted in Zawra Park in the past four months," said Maj. Ryan Remley, executive officer, 4th Bn. 42nd FA Regt.

Almost two million Iraqis visited the Park as part of the post-Ramadan celebration in late September, while in mid-November, local citizens gathered in the park to celebrate "Baghdad Days" and enjoyed a free concert.

"Each of these gatherings has not had a single reportable incident and demonstrates the capabilities of the Iraqi Security Forces to secure these large-scale events," said Remley. "These highly successful events are just one more sign that normalcy is returning to the capital city."



▲ *An Iraqi child shows off his collection of balloons at Zawra Park in the Karkh district of northwest Baghdad Dec. 9.*



▲ *Iraqi children play on playground equipment at Baghdad's Zawra Park in the Karkh district of northwest Baghdad Dec. 9. An estimated 1.2 million people visited Zawra Park during the Eid al-Adha and the security efforts for the event were led by Iraqi Security Forces.*



*Lt. Col.
Robert Kirby*

**Straight Arrow
Soldiers:**

We passed the holiday season in Baghdad as Soldiers traditionally do when deployed: we took some time off from the pace of operations to enjoy special meals, relax, and enjoy the camaraderie of our fellow Soldiers. We also took time to think about the meaning of the season. For some, this was the first time deployed for the holidays; for others, this was not new. While we would rather have spent the time with our Families and friends, they were with us in spirit. The battalion continues its great work in maintaining the security and stability within our area of Baghdad. Working closely with our Iraqi partners each day, we protect the Iraqi people from those who want to undo the successes we have achieved together.

While we have had many successes, work still remains. There will be elections, transitions, and changes in the way we operate. We must remain vigilant in our duties and responsibilities. In partnership with our Iraqi counterparts, we will face these challenges with the same determination and skill that has made us successful so far.

You have all done a great job – both those deployed and those at home – under very demanding conditions. As your Battalion Commander, I cannot be more proud of you and your performance thus far. Each day you impress me with your positive attitudes and achievements. Keep up the great work and thanks for all efforts.

I wish all Soldiers, their Families and friends, best wishes for the New Year. STRAIGHT ARROWS!

4th BATTALION, 42nd FIELD ARTILLERY REGIMENT

Christmas in Baghdad



▲ Soldiers of the 299th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team pose in their motor pool at Camp Liberty, Iraq Dec. 24. Command Sgt. Maj. Julia Kelly and other leaders in the battalion delivered stockings full of goodies to LifeLine Soldiers in Operation "Sugar Plum." (Photo courtesy of 299th BSB)



Capt. Joseph Witmer and 1st Sgt. Edward Barfield, Battery A, 1-7 FA, serve Soldiers of Battery A Christmas Dinner at their JSS Dec. 25.

▼ (Photo by 1st Lt. Mark Peek, 1-7 FA)



◀ Command Sgt. Maj. Julia Kelly, the senior enlisted leader in the 299th Brigade Support Battalion, gives a 299th BSB Soldier a hug Dec. 24. (Photo courtesy of 299th BSB)



▶ Spc. Benny Warren, a native of Painesville, Ohio, Battery A, 1st Battalion, 7th Field Artillery Regiment, poses next to a Christmas Tree at his JSS Dec. 25. (Photo by 1st Lt. Mark Peek, 1-7 FA)



Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration training reaches out to communities

Story and Photo by Spc. Dustin Roberts, 2HBCT PAO

In a Dec. 23 training event in the Hurriyah neighborhood of the Kadamiya district of northwest Baghdad, local contractors, in partnership with Coalition Forces, showed how their idea to train citizens in generator and heavy equipment repair is preparing northwest Baghdad for the future.

The training, part of a special funding project called Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration, which focuses on two separate training classes directed towards military-aged males, released detainees and the Iraqi Security Forces-backed 'Sons of Iraq' in the repair of generators and heavy equipment, such as dump trucks, sewage pump trucks and trash-pickup trucks.

The class in Hurriyah, which started in August, is a four-month-long generator class with 10 students.

"Each day they work from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., six days of the week. They train in the classroom from 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. After that, the students go outside to make treatment on the generators for hands-on training," said Basheer Ghalib Abdul-Kadom, general manager and engineer for the FIAFI company, the Iraqi contracted company that trains the students. "The generators are supposed to be broken, and the students spend time repairing them."

A the end of each training period, the students receive a certificate of achievement, which gives them the credentials they need to find work in northwest Baghdad.

"We contract out Iraqi contractors, and we try to provide training that is convenient for the location," said

1st Lt. Justin Casey, the contacting officer representative from the 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team. "Baghdad needs a lot of electricity; therefore, it needs a lot of generators. If we can train generator repairmen then that will help the community."

When the training is completed, more than 70 generators will be donated to northwest Baghdad and about 120 trained generator experts will be ready for jobs.

During the four-month block, the trainees are paid \$300 a month, but are subtracted \$10 for each day of class they miss.

The proper tools and equipment used in the training, to include protective eyewear, hard hats, shoes, ratchets and screwdrivers, are provided for the workers; if they graduate, they get to keep the equipment.

"There are even some few spare parts for the generators, so when the students need some new spare parts for generator repair, they will use them and make the necessary adjustments to fix them," said Abdul-Kadom. "When the students finish the course, they get to take their own set of tools with them to keep."

Although they get the proper training they need for job opportunity, Abdul-Kadom said it doesn't guarantee the trainees a job.

"As you know, we want them to work in the future," he said. "We cannot promise them that we can give them a job after the training; if we have another job open, then we will prefer our students because we trained them."

Many local citizens have been recruited from the 2nd HBCT subordinate units to be trained in both the generator and heavy equipment training.

"DDR is an opportunity to provide employment for young, unemployed males," said Col. Gerald Gibbons, embedded provisional reconstruction team, 2nd HBCT. "They get to appreciate learning a marketable skill, and when they can be employed, it helps society in general."

◀ *Staff Sgt. Brandon Ferguson, personal security detachment, 2nd HBCT, stands at the Ameriyah Public Works Substation Dec. 21. In the background are heavy equipment vehicles used to provide essential services to the citizens of northwest Baghdad.*

SAFETY ZONE

The importance of vehicle, living quarters fire safety

By Thomas McMurray, 2HBCT tactical safety specialist

Recently we have experienced fires in vehicles (primarily MRAPs), in living quarters and work areas. Some of the fires have happened while no one was in them.

For vehicles, during your PMCS, inspect all ground cables and wires for excessive wear and rub marks, specifically cables and wires that are located in or near the battery boxes. MRAP fires have been experienced theater-wide and are normally started in the battery boxes.

Ensure you have a serviceable fire extinguisher on hand and that it/they are fully charged. (The on-board fire suppression system will not put a fire that starts in the battery box due to the lack of a nozzle in that area of the vehicle.) TACOM is currently looking into the fire instances to determine the cause and provide proper guidance.

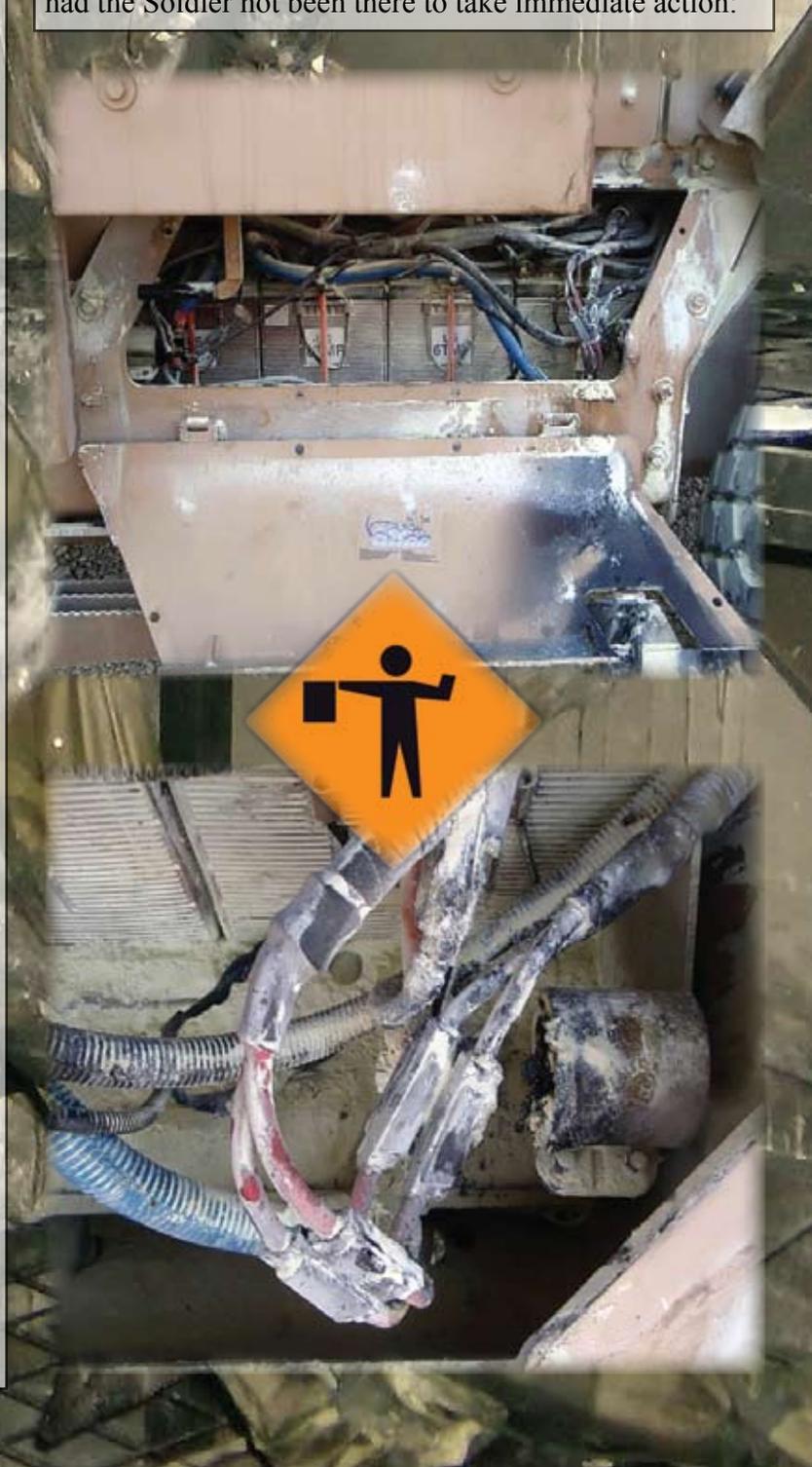
In our living quarters and office areas, pay attention to the amount of items you have plugged into the same outlet. Remember that all appliances that have a heat source or a motor require more electricity. These items should have a dedicated outlet when being used. Normally the electrical outlets in this area are rated for 12 amps. Look at the amp requirements on your appliances, add the numbers and ensure you don't exceed the amp requirement for that outlet.

Fires start when circuits are overloaded due to the electrical demand and this could happen while you're at work. As a prevention method, occasionally, check your cords and power strips to see if they are hot or warm. If this is the case, unplug one of the items from the outlet. Never leave your heater or appliances on while you're not in your room.

Also, if you observe smoke in your room or someone else's room, don't hesitate to warn others; take immediate action. Ensure you are familiar with the fire extinguisher in your room and office areas.

Never remove the battery from your smoke detector unless you are replacing it. Often Soldiers get annoyed with their smoke detector because it keeps going off for no apparent reason; that is normally an alert to

inform you that it needs a new battery. If it is actually broken, have it replaced. You and your equipment are an important part of this organization. The results of this MRAP fire could have been a lot worse had the Soldier not been there to take immediate action:



DIMHRS: the new pay- personnel system

A new integrated pay and personnel system for Soldiers and Airmen is on track for launching by Spring-2009, defense officials said.

The Defense Integrated Military Human Resources System is a Web-based system designed to integrate pay and personnel systems for the Army and Air Force, with a goal of helping prevent the kind of pay problems that have cropped up in the 1991 Persian Gulf War and in the current conflicts, both for active-duty personnel and reservists.

Among other things, the system, in development for about a decade, will be accessible to anyone with a computer that is compatible with the Defense Department's new Common Access Card, which will eliminate the need for a service member to be physically located near a personnel office, defense officials said.

"It's conceivable today that if you're an airman in an Army task force, you might have to

Courtesy of Army Times

get in a Humvee and travel 30 of 40 kilometers to find a personnel service unit to support you," said Army Maj. Gen. Carlos "Butch" Pair, defense business systems acquisition executive for the Pentagon's Business Transformation Agency. "Under DIMHRS, that won't happen."

Soldiers and Airmen will be able to view their personnel records and make changes as necessary, officials said.

According to an article by the Pentagon's internal American Forces Information Service, Army and Air Force commands also will be able to use DIMHRS to straighten out issues that troops can't deal with themselves.

The system is part of a "revolution" in how the military is approaching pay and personnel issues, Pair said. "It's really more than an acronym; it's a solution for the future," he said.

DIMHRS

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