

Crossed Sabers

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What's Inside



Former Sons of Iraq assume new role in their country's future, Pg. 6



Iraqis lead Operation Winged Lion II, Pg. 11



Panther training academy prepares ISF personnel to protect, maintain security, Pg. 14



Educational opportunities abound for deployed 1st Cav Soldiers, Pg. 21



Soldiers 'Seeking Solace' with band in Iraq, Pg. 24

Healing the wounds of war: Operation Proper Exit warriors visit MND-B



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jon Cupp, MND-B PAO

Command Sgt. Maj. Rory Malloy (right), senior enlisted advisor for 1st Cavalry Division and Multi-National Division-Baghdad, and Maj. Gen. Daniel P. Bolger (third from left), commanding general, 1st Cav. Div. and MND-B, chat with Soldiers from the Operation Proper Exit pilot program at Camp Liberty, Iraq June 27. The program allows wounded Soldiers the chance to re-visit the combat zone, find closure and spread a message of hope to Soldiers working in units throughout Iraq and recently wounded troops at Combat Support Hospitals.

Story by Sgt. 1st Class Jon Cupp
MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – In past wars, wounded Soldiers, especially those recovering from severe injuries like amputated limbs, were never afforded the opportunity to re-visit the locations where they had been injured or the hospitals in theater where they had been treated when the conflict they served in was still taking place. This may soon be changing thanks to improved security.

For one of the first times in U.S. military history, a new pilot program

dubbed "Operation Proper Exit" has been giving a few of those warriors the opportunity to fly from the U.S. back to their former theater of operations with the purpose of helping them ease the emotional wounds of war while also spreading a message of hope to their fellow Soldiers.

With this as their goal, six Operation Proper Exit troops took the opportunity to meet with military service members and civilians who work for the 1st Cavalry Division and Multi-National Division – Baghdad, during a June 27 visit to Camp Liberty, Iraq.

While at the MND-B headquarters, the

pilot program participants took photos with Maj. Gen. Daniel P. Bolger, commanding general for 1st Cavalry Division and Multi-National Division-Baghdad and Command Sgt. Maj. Rory Malloy, senior enlisted advisor, 1st Cav. Div., MND-B, and spoke with MND-B Soldiers about their experiences.

During an operations and intelligence briefing from Multi-National Division-Baghdad's senior leadership, the Operation Proper Exit troops said they were astounded by the security gains that have been made in Iraq since they were last in country.

"It's a complete 180 degrees from what we've seen before, it's amazing," said Goldsboro, N.C. native, Sgt. Christopher Burrell, a military working dog handler with the 108th Military Police Company, 16th MP Brigade out of Fort Bragg, N.C. "After seeing that [Joint Security Station] Sadr City had been turned over to the ISF, I was dumfounded. It used to be a much rougher area, but this is just a testament to what the Coalition has done together with the Iraqi Security Forces."

"When we see this, we know that our sacrifices didn't go in vain. It's sad that we lost our limbs, but everything we did here didn't go to waste because you're seeing improvements and less violence every day," said Clarksville, Ark. native, Sgt. Marco Robledo, who lost an arm and leg when his truck was hit by an improvised explosive device in May 2007. "Being here and seeing it for ourselves, it's really good to be here this time."

After the brief, Command Sgt. Maj. Malloy presented the guests with the Order of the Combat Spur, an honor

See ~ **WARRIORS** Pg. 3

National Guard unit formed by Benjamin Franklin still defends freedom

Story by Sgt. Jon Soles
MND-B PAO

TAJI, Iraq – As America celebrated its 233rd birthday this past week, a Pennsylvania National Guard unit that predates the American Revolution, continued its mission of defending freedom with combat operations here in Iraq.

The 1st Battalion, 111th Infantry Regiment is the original unit of the Pennsylvania National Guard and is one of the oldest

units in the Army. The unit, which was founded by Benjamin Franklin, first saw action in the French and Indian War and today is a part of the 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 28th Infantry Division, deployed to Camp Taji, Iraq, a base camp north of Baghdad.

"We're the founding unit in the Pennsylvania National Guard," said Lt. Col. Mark O'Hanlon, commander of the 1st Bn., 111th Inf. Regt. "We're very proud of our lineage. We have been around since 1747 before there was a country."

In the mid-18th Century, Pennsylvania was a British colony, but was still subject

to threats from the French privateers and pirates.

"Ben Franklin understood there was a need for a mechanism to defend the colony," said O'Hanlon, of Wallingford, Pa. "He conceived of an association that would come together to defend the city in times of crisis."

Franklin organized fighting men under the auspices of a firefighting brigade, because the Quakers who controlled Pennsylvania at the time were pacifists opposed to militias. At the time, firefighters were called associators and the unit still uses the same call sign today, accord-

See ~ **FREEDOM** Pg. 3

Prayers from Baghdad

By Chap. (Lt. Col.) Barb Sherer, MND-B Chaplain

Prayer of the G1

Personnel. It's a job that requires great attention to detail, and is rarely appreciated for the important role it plays to the mission. But you try keeping Soldiers ready to fight without pay, leave, awards, promotions, morale support, and most of all, mail! With my greatest appreciation for all they do, this prayer is for the G1.

Lord, you had the right idea
When you handed down commandments to
Moses.
We humans are a troublesome lot,
And we need Your guidance to get thru the
day.
So, could you maybe consider
Adding a few more to those holy tablets?
I have a few suggestions,
if you are willing to listen....

THOU SHALL:

- Announce promotion board results in a timely manner
- Use spell check on all award recommendations
- Track how many contractors we really have

THOU SHALT NOT:

- Submit late OERs or NCOERs
- Mess with the Field Grade Slate
- Cancel the USO Coaches tour
- Impede the flow of mail to soldiers

It's not about me, Lord,
Or even my commander...
It's about taking care of Soldiers,

The most worthy mission of all.
Therefore,
Just as you feed the birds of the air,
And clothe the grass of the field,
Help me care for your servants in uniform
And provide for all their needs.

Amen



Questions, comments, story ideas? Contact the Crossed Sabers at nicholas.conner@mnd-b.army.mil. The Crossed Sabers is an authorized publication for members of the U.S. Army. Contents of the Crossed Sabers are not necessarily official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, Department of Defense, Department of the Army or the 1st Cavalry Division. All editorial content of the Crossed Sabers is prepared, edited, provided and approved by the 1st Cavalry Division Public Affairs Office.

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WARRIORS ~ From Pg. 1

bestowed upon cavalry troops or those attached to cavalry units and then took the wounded warriors on a tour of MND-B headquarters.

Once the tour was complete, the Operation Proper Exit troops sat down to lunch with MND-B Soldiers at the Pegasus dining facility.

The Laurel, Md.-based Troops First Foundation, a non-profit organization that pursues projects to benefit troops who have served or are serving in the combat zone, partnered with the United Service Organization to sponsor the visit, much of the funding for which came from corporations and private donations.

“The idea for this trip came from wounded warriors and the one constant you hear from them is ‘I want to go back,’” said Richard Kell, executive director for Troops First who helped organize Operation Proper Exit. “They know that their unit may no longer be here, but they still want to come back.”

According to Kell, the name for the program comes from the fact that when the wounded Soldiers left the combat zone, they left feeling a sense that they had left their unit behind and that they had left something unfinished. The program, in essence, gives the troops a sense of closure,



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jon Cupp, MND-B PAO

Command Sgt. Maj. Rory Malloy (left), senior enlisted advisor, 1st Cavalry Division and Multi-National Division-Baghdad, presents the Order of the Combat Spur to Topsham, Maine native, Sgt. Brandon Deaton, an infantryman with the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, during a visit by Operation Proper Exit Soldiers to Camp Liberty, Iraq June 27. Operation Proper Exit allows wounded warriors the opportunity to find closure and to see recent security gains in Iraq, many of which are the direct result of their sacrifices.

allowing them to ‘leave the battlefield the right way.’

Palestine, Texas native, Staff Sgt. Bradley Gruetzner, who retired from the Army,

was assigned with the 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cav. Div. when he was wounded and said he remembers that sense of leaving his military family behind but that he sees the pilot program as helping to ease that feeling.

“The last thing I remember about being in country was being on my way to chow [when I was injured], but I left my brothers still here,” said Gruetzner, who lost part of his right arm, suffered head injuries and received severe burns when his humvee was hit by an IED. “I didn’t see myself as being injured, I saw myself as having the good life sitting in front of the air conditioner in the U.S. while my unit was in Iraq. I was miserable, but it’s

nice to finally get to close that chapter.”

Some Soldiers involved with the pilot program are retired, while others are still on active duty. But the one thing they have in common, according to Kell,

is that all of them have been working on moving forward with their lives— a few with plans for college and several are active in sports with one training for the U.S. Archery Team for Paralympics and another preparing for two events in the 2012 Summer Olympics.

“[When considering Soldiers to send on the trip], we look for Soldiers who have a plan and are moving forward,” added Kell. “And these six troops are going to demonstrate that this [Operation Proper Exit trip] should happen again.”

MND-B troops said the opportunity

to meet fellow brothers-in-arms who have survived through some of the roughest aspects of war was a worthwhile, inspirational and emotional experience.

“I think this program is great and it’s really good for us to see these Soldiers and how they’ve been doing after being wounded,” said Fayetteville, N.C. native, Spc. Ashley Cummings, an administrative assistant for the MND-B chief of staff’s office. “It’s wonderful and I’m happy to see they’re doing well and wish them all the best.”

“It’s very inspiring and they stuck it out in a very hard time. It meant a lot to see them because they all had such a positive outlook and are moving on with their lives,” said Spc. Michael Ellingson, a tactical data systems specialist who works for the MND-B commandant’s office and hails from Sioux Falls, S.D. “It was important for us to see them so that we’re reminded of the people who have made those very big sacrifices. It’s also good to see that they know their sacrifices didn’t go unnoticed.”

Prior to their visiting Soldiers at MND-B, the Proper Exit group also met with recently wounded Soldiers at a Combat Support Hospital where they had the opportunity to thank medical healthcare professionals for what they do to ensure that wounded troops make it home alive.

One of their goals when meeting recently wounded troops includes giving them hope as they start on the long road to recovery, said Burrell while describing a recent CSH visit to MND-B Soldiers.

“You always try to instill optimism, which is the best way to heal and move on,” said Burrell, who was severely wounded, losing a leg, during combat in Sadr City

in December 2007 after insurgents detonated several explosions near him.

“We learn about mentorship and about interacting. When we go see [the recently wounded] Soldiers we can build bonds with them.”

“We come in smiling and we show them where they can be in two months to eight months to one year from now,” Burrell added.

All of the visiting Operation Proper Exit troops agreed that the chance to come back to Iraq and leave ‘the right way’ was not lost on them.

“The enemy didn’t take me out of this, and we’re all going home together,” said Robledo about his fellow Operation Proper Exit troops. “This time I can sleep peacefully—I can now move on with a sense of closure.”

FREEDOM ~ From Pg. 1

ing to Maj. James Fluck, a 56th SBCT civil affairs officer who was formerly a company commander in the 1st Bn., 111th Inf. Regt.

“He formed it as an ‘associator’ brigade who trained as firefighters and gave the surface appearance of fire-fighting but they actually trained as a militia,” said Fluck, of Lancaster, Pa. “Franklin procured money to go to New York to buy fire hoses. He came back with 10 cannons he considered fire hoses.”

Franklin disguised the real mission of the association, according to O’Hanlon, by ordering fire hoses and conducting training outside Philadelphia. But when the fire hoses arrived, they didn’t shoot water. Instead, they were cannons capable of heaping fire-power toward any enemy.

The 111th Inf. Regt. flag has battle streamers from almost every military engagement dating back to the Revolutionary War. O’Hanlon said the Soldiers serving in the 1st Bn., 111th Inf. Regt., celebrate their heritage and educate any new Soldiers about the unit’s history. A regiment mess is held every year, complete with a reading of the Declaration of Independence and the attendance of an actor who portrays Benjamin Franklin.

The 111th Inf. Regt. today is the only unit in the military allowed to fly the Franklin Flag, which predates the current American flag. It has 13

red, white and blue stripes and 13 six-pointed stars.

“That flag was flying on John Paul Jones’ ship when he uttered the words ‘Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead,’” said O’Hanlon.

Two and a half centuries later, and half a world away from Philadelphia, Benjamin Franklin’s legacy of fighting for freedom lives on in the 111th Inf. Regt.

“Benjamin Franklin would be very impressed with the Soldiers and their courage and commitment,” O’Hanlon said. “I think he would also be proud that we are good ambassadors of America in Iraq.”



Photo by Sgt. Jon Soles, MND-B PAO

The Franklin Flag flies in front of the 1st Battalion, 111th Infantry Regiment’s headquarters in Camp Taji, Iraq which is north of Baghdad. The flag was designed by Benjamin Franklin and was used as a maritime flag before the current American flag was adopted. The 1st Bn., 111th Inf. Regt. is the only unit allowed to fly the Franklin Flag. The regiment is part of the 56th Sbc, 28th Infantry Division, Pennsylvania National Guard.



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Freedom Radio Baghdad 104.1 and 107.3 FM

“Solid Warrior” MPs train, maintain Iraqi police

Story by Staff Sgt. Peter Ford

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – U.S. military forces continue to train and enable Iraqi Security Forces as the June 30 deadline for a responsible withdrawal from Iraqi cities draws near.

A military police transition team from the 463rd Military Police Company “Solid Warriors,” 93rd Military Police Battalion, 8th Military Police Brigade, trained with the local Iraqi police of the al-Mansour district of Bagh-



Photo by Staff Sgt. Peter Ford, MND-B PAO

Staff Sgt. Maurice Rice (right), a squad leader from Chicago, assigned to the 463rd Military Police Company, 93rd Military Police Battalion, 8th Military Police Brigade, speaks with the Iraqi police of al-Mansour about maintaining police standards, June 24.

dad, June, 24.

“Every day we train to maintain our standard as well as train and observe the local Iraqi police to enhance their performance,” said Staff Sgt. Maurice Rice, a squad leader from Chicago, assigned to the 463rd MP Co. “Each day before we leave to train with the IP, we have a mission brief and conduct a rehearsal on some things we may possibly experience while training with the IP.”

Soldiers conduct rehearsals before each mission to ensure everyone is familiar with their duties as well as the duties of their battle buddies. The idea is to have the Soldiers trained well enough to react to dangerous situations as if it were second nature. Training is imperative to being proficient.

“You know as the saying goes, if you don’t use it, you lose it,” said Rice.

“The local police here in al-Mansour have sufficient police skills and security is excellent here, but there are a few areas that need improvement,” said Rice. “We want to show them the importance of continuous training to make them more proficient as police and it will help them maintain the skills they have already learned.”

The local IP have already incorporated a few of the suggestions made by the Solid Warriors such as the guard mount. Station commander, Lt. Col. Abbas inspects the weapons and appearance of the police at the beginning of each shift. While inspecting the policemen, he stressed the importance of appearance. He said appearance is vital, and is a direct reflection of the policemen and the police station. Guard mount, a technique adopted by the Iraqi Police from the Coalition forces, ensures the IP are mentally and physically prepared to perform their duties before going on shift.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Peter Ford, MND-B PAO

Second Lt. Sebastian Balint (right), first platoon leader, from Las Vegas, assigned to the 463rd Military Police Company, 93rd Military Police Battalion, 8th Military Police Brigade, observes as Lt. Col. Abbas (left) speaks with the Iraqi police getting ready to go on shift in al-Mansour district, June 24. The Coalition forces are working with the Iraqi police as observers and advisors.

“Community policing is the act of getting to know people of the community and making them aware the IP are there to keep them safe,” said Rice. “The IP will be much more proficient once they fully grasp the concept of community policing.”

The continuous training by the Solid Warriors has made the IP of al-Mansour more proficient as policemen. In turn, the proficiency of the IP has made al-Mansour area an example for all of Iraq. ✂

“Black Knights” team up with ISF for adopt-a-school program

Story by Sgt. Shejal Pulivarti

1st BCT PAO, 1st Cav. Div., MND-B

BAGHDAD – Mirroring the adopt-a-school program in the United States with local schools, the 1st “Black Knight” Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, attached to 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division initiated a partnership program with four schools in their area.

The four companies of the “Black Knight” battalion partnered up with a local Iraqi Security Forces unit jointly selected a school and began a dialogue with the school head minister or headmistress. After identifying a school in need of assistance, the “Black Knight” Soldiers and their ISF partner, processed a contract to renovate the building to improve the facility.

The first such school to be completed is the Al Areej Kindergarten in Adhamiyah.

“From the time we started the process, this school took a little under 60 days to fully renovate,” stated Waltham, Mass. native Capt. William Murphy, the civil affairs team leader.

The Civil Affairs Team attached to the “Black Knights” visited the kindergarten, assessed the conditions, developed a scope of work and began the contractor-bid process.

“The project renovated the floors, the latrines, repainted the entire school, and removed all the debris from the playground that surrounds the school,” Murphy said.

During this project, the ISF continued visits to the school to check on progress and interact with the children. By being involved in the renovation process, the children were able to interact with the ISF unit that secures their area and build a relationship with them.

“The renovation of the school is to provide the children a safe school that will promote education while giving the children access to the ISF,” Murphy shared.

The renovation is funded by the Commander’s Emergency Response Program (CERP), which is a decentralized fund for commanders to use in providing humanitarian and reconstruction services in order to assist Iraq’s

return to normalcy.

Under CERP, schools are rebuilt, medical facilities, water and sewer facilities are constructed and social programs implemented. The funding is an easily acces-

sible source of funds that produces great benefits, stated Murphy.

“Many of our projects are aimed at providing the local populace with a long lasting effect—not just a band-aid, but a repair of the overall system and structure,” Murphy said. ✂



Photo by Sgt. Shejal Pulivarti, 1st BCT PAO, 1st Cav. Div., MND-B

The headmistress of the Al Areej Kindergarten, Waltham, Mass. native Capt. William Murphy, team leader for the Civil Affairs Team attached to 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, attached to 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division and Iraqi Maj. Nassir from the 42nd Brigade, 11th Iraqi Army Division, cut the cake together in celebration of the successful completion of the school’s renovation June 25.



Photo by Sgt. Shejal Pulivarti, 1st BCT PAO, 1st Cav. Div., MND-B

Waltham, Mass. Native Capt. William Murphy, team leader for the Civil Affairs Team attached to 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, attached to 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division and Iraqi Maj. Nassir from the 42nd Brigade, 11th Iraqi Army Division, cut the ribbon together symbolizing the successful completion of the school’s renovation June 25 in Adhamiyah, northern Baghdad.

Iraqis, Alpha Troop “Dawgs” sweep for weapons caches in Arab Jasim

Story by Sgt. Joshua Risner

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD - The sun has yet to crest the horizon as Soldiers of A Troop “Dawgs,” 1st Battalion, 150th Armor Reconnaissance Squadron, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, move out to begin their mission.

The day’s mission was to travel to the village of Arab Jasim and link up with Iraqi Army Soldiers of 1st Company, 1st Battalion, 23rd Bde., 17th IA Division, to conduct a sweep of the area for weapons caches.

“Our mission was to cordon off the area of Arab Jasim in order to search all the local houses and look for caches,” said Capt. Mark Houk, a native of Mullens, W.V., and commander of A Troop, 1st Bn., 150th Armor Reconnaissance Sqdn., 30th HBCT.

The search took the A Troop Dawgs through a mix of arid dustbowl and lush, verdant farmland. They jumped across canals that crisscrossed the land frequently. The A Troop Soldiers swept the outside, leaving houses for the IA to take care of.

“We sort of sit back as a supporting force, providing some enablers that they don’t have, such as the Raven [unmanned aerial vehicle] and metal detectors,” said Houk. “We’re basically like a big brother to them.”

The Security Agreement, which limits Coalition force operations inside the major cities in Iraq, has little effect on the Soldiers of A Troop, who normally operate in the rural areas outside of Baghdad. “Since we don’t operate in the city, our mission really has not changed,” said Houk. “We still are doing the exact same things with the Iraqi Army and the Iraqi Police as we operate under the security agreement.”

Soldiers of A Troop, who have been in theater since April, have a good working relationship with their Iraqi counterparts, according to Houk. “They want us here, they want us to go out on missions with them,” he said. “The



Photo by Sgt. Joshua Risner, MND-B PAO

partnership has been really successful.”

Overall, the search turned up no weapons but the mission furthered the development of A Troop’s relationship with the IA, Houk explained. “We cordoned off the area, the IA did all the searches through the houses, searched for caches and possible sites,” he said. “I felt it went well; everybody made it back and nobody got hurt.” ✂

Capt. Mark Houk, from Mullens, W.V., commander of A Troop “Dawgs,” 1st Battalion, 150th Armor Reconnaissance Squadron, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, meets with his Iraqi counterparts with 1st Company, 1st Bn., 23rd Bde., 17th IA Division, prior to moving out on their mission. The Iraqis took the lead, while the “Dawgs” provided support.



Photo by Sgt. Joshua Risner, MND-B PAO

Sgt. 1st Class Matt Crouch, from Hudson, Mich., helps Staff Sgt. David Calangelo, from Vienna, W.V., cross an irrigation canal in the village of Arab Jasim here, July 3. Both Soldiers are assigned to A Troop, 1st Battalion, 150th Armor Reconnaissance Squadron, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team.



Photo by Sgt. Joshua Risner, MND-B PAO

Staff Sgt. Raymond Shaffer, from Morgantown, W.V., assigned to A Troop, 1st Battalion, 150th Armor Reconnaissance Squadron, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, surveys the area around the village of Arab Jasim here, July 3. The landscape is a strange mix of arid dustbowl and lush, verdant farmland, made possible by irrigation canals.

Dagger Brigade aids water flow into Zaidon Clinic

Story by Staff Sgt. Peter Ford

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – The local people of Zaidon were elated to see water pipes connected to the Zaidon Clinic during a ribbon cutting ceremony in the Abu Ghraib district here, June 29.

“There have been water issues at this clinic for over 20 years,” said Ahmed Husain Saood, the contract manager who installed the water line. “Thanks to the Coalition forces and Dr. Mahjid Raad Fhas, this clinic will now have running water to serve the people in the community,” he added.

The clinic has existed for several decades without running water. In the past, water was delivered to the clinic in large containers. Now, the clinic has a water storage tank and pipes have been connected to the main water line of Zaidon. According to Capt. Kenneth Johnson, the brigade surgeon of 2nd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, the clinic serves a large population from Nasir Wa Salem to Zaidon.

“A clinic with clean running water is critical to healthcare and vital to the community,” said Johnson. “During these summer months as water becomes scarce, people will be forced to use suspect water sources to stay hydrated, as they do this, water-borne diseases such as cholera becomes a problem.”

Cholera is caused by a bacterium known as vibrio cholera, which causes sleepiness, dry skin, rapid heart rate, cramps, nausea, vomiting and sometimes death. “Washing hands with clean water is important in the prevention of water-borne diseases such as Cholera,” said Johnson.

“The running of clean water to

the Zaidon Clinic is one of the most significant events in expanding civil capacity because it impacts the greatest amount of people,” said Johnson.

Clean water is a pre-requisite for reducing the spread of waterborne diseases and providing running water to the clinic helps provide much needed care to patients in the community.

“Providing running water to the Zaidon

Clinic is just a start in fixing the water and sewer problems in the rural community of the Abu Ghraib district,” said Maj. Christopher Ott, of Fort Riley Kan., and executive officer of the 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 63rd Armored Regiment, 2nd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division. “We understand we have a long way to go and

as long as we work together projects such as this will continue.”

The Iraqi Security Forces taking the lead in providing security for the country allows the Coalition forces the opportunity to aid in more humanitarian-type projects like running water lines to clinics and aiding the community. ✂

“The running of clean water to the Zaidon Clinic is one of the most significant events in expanding civil capacity because it impacts the greatest amount of people.”

-- Capt. Kenneth Johnson, brigade surgeon, 2nd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division



Photo by Staff Sgt. Peter Ford, MND-B PAO

Maj. Christopher Ott, of Fort Riley, Kan., and executive officer of the 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 63rd Armored Regiment, 2nd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division watches as Dr. Mahjid Raad Fhas cuts the ribbon at the Zaidon Clinic in the Abu Ghraib District, June 29. “Providing running water to the Zaidon Clinic is just a start in fixing the water and sewer problems in the rural community of the Abu Ghraib district,” said Ott.

Former Sons of Iraq assume new role in their country's future

Story by Sgt. Joshua Risner

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – Coalition forces, in coordination with the Ministry of Electricity, are giving former Sons of Iraq the opportunity to find employment outside of manning checkpoints.

In implementation of this plan, thirty students graduated from an electrical line refurbishment course in the Nasir Wa Salam district here, June 25.

Though the students recently graduated the six-month program, they have been working in the area for quite some time, already providing the services they have been training for, according to 1st Lt. Justin Casey, from Ogdensburg, N.Y., assigned to the Joint Projects Management Office, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division.

“The program provides a system in place to improve the electricity of the Nasir Wa Salam area,” said Casey. “Residents can call a hotline to notify the Ministry of Electricity of any electrical problems and these guys go out and fix it.”

Locals already use the services provided by the electrical line refurbishment team, either calling in or showing up personally to inform the team of problems they are having.

The team then goes out to inspect and fix it. “They have two hotlines running that people can call,” Casey said. “They are available all day, from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m.”

The program is funded by Coalition forces, but everything else is taken care of by the Iraqis, according to Casey. “We’re the middleman,” he said. “We fund it and provide the equipment but the Ministry of Electricity provides everything else.”

The team received tool belts and a number of vehicles from Coalition forces to carry out their duties.

It is the intent now that the students have graduated the course and are now certified in their field, that the Ministry of



Photo by Sgt. Joshua Risner, MND-B PAO

A former Son of Iraq receives his diploma for completing the electrical line refurbishment course during a graduation ceremony in the Nasir Wa Salam area here, June 25. The program is designed to give former Sons of Iraq the opportunity to find gainful employment.

Electricity will hire them full time, Casey added.

With programs such as the electrical line refurbishment course, former Sons of Iraq will transition into new jobs that will assist the Government of Iraq and

their neighborhood with getting the country to a state of normalcy that will no longer require the aid of the Coalition forces. ✂



Photo by Sgt. Joshua Risner, MND-B PAO

The diploma that a former Son of Iraq holds signifies the completion of the electrical line refurbishment course in the Nasir Wa Salam district here, June 25. Thirty students, all former Sons of Iraq, graduated the course and will now be an asset to their neighborhood.



Photo by Sgt. Joshua Risner, MND-B PAO

A newly certified electrical line refurbishment team member receives his pay in the Nasir Wa Salam district here, June 25. Though the students of the course recently graduated, they have been performing their duties as electrical repairmen and will now work full time to assist the electrical needs of their neighborhood.

Behind the scenes maintenance drives 1st Air Cavalry mission

Story by Spc. Alun Thomas

1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. PAO, MND-B

TAJI, Iraq – Sparks fly from a welder’s tool, illuminating the room, while just next door all-wheel mechanics, covered in sweat and grease, fix engine parts, all while fighting a typically hot Iraqi summer afternoon.

Just a stone’s throw away from the mechanics, secluded in a small trailer, Soldiers specializing in communications security try to solve electronic issues to make sure radios remain functional for secure transmission.

Considering the different nature of each job it would be easy to speculate all three are unrelated and part of separate units. But they aren’t.

They all belong to the Headquarters Support Company, 615th Aviation Support Battalion, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, who supply maintenance in a variety of ways to the Air Cav [on Camp Taji, Iraq], said Bronx, N.Y. native, Capt. Jasmin Sarmiento, commander, HSC, 615th ASB, 1st ACB.

“HSC provides support to the entire battalion for their ground equipment, generators, air conditioners and vehicles,” Sarmiento said. “We also provide backup maintenance to the FSC’s (forward support company) for night vision goggles and small arms repair for the brigade.”

On a grand scale, maintenance is the focal point of HSC’s mission, Sarmiento said, with the constant upkeep of vehicles a major part of their many duties.

“Making sure the vehicles are serviceable and able to run so the other companies can conduct their missions is the main mission for HSC,” Sarmiento said. “The Soldiers work long days to make this happen.”

This often results in late nights spent troubleshooting equipment to find the exact problem for defections, Sarmiento said.

“Finding the core of the problem takes a while and some vehicles may take 20 minutes while others might take four to five hours,” Sarmiento explained. “There is always a huge influx of vehicles, so we are constantly working.”

The emphasis of the 615th HSC does not primarily revolve around vehicles, Sarmiento said, a fact which many people are not aware of.

“Although ground maintenance is a big portion of what we do, there are all the other things we do for the brigade as well,” she said. “There is so much more to it and what many people don’t know is we are the support for the FARP (Forward Arming and Refueling Point) as well.”

Sarmiento said their direct support in providing maintenance for the FARP is essential for the 1st ACB, as it helps maintain the vehicles needed to fuel helicopters, one of the key aspects of an aviation brigade.

Handling duties at the FARP is Sgt. Sean Schwartzfigure, from Connaut, Ohio, noncommissioned officer in charge, FARP maintenance, HSC, who said his Soldiers are responsible for repairing fuel trucks used to provide gas for brigade helicopters.

“We work on these trucks every day and also the pumps that fill up the birds on the flight line,” Schwartzfigure said. “Any kind of equipment that is used in the FARP out here we fix.”

The FARP is kept constantly busy with fueling trucks that need to be repaired, Schwartzfigure said, with older vehicles providing the most problems.

“It’s not that something is always breaking down due to us not fixing it right, but the older trucks always have something going wrong with them,” Schwartzfigure said.

The deployment has been busy thus far at the FARP, Schwartzfigure said, but he thinks the surge of damaged vehicles will slow over time.



Photo by Spc. Alun Thomas, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. PAO, MND-B

A bright glare emits from the blowtorch of Oroville, Calif. native, Spc. Michael Hetrick, a metalworker with Headquarters Support Company, 615th Aviation Support Battalion, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, as he welds parts of a wash rack frame together, July 7, at an HSC maintenance garage on Camp Taji, Iraq, a base camp north of Baghdad.



Photo by Spc. Alun Thomas, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. PAO, MND-B

Spc. Douglas Cordray, from Mansfield, Ohio, utilities equipment repairman, Headquarters Support Company, 615th Aviation Support Battalion, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, attempts to remove a bolt from a fueling truck before performing a routine inspection, July 7, at the Forward Arming and Refueling Point, Camp Taji, Iraq.

Texas Guard unit at home in Iraqi wilderness

Story by Staff Sgt. Jason Kendrick

56th IBCT PAO, MND-B

BAGHDAD – For the second time in four years, troops from a Texas National Guard unit finds themselves in the full time service to their state and nation supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom.

For some Soldiers of 2nd Battalion, 142nd Infantry Regiment, 56th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, deployment to the Middle East bares a close resemblance to home station.

Known as the “High Plains Infantry”, the companies that comprise the battalion are primarily found in the high plains area of the panhandle of northwestern Texas. This part of Texas has terrain that is mostly flat with moderate elevation and has high winds and temperatures during the summer; no different than many parts of Iraq.

This time around, they secure and escort convoys of critical supplies, everything from beans and bullets to water and fuel across western Iraq in the famed al-Anbar province.

“Every single widget we use, from a slice of bread at chow to the fuel that runs our generators is brought in by ground convoy, and Texan Soldiers are the ones protecting it,” said Lt. Col. Christopher Link, 56th IBCT operations officer of Mansfield, Texas.

These convoy missions can take several days to complete and when rolling on the road, can stretch for several miles from the lead vehicle to the truck pulling up the

rear.

“This mission normally puts about 1,000 miles on each of our trucks,” explained acting platoon sergeant, Staff Sgt. Richard Shaver, of Arlington, Texas.

For Shaver, most missions normally lasts about four or five days, depending on execution times and cooperating weather. That’s five days of living out of a backpack, sleeping irregular hours, operating under the starry nights of western Iraq and sleeping in makeshift huts under the blaring desert sun.

Rolling out of the sprawling Victory Base Complex on the western edge of Baghdad, Soldiers escort more than 30 tractor trailer trucks and start heading west in Mine Resistant Ambush Protected Vehicles. The large trucks can strike an intimidating presence.

“I like driving the MRAP because civilians [in smaller vehicles] tend to stay clear when they see a 25,000 pound truck coming,” said a wide smiling Spc. Timothy Stewart, a vehicle driver from Rock Port, Texas.

The convoy traveled more than 250 miles during the night, often times barely crawling along due to sub-standard road conditions.

Along the way, vehicle breakdowns increase the timeline and prompts Shaver to say, “We might see daylight before we finish tonight boys.” Once everyone has pulled into their destination, all the vehicles top off with fuel and get ready to go again the next day. As they look to the



Photo by Staff Sgt. Jason Kendrick, 56th IBCT PAO, 36th Inf. Div., MND-B

Staff Sgt. Richard Shaver, acting platoon sergeant for 1st Platoon, B Company, 2nd Battalion 142nd Infantry, 56th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, counts trucks coming out of the convoy yard at Camp Korean Village on the night of June 23. Shaver, of Arlington, Texas, counts all the trucks out of the gate checking his manifest to ensure accountability.

east, troops see the beginnings of daybreak and head to the dining facility for a breakfast meal that for many of the Soldiers will serve as supper.

The mood is light as everyone enjoys a helping of eggs, bacon and fruit. Some enjoy cereal and some of the many other choices available at the dining facility. Following chow, many of the Soldiers retire for the morning into a plywood building for a few hours of shut-eye.

As the afternoon sun begins to bake the desert at a stifling 110 degrees, many of the Soldiers begin to stir. Within a couple of hours these Soldiers start all the preparations of once again heading out on the road. As they ready their trucks, checking fluid levels and doing communications checks, the word comes that the convoy may not push out.

“I don’t mind spending an extra day out, because when we are out on the road it makes the days go by quicker,” said Sgt. Ryan Northcutt, a squad leader from Longview, Texas.

Many of the various missions performed throughout Iraq require a degree of flexibility and the capacity to change direction at the drop of a hat. On this night, the Soldiers would be put on standby because of unfavorable route status, only to be given the word “Go” after many had relaxed and settled in for what was thought to be an extra night on the camp.

“You absolutely have to be flexible in this mission, said Shaver. “We can go from being stood down and not moving to hitting an [start point] within an hour.”

Like the rest of the convoy, the security platoons operate using three elements: a forward security element for added safety and a sense of warn for the Soldiers on the mission, a main body who escorts the bulk of the semi-trucks with the supplies, and a recovery element which acts to recover any of the vehicles that may experience problems ranging from transmission problems to something as innocuous as a simple flat tire.

“We operate with three elements within the convoy. Each element operates semi-independently of each other. Their tasks being completed can make or break a mission,” Shaver explained.

Along the route the recovery team got a chance to exercise their skills as a fuel tanker had a tire blowout. The blowout caused the loss of two tires and both had to be replaced before the mission could continue.

On this night however, this would not be the only maintenance issue that these Soldiers would be faced with. A separate trailer had tire issues as well, including the loss of some of the highly important lug nuts used to keep the wheels on and rolling down the supply routes. After some controlled substitution amongst the contracted drivers of the fuel tankers, the mission, once again continued towards the Iraqi capital. There would be, however, one more breakdown.

This final breakdown happened along the supply route to Baghdad near Fallujah, some 30 miles west of the capital city. This incident would test the resolve and patience of the recovery crew.

Un-able to self recover, Shaver’s Soldiers would wait nearly ten hours on the outskirts of Fallujah in searing heat all the while maintaining 360 degree security protecting the vital fuel in the tanker, and wait for addition recovery assets.

“Whenever we can’t self recover, we wait for additional assets to get to us. Sometimes that wait is only a couple of hours and sometimes it is longer,” said Shaver.

Glad to be moving again, the recovery element of 1st Platoon breathe a sigh of relief as they finally continue towards Victory Base Complex on the western edge of Baghdad for some well deserved rest after their 22 hours on the road. Even on what many consider the most inhospitable terrain in Iraq and through scorching temperatures, the High Plains Infantrymen complete their tasks with a unique pride that lets them feel at home. ✂



Photo by Staff Sgt. Jason Kendrick, 56th IBCT PAO, 36th Inf. Div., MND-B

Spc. Timothy Stewart, a vehicle driver serving with B Company, 2nd Battalion 142nd Infantry, 56th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, checks transmission fluid levels in his Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle in the early morning hours, June 23, following a seven hour long convoy.

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General Daniel P. Bolger
Commanding General
1st Cavalry Division Headquarters
Building 28000
Fort Hood, Texas 76544

Dear General Bolger:

On Wednesday, June 3 instant, I had the pleasure of meeting some of your fine Soldiers while transiting Dallas-Fort Worth airport on my return to Washington-Dulles. These fine young men were waiting for a flight at the adjoining gate. I correctly assumed that they also were in transit, albeit to a further posting. Therefore, I approached these Gentlemen and simply stated, "I want to thank you, Gentlemen, for your service and sacrifice on behalf of our great Nation."

Sir, a young Noncom approached me closely, offered his hand, and replied, "Sir, you do not need to thank the 1st Cavalry because we all love our jobs." The troops then formed a single line and each Soldier shook my hand without comment or another word. The esprit de corps of this spit and polish outfit, their professional demeanor, and their obvious capability made me so very proud and honored. I have no doubt that your young Soldiers in the 1st Cavalry are among the very best in our service, and therefore, the best in the world. I simply wanted you to know that this group returning overseas from R. & R. is a credit to the 1st Cavalry, to the United States Army, and to our fine Country. May God bless and keep them.

With best regards, I remain

Yours faithfully,

R. Christopher Goodwin, Ph.D.
President & CEO

RCG/sal

591st MPs check on progress of Tarmiyah Iraqi Police station

Story by Sgt. Jon Soles

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – In 2006, an insurgent's bomb destroyed the Tarmiyah Iraqi Police Station, leaving a burning pile of rubble. Today, the station has literally risen from the ashes and is a new source of pride and an improvement for security in this town near Taji, north of Baghdad.

The Soldiers of the 591st Military Police Company, 93rd Military Police Battalion, 8th Military Police Brigade are helping the IP prepare for the grand re-opening of a new, modern building, funded by Coalition forces.

First Lt. Brenda Beegle, a platoon leader with the 591st MP Co., 93rd MP Bn., 8th MP Bde., met with the Tarmiyah IP commander, Col.

Tawfiq Ahmad Hamid, here, July 3, to help plan the station's opening and to check on security two days after the security agreement took effect.

"We are here to find out when the grand opening of this station is and to check on the red alert they received," said Beegle, a native of San Mateo, Calif.

After an insurgent's vehicle-borne improvised explosive device left the old station in ruins, local council members arranged for the IP to use a small house.

The house was cramped and made carrying out security operations difficult, according to Beegle.

"It greatly benefits them. Before, they couldn't do their job because they didn't have enough space," said Beegle. "This new station shows the public the IP are worth something."

The floors of the new station are shiny and the halls are filled with the aroma of fresh paint. The new Tarmiyah IP Station is not only a town showpiece, but has made police work much easier for the IP, according to Hamid.

"Imagine yourself with one rented room, and then you go into a big house with many rooms. Of course there is a difference," said Hamid.

But the new station, with its spacious rooms and high walls, does not alone make a good IP force, Beegle said.

"Even though the building is really great, we are still trying to get them to do patrols without us and to be proactive,"

-- First Lt. Brenda Beegle, platoon leader with the 591st MP Co.

"Even though the building is really great, we are still trying to get them to do patrols without us and to be proactive," Beegle said.

Standing inside a newly-constructed steel tower, Pfc. Samuel Castaneda, a native of El Paso, Texas, assigned to the 591st MP Co., 93rd MP Bn., 8th MP Bde., kept security watch with his M-249 Squad Automatic Weapon. From the tower, he said Soldiers still worked with IPs to provide security and train for security.



Photo by Sgt. Jon Soles, MND-B PAO

First Lt. Brenda Beegle, (left), a platoon leader assigned to the 591st Military Police Company, 93rd Military Police Battalion, 8th Military Police Brigade, meets with Col. Tawfiq Ahmad Hamid at the Tarmiyah Iraqi Police Station. The new station was built by local Iraqi contractors and funded by Coalition forces. "The new station has been a real ego-booster. They are very proud of their building," said Beegle, a native of San Mateo, Calif. The American MPs have supported the Iraqis throughout the construction of the new IP station, and will continue to support them in training, said Beegle.

"If we see anything suspicious we let them [IPs] know, 'Hey you need to do something about that,'" Castaneda said. "We work with the IPs."

Beegle said she is working to involve the local Iraqi media and government officials from Baghdad in the Tarmiyah station's re-opening. The American MPs have supported the Iraqis throughout the construction of the new IP station, and will continue to support them in training, said Beegle.



Photo by Sgt. Jon Soles, MND-B PAO

Spc. Jovanny Lovato, a military policeman from Stockton, Calif., pulls security from a guard tower with an Iraqi Policeman at the new Tarmiyah Iraqi Police Station, here, July 3. Lovato is assigned to the 591st Military Police Company, 93rd Military Police Battalion, 8th Military Police Brigade. In 2006, an insurgent's bomb destroyed the Tarmiyah Iraqi Police Station, leaving a burning pile of rubble. Today, the station has literally risen from the ashes and is a new source of pride and an improvement for security in this town near Taji, north of Baghdad.

Pfc. Jordan Robinson, a military policeman from Salisbury, Md., pulls security from a guard tower at the new Tarmiyah Police Station, here, July 3. Robinson is assigned to the 591st Military Police Company, 93rd Military Police Battalion, 8th Military Police Brigade. From the tower, he said Soldiers still worked with IPs to provide security and train for security.



Photo by Sgt. Jon Soles, MND-B PAO

Iraqis lead Operation Winged Lion II



Photos by Sgt. 1st Class Alex Licea, 3rd BCT PAO, 82nd Abn. Div., MND-B



Paratroopers assigned to K Troop, 5th Squadron, 73rd Cavalry, 82nd Airborne Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, check their surroundings as a CH-47 Chinook helicopter takes off behind them during “Operation Winged Lion II,” an Iraqi-led air assault clearance mission, June 26, in the Ma’dain region, located outside of eastern Baghdad. The operation was to deny enemy movement into the city and seize potential weapons caches in the region.

MA’DAIN REGION, Iraq – National Police officers assigned to the 3rd NP Brigade, 1st NP Division provide security as they await a CH-47 Chinook helicopter to arrive and drop off more NPs and their American counterparts during Operation Winged Lion II, an Iraqi-led air assault clearance mission, June 26, in the Ma’dain region, located outside of eastern Baghdad. More than 240 Iraqi and American personnel conducted the operation in order to deny enemy movement into the city and seize potential weapons caches in the region.

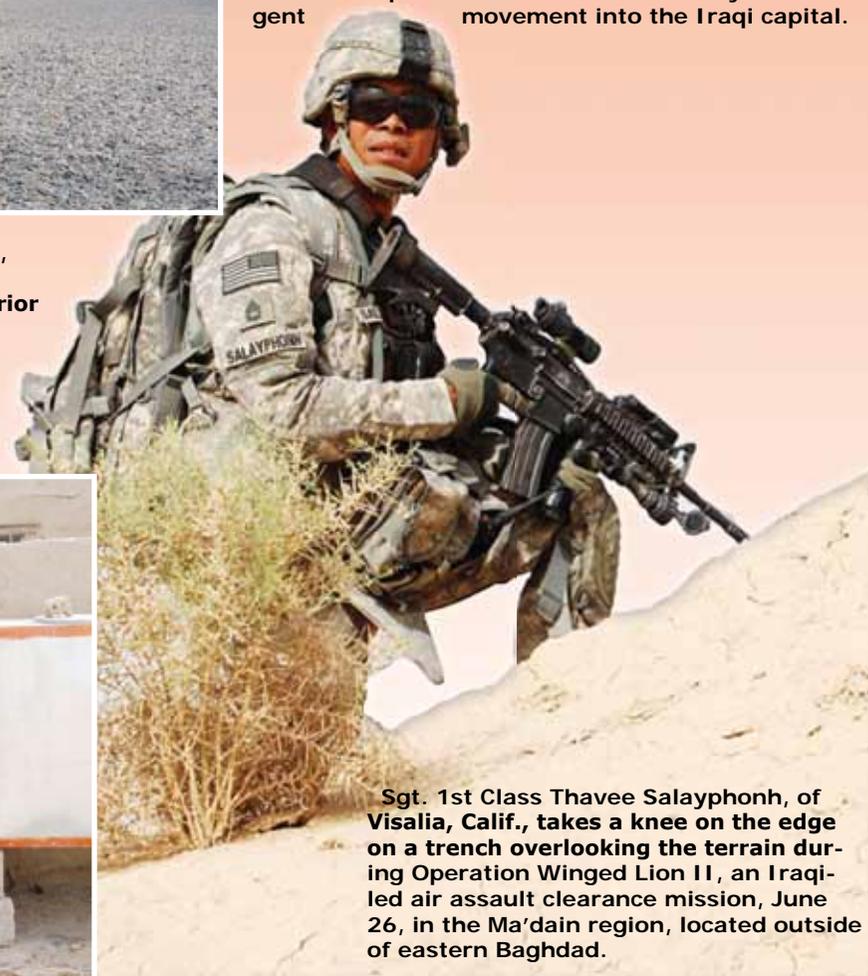


Paratroopers assigned to K Troop, 5th Squadron, 73rd Cavalry, 82nd Airborne Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, position themselves in order to provide support fire for their fellow Paratroopers and their Iraqi counterparts assigned to the 3rd National Police Brigade, 1st NP Division as they prepare to clear a nearby village during “Operation Winged Lion II.” The Iraqi-led air assault clearance operation was in order to deny insurgent movement into the Iraqi capital.



Paratroopers assigned to K Troop, 5th Squadron, 73rd Cavalry, 82nd Airborne Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad and National Police officers assigned to the 3rd NP Brigade, 1st NP Division rehearse the proper way to exit a CH-47 Chinook helicopter prior to conducting an air assault clearance operation, June 26, on Forward Operating Base Hammer, Iraq. The combined forces partnered during an Iraqi-led operation dubbed “Operation Winged Lion II.” The operation was in order to assess security in the Ma’dain region, located outside of eastern Baghdad.

National Police officers, assigned to the 3rd NP Brigade, 1st NP Division, position themselves to enter a home in a small village, June 26, in the Ma’dain region, located outside of eastern Baghdad. Iraqi Security Forces and Paratroopers assigned to 5th Squadron, 73rd Cavalry, 82nd Airborne Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, searched for any signs of enemy activity and possible weapons caches in the area during “Operation Winged Lion II.” The Iraqi-led operation was in order to deny insurgent movement into the Iraqi capital.



Sgt. 1st Class Thavee Salayphonh, of Visalia, Calif., takes a knee on the edge on a trench overlooking the terrain during Operation Winged Lion II, an Iraqi-led air assault clearance mission, June 26, in the Ma’dain region, located outside of eastern Baghdad.

UAVs help protect ground forces through camera technology

Story by Spc. Alun Thomas

1st ACB PAO, 1st Cav. Div., MND-B

TAJI, Iraq – Day and night they can be heard at the airfield – their distinctive hum akin to that of a lawnmower starting – as operations take place around the clock, supporting ground forces throughout the greater Baghdad area.

These rumblings belong to unmanned aerial vehicles, remote controlled planes which help cut down the threat of Improvised Explosive Devices and mortar attacks to convoys, through camera technology which helps detect enemy activity.

The Camp Taji airfield, just north of Baghdad, is the main launching pad for UAV's in and around Iraq's capital city, sending the aircraft to assist in missions [several] times a day, said Sgt. 1st Class Robert Thompson, from Sweet Home, Ore., first sergeant, Company G, 2nd Battalion, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

"A UAV is a small plane with a 39 horsepower engine, and right now we have [many] of those which fly every day," Thompson said. "We launch [several] missions a day with the help of five units which are attached to second battalion."

"We don't fly the missions; the main thing we do is launch UAV's and recover them," Thompson said of the mission at Camp Taji. "When the UAV is launched it flies into a different zone and our sister unit picks it up and takes over the mission."

During the missions the UAV's camera, named the 'payload,' can be used to look at things on the ground, which may include people planting IEDs or simply a building that looks suspicious, Thompson said.

"They can zoom in and spot hazards and eliminate (Soldiers) going into that area," Thompson said of the personnel at the airfield controlling the UAV by remote control.

The sister unit then flies the UAV back into the Taji airspace where it is picked up by personnel at the airfield, who land the UAV, recover it and perform maintenance on it to prepare it for the next mission, Thompson explained.

The process of launching a UAV and following its progress is much more complicated than people think, said Capt. Tyler Espinoza, from Grand Junction, Colo., commander, Co. G, 2nd Bn., 1st ACB, with all the regular safety procedures of normal aviation being followed.

"We have checklists like you would for a Black Hawk and all the maintainers, mission commanders and pilots do inspections before a launch," Espinoza said. "A lot of people forget that a UAV is still an aviation mechanism."

Surveillance and reconnaissance are the key words for the UAV mission at Camp Taji, Espinoza said.

"We provide direct protection for the ground guys," Espinoza said. "Situational awareness of the battle spectrum as well as giving guidance, that's



Photo by Sgt. Travis Zielinski, 1st ACB PAO, 1st Cav. Div., MND-B

Conducting a post flight weigh-in, Spc. Stephen Cantrell, from Wichita Falls, an unmanned aerial vehicle mechanic in the 1st Infantry Division, attached to the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, positions a UAV onto sensors at Camp Taji, Iraq, north of Baghdad, June 25. The UAV must be weighed after every flight to ensure proper servicing.



Photo by Sgt. Travis Zielinski, 1st ACB PAO, 1st Cav. Div., MND-B

Prepping for a launch, Sgt. Donald Melvin (left), an unmanned aerial vehicle mechanic, from Columbus, Miss., a 1st Infantry Division Soldier attached to 2nd Battalion, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, and Spc. Stephen Cantrell (right), from Wichita Falls, Texas, a UAV mechanic, in 1st Inf. Div., also attached to the 1st ACB, set a UAV onto a ramp that will help propel the aircraft into flight at Camp Taji, Iraq, north of Baghdad, June 25.

what we do."

This is why the motto of the unit is 'guardians,' Espinoza added.

Thompson said the mission of guarding the combat troops has been running according to plan since the 1st ACB took over UAV operations.

"So far we haven't had any incidents or accidents since we've been here," Thompson said. "Usually in the winter there might be more mishaps because it gets cold and they have icing problems with the engines and the carburetors, but so far we haven't missed a mission."

Should a UAV experience difficulties during a mission, there are safety measures installed within the UAV to prevent extensive damage, Thompson said.

"In some instances UAV's have lost their signals, but they have an automatic parachute that can be activated which flips the aircraft upside down to protect the camera when it does land," he said.

The aircraft lands itself through something known as a tactical automated landing

system, Thompson said.

"The tower will pick the aircraft

up but the computer will actually land the airplane," Thompson continued. "There have been instances of a UAV losing signals with the tower and having a hard landing into the safety net."

So far, knock on wood, it hasn't happened during this deployment, Thompson said.

As for the UAV's distinctive motor which is a mainstay of the airfield? "You can hear it all night long," Thompson said. "People will say 'those UAV's, there they go again!'" ✂

Going 0-60 knots in less than a second, a UAV from the Pennsylvania National guard, attached to the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, clears the launch ramp on its way to conduct a June 25 aerial reconnaissance mission around the greater Baghdad area, at Camp Taji, Iraq, which is north of Iraq's capital city.

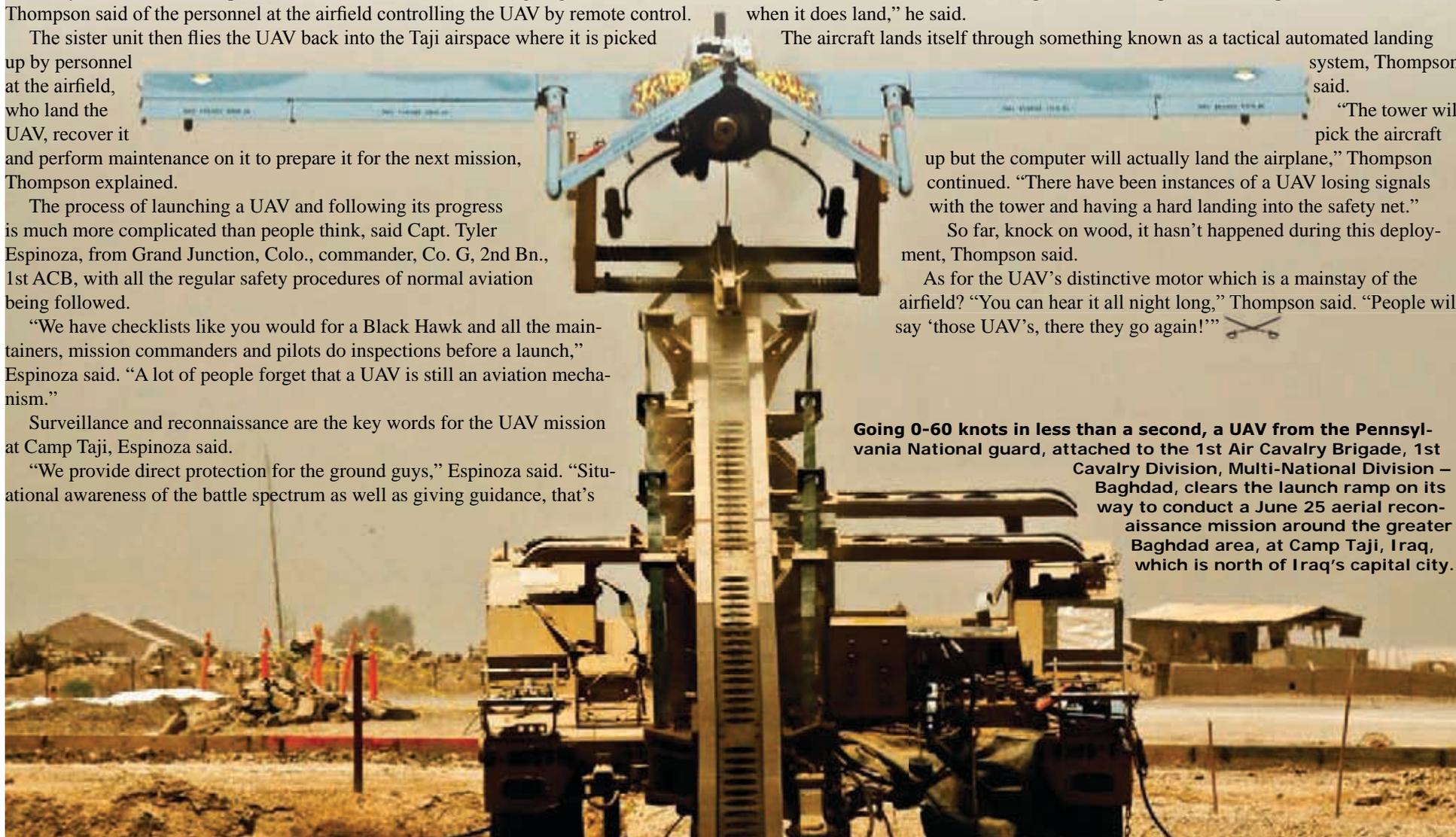


Photo by Sgt. Travis Zielinski, 1st ACB PAO, 1st Cav. Div., MND-B

Ironhorse troopers enjoy activities at JSS War Eagle's new MWR

Photos by Maj. Brian Carlin, 1st BCTPAO, 1st Cav. Div., MND-B



Junction City, Kansas native Cpl. Daniel Valoaga assigned to Company B, 101st Finance Management Company and Chaplain (Capt.) John Gabriel, originally from Balaramapuram, India, assigned to 1st "Centurion" Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 1st "Ironhorse" Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division break in the ping-pong table at the new Morale, Welfare and Recreation center on Joint Security Station War Eagle, north of Baghdad, July 1. The MWR center was built in time for an upcoming Independence Day celebration. Scheduled activities include pool, ping-pong, Texas hold-em, and a hot dog eating contest.



First Lt. Stephen Kraheck of Westchester, Penn. assigned to Company E, 1st "Black Knights" Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, attached to 1st "Ironhorse" Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division shoots a layup during some downtime at Joint Security Station War Eagle July 1. A basketball competition is one of the activities planned for an upcoming Independence Day celebration this week at JSS War Eagle. Soldiers have also scheduled pool and ping-pong competitions as well as card games and a hot dog eating contest.

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PANTHER TRAINING



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Alex Licea, 3rd BCT PAO, 82nd Abn. Div., MND-B

Staff Sgt. Damian Remijio, of Chicago, assigned to Troop K, 5th Squadron, 73rd Cavalry, 82nd Airborne Division, Multi-National Division-Baghdad, advises a National Police lieutenant on tactical procedures during a training event June 24 at Forward Operating Base Hammer, Iraq, located outside of eastern Baghdad. NPs assigned to the 3rd NP Brigade, 1st NP Division are currently training during a two-week training cycle under the squadron's newly developed "Panther Recon Training Academy." The two-week academy trains and mentors the squadron's Iraqi Security Forces partners on basic Soldier skills. Following the course, a graduation will be held and a new batch of ISF partners will participate in the academy.



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Alex Licea, 3rd BCT PAO, 82nd Abn. Div., MND-B

FORWARD OPERATING BASE HAMMER, Iraq – To ensure Iraqi Security Forces are ready to handle their country's security; American Paratroopers are taking their Iraqi partners to school in the sprawling deserts outside eastern Baghdad.

Dubbed the "Panther Recon Training Academy," Paratroopers of Troop K, 5th Squadron, 73rd Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, are advising and mentoring their ISF partners in order for them to hone their combat abilities and responsibilities.

The two-week academy trains both National Police officers and Iraqi Army Soldiers on the fundamentals of combat. Whether it be learning how to move in a combat formation or planning, developing and executing a combat operation, ISF personnel are receiving first-hand instruction from their U.S. counterparts.

While some ISF personnel in the academy have been already performing their duties throughout the country, the academy aims to fine-tune those skills.

"They know and understand the big picture in many of the things we are teaching them. They have done them before and it shows," said Sgt. 1st Class William Lillie, of Winshtr, Mass., who is senior enlisted leader for Troop K. "However, it is those little details, such as what do in case the officer or senior leader goes down [that] we are trying to instill in them. We want to empower the next leader in charge to carry on and make decisions."

"The great thing is that they want to learn and have a great attitude," he added.

During the program, ISF personnel are taught in subjects such as leadership responsibilities, first aid training, individual movement techniques, team movement drills and reacting to enemy forces.

For many of the ISF personnel, training and getting a chance to be taught by Troop K Paratroopers is an experience they will remember.

"They have been teaching us new and useful information that I know will help all of us in the future," said a NP assigned to the 3rd NP Bde., 1st NP Div. "This is an experience I will never forget and I will always cherish."

A graduation ceremony is scheduled for this weekend. But Troop K Paratroopers will not have much time to relax because a new cycle of training and a new group of students are scheduled to come in soon after.

PREPARES TO PROTECT

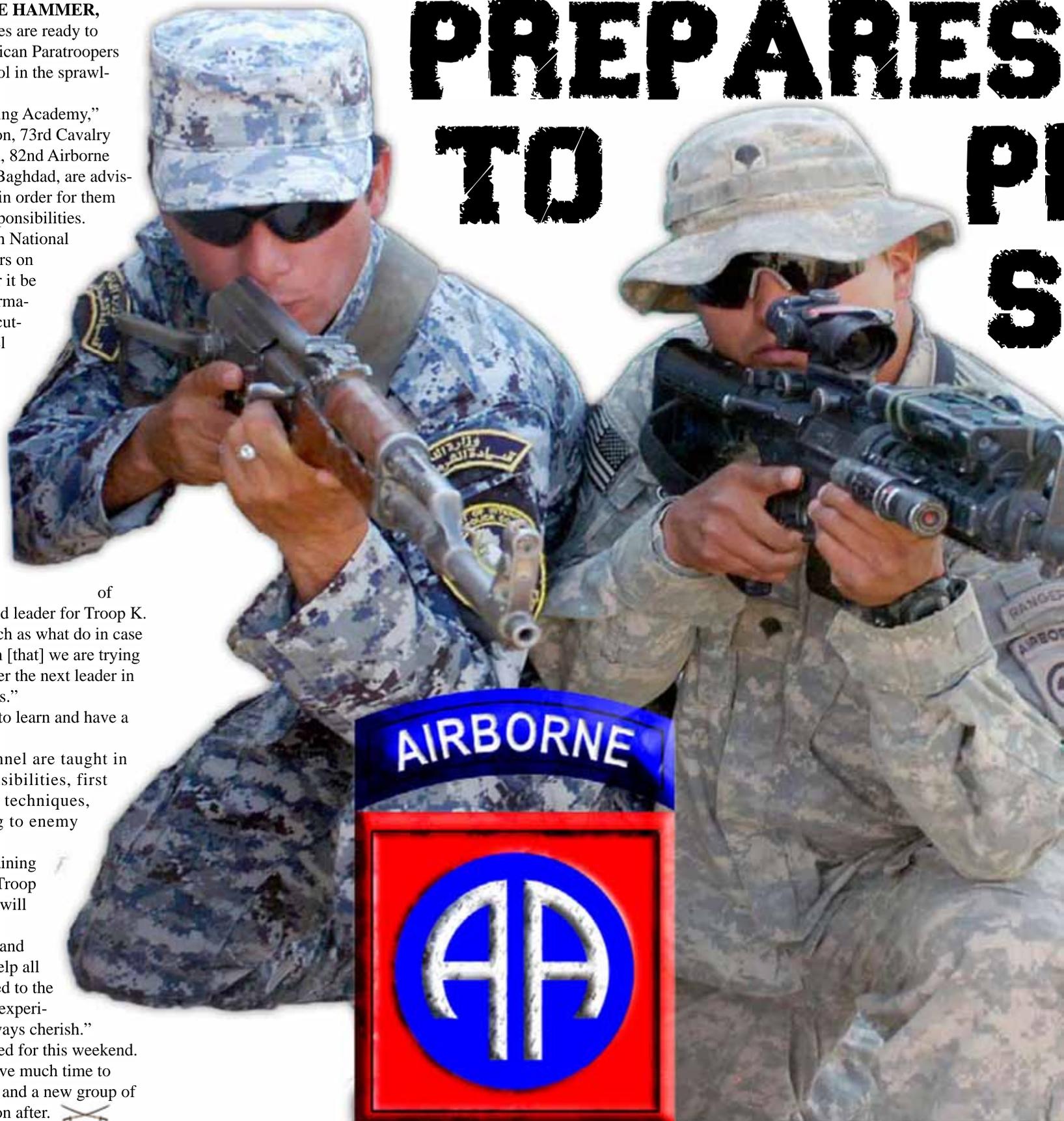


Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Alex Licea, 3rd BCT PAO, 82nd Abn. Div., MND-B

NG ACADEMY



Pvt. Nicholas Culpepper, of Raleigh, N.C., advises a National Police officer assigned to the 3rd NP Brigade, 1st NP Division to point his weapon toward a certain direction in order to provide security for his fellow officers who are entering and clearing a home during a training event June 24 at Forward Operating Base Hammer, Iraq, located outside of eastern Baghdad. Culpepper and Paratroopers assigned to Troop K, 5th Squadron, 73rd Cavalry, 82nd Airborne Division, Multi-National Division-Baghdad are training and mentoring their Iraqi partners as part of a two-week course in the unit's newly developed "Panther Recon Training Academy." The academy offers several training events in order to prepare Iraqi Security Forces to maintain security across their area of operation.



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Alex Licea, 3rd BCT PAO, 82nd Abn. Div., MND-B

Staff Sgt. Damian Remijio, of Chicago, instructs a National Police officer assigned to the 3rd NP Brigade, 1st NP Division to keep his sights on a door during a training event June 24 at Forward Operating Base Hammer, Iraq, located outside of eastern Baghdad. Culpepper and Paratroopers assigned to Troop K, 5th Squadron, 73rd Cavalry, 82nd Airborne Division, Multi-National Division-Baghdad are training and mentoring their Iraqi partners as part of a two-week course in the unit's newly developed "Panther Recon Training Academy." The academy offers several training events in order to prepare the NPs to maintain security across their area of operation.

ISF PERSONNEL PROTECT, MAINTAIN SECURITY

Story by Sgt. 1st Class Alex Licea
3rd BCT PAO, 82nd Abn. Div., MND-B



(Left) Spc. Miguel Angel Trevino, of Uvalde, Texas, assigned to Troop K, 5th Sqdn., 73rd Cav., 82nd Airborne Div., MND-B, shows a National Police officer assigned to the 3rd NP Bde., 1st NP Div. the proper way to hold his weapon during a training event June 24 at FOB Hammer, Iraq, located outside of eastern Baghdad. The training event is part of the squadron's newly developed "Panther Recon Training Academy." The two-week academy trains and mentors the squadron's Iraqi Security Forces partners on basic Soldier skills such as troop leading procedures, entering and clearing buildings and arresting suspected criminals.



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Alex Licea, 3rd BCT PAO, 82nd Abn. Div., MND-B

National Police officers assigned to the 3rd NP Brigade, 1st NP Division provide security as their fellow officers enter and clear a home during a training event June 24 at FOB Hammer, Iraq, located outside of eastern Baghdad. Paratroopers assigned to Troop K, 5th Squadron, 73rd Cavalry, 82nd Airborne Div., MND-B, have been training their NPs counterparts on several military tactics and procedures as part of the "Panther Recon Training Academy." The two-week course teaches Iraqi Security Forces basic Soldier skills such as troop leading procedures, pre-combat checks, and entering and clearing buildings.

1st Air Cav supports Iraqi liaison in control tower operations

Story by Spc. Alun Thomas

1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. PAO, MND-B

TAJI, Iraq – Communication between an air traffic control tower and the aircraft must be concise and clear or the consequences could be deadly.

To alleviate some of the communication problems between American forces in the tower and Iraqi pilots, a request was made by the Iraqi Air Force, to place a liaison in the control tower located on Camp Taji, Iraq, a base north of Baghdad.

The request was made during a meeting between the leadership of the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad and leadership of the Iraqi Air Force on June 6. One month after the meeting, that request is being fulfilled.

Being an ATC (air traffic control) operator can be a stressful job; the operators on Camp Taji are responsible for the air space within a five-mile diameter around Taji and deal with a great amount of helicopter traffic. They are the voice the aviators trust to keep the airspace safe.

Having a commanding view of the flight line and up to date information are vital tools to help controllers like Spc. Brian Kelly, from Stillwater, Okla., in Company F, 2nd Battalion, 1st ACB, do

their job.

“We sequence and de-conflict aircraft to get them safely to the ground. We keep metal from scraping metal,” said Kelly.

“As a liaison (the Iraqi ATC) might help because he can understand (Iraqi pilots) better,” said Kelly. “They have different rules over there compared to what we have, so he will be able to bridge that gap and explain the situation.”

Lt. Col. Mohammed Sami’r Abraheem ALsaady graduated in 1991 from the Iraqi Air Force college; in 1994 he completed his ATC training in Jordan and has gained experience from multiple airfields across Iraq, he said.

Working as an ATC controller is something he loves to do and coming to work with the American forces, he feels that the controllers are now his new brothers, said Sami’r.

The Iraqi pilots are anxiously waiting for the sound of his voice over the radio and the information that he will be able to provide from his new experiences working with the U.S. ATC Soldiers, he said.

Having a positive attitude on the situation, Capt. Stephen Schmidt, a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter pilot and commander of Co. F, 2nd Battalion, 1st ACB, was impressed at how his Soldiers reacted to the enthusiasm of the liaison.

“Once these guys saw that Sami’r wanted to get into the job and learn how



Photo by Sgt. Travis Zielinski, 1st ACB PAO, 1st Cav. Div., MND-B

Capt. Stephen Schmidt (left), a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter pilot and commander of Company F, 2nd Battalion, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, explains the credentials necessary for Lt. Col. Mohammed Sami’r Abraheem ALsaady (right), of the Iraqi air force, to work in the air traffic control tower as a liaison for the Iraqi air force, Camp Taji, Iraq, north of Baghdad, July 2.

things operated up here, they became very enthusiastic in being a part of it,” said Schmidt.

The air traffic controllers want to ensure nothing gets lost in transition, he said.

“We have some difficulties communicating with the Iraqi pilots – it was just the language barrier that was hurting us,” said Schmidt. “Having Lieutenant Colonel

Sami’r in the tower is a great way to help the Iraqi pilots understand exactly what the tower wants the aircrew to do and when to do it – not when the aircrews feel like doing it.”

Having Sami’r in the tower is one-step in a newly formed and continuing relationship between the Iraqi air force and the 1st Air Cav. Bde. ✂

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30th HBCT Soldiers get comic relief while deployed

Story by Sgt. Mary Phillips

30th HBCT PAO, MND-B

ZAIDAN, Iraq – Combat Outpost Meade, south of Baghdad, became Comedy Club Meade for an hour July 8, when comedians Scott Kennedy, Jackie Kashian and Nate Bargatze stopped by to perform for Soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 113th Field Artillery Regiment, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team.

All of the comics have appeared on the Comedy Central cable network and said they were happy to be in Iraq with the Soldiers.

Kennedy, who is on his 31st comedy tour in Iraq, spends 11 days of every month doing comedy shows and talking with the Soldiers.

“People ask me when is enough going to be enough,” said Kennedy during his performance. “I can’t say when enough is enough. Whenever you guys all go home, I’ll go home, too.”

Kennedy said part of his agreement to visit Iraq each month is that he performs at the smaller bases which do not normally receive many shows.

“They asked me if I’d be willing to come back every month and bring a couple of my colleague bud-

dies with me,” said Kennedy. “I said I would if I could do things my way. I always wanted to go out to the JSSs, CPs, COPs, and FOBs and they said ‘yes.’ So, I said ‘yes,’ and that brings us to 31 tours today.”

The North Carolina National Guard Soldiers said they were very appreciative of the visit.

“They were hilarious,” said Spc. Alan Suggs of Kannapolis, N.C., with Headquarters and Headquarters

Battery. “It was a welcomed change of pace. We don’t get much entertainment out here.”

Kennedy said he has a personal reason for doing so many shows in Iraq.

“My nephews were over here in the initial invasion, and they got no entertainment at all,” he said.

“I stand in awe,” said Kennedy at the end of his performance. “There’s no way I have words enough to say thank you. I’ll just keep coming over here and saying it in person.” ✂

Nate Bargatze, part of the Comics Ready to Entertain tour, performs for Soldiers with the 1st Battalion, 113th Field Artillery Regiment, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, at Combat Outpost Meade south of Baghdad July 8.



Photo by Sgt. Mary Phillips, 30th HBCT PAO, MND-B

FDA: Unregulated supplements pose health risk to unaware consumers

Story by Sgt. 1st Class Ron Burke

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – Rows of colorfully designed jars and plastic tubs scream “Shock your muscles” and promise “Get ultra-ripped fast” or “Gain 12 pounds in 2 weeks!” At the end of the aisle, slick magazines line the shelves showcasing the newest methods to gain mass or how to push 20 percent more weight instantly when you use their new technique.

What many don’t know about these weight training products that bring in a large amount in sales in the post exchange and online is that many of them are not regulated or tested by the Food and Drug Administration. Manufacturers of dietary supplements are themselves responsible for ensuring and documenting the safety claims of their products.

“The supplements you see on the shelves or online aren’t regulated by the FDA and contain proprietary blends and ingredients that aren’t tested for safety,” said Lt. Col. Jeffrey Callin, the division surgeon for the 1st Cavalry Division at Camp Liberty, Iraq. “Just because they’re on the shelf doesn’t mean they’re safe.”

Recently, the FDA placed a mandatory recall on all Hydroxycut products by Iovate Health Sciences, Inc. Hydroxycut products are dietary supplements that were marketed for weight-loss, to spur water loss, and as an energy enhancer. The FDA received reports of serious health problems indicating potential liver damage, serious enough that one death due to liver failure has been reported.

The FDA has also received 23 reports of serious health problems in people who have used Hydroxycut, ranging from jaundice (the yellowing of the skin or whites of the eyes) to elevated liver enzymes. The symptoms of liver

injury include jaundice, nausea, vomiting, excessive fatigue, stomach or abdominal pain, brown urine and loss of appetite. Other health problems reported include seizures, cardio-vascular disorders, and rhabdomyolysis, a type of muscle damage that can lead to other serious health problems such as kidney failure.

The FDA has urged consumers to stop using Hydroxycut products in order to avoid any undue risk. The FDA has not determined which ingredients, dosages, or other health-related factors may be associated with risks related to Hydroxycut products.

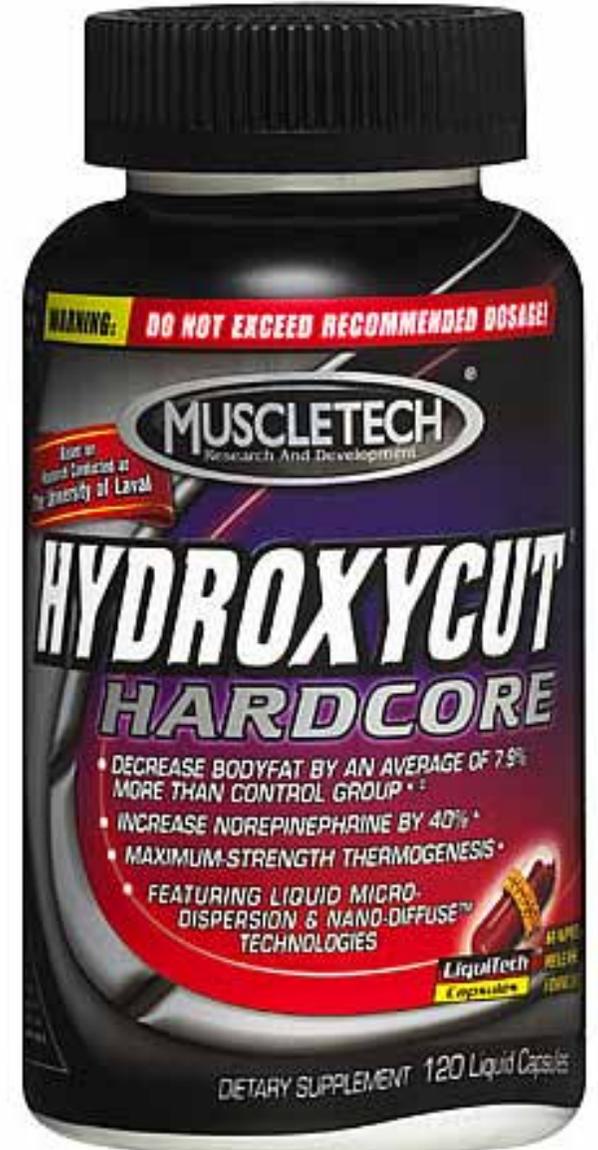
Callin went on to explain that the claims that these supplements boldly make are not justified and come from lab studies where they take the results out of context. “The lab results, which are statistical numbers, don’t translate into physical change in a person’s body,” he said.

Creatine, (creatine monohydrate) a popular supplement that promises mass gains and large pumps during workouts is another thing that Soldiers need to stay away from in this environment.

“Creatine can cause kidney damage,” said Callin. “It sucks the water from your bloodstream and transports it between your tissues (called edema), making you swell.” If that water isn’t put back in, it could lead to serious heat injuries.

“The last thing we need is to have Soldiers taking supplements that take themselves out of the fight because of extreme heat and dehydration in tough combat conditions,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Rory Malloy, division command sergeant major for the 1st Cavalry Division.

Malloy, who is from Campbellsburg, Ind., stressed eating right, exercising regularly, and watching your calorie intake if you’re overweight and want to slim down. “If you want to gain mass,” added Malloy, “Focus on better physical training, a good nutritional plan, and be committed and realistic because there’s no quick fix.”



So what’s a Soldier to do when he or she wants to supplement their workout? “Everything you need is available in the dining facility for free,” said Callin. “Many of those supplements will simply produce very expensive urine.” ✂

Joint Security Station Comanche returned to Gol

Photos by Maj. Brian Carlin, 1st BCT PAO, 1st Cav. Div., MND-B



BAGHDAD – Harker Heights, Texas native Capt. Christopher Clyde (left), commander for Company C, 2nd "Lancer" Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, attached to the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, signs the record of return of Joint Security Station Comanche with Sameer al Haddad (right), the receivership secretariat for the Government of Iraq, June 28 here.



Harker Heights, Texas native, Capt. Christopher Clyde (left), commander for Company C, 2nd "Lancer" Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, attached to the 1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div., presents the key to JSS Comanche to Sameer al Haddad (right), the receivership secretariat for the Government of Iraq, June 28 as part of an effort to return Coalition forces' military installations to the Government of Iraq.

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Watchdog Soldier becomes one out of many

Story by Maj. Jeff Parker

8th MP Bde. PAO, MND-B

BAGHDAD –The Latin phrase 'E Pluribus Unum' was presented to Congress as the words for the seal for the United States of America on July 4, 1776. Half-way around the world from its origin, the phrase which means "Out of many, one" held significant meaning for 236 Service members at the Naturalization Ceremony held here at the al-Faw Palace, July 4.

Among those who raised their right hand and recited the oath of citizenship, Spc. Benny Ares, 8th Military Police Watchdog Brigade, Multi-National Division-Baghdad, took the final steps towards officially becoming an American.

"This is something I've always wanted to do," said Ares. Ares, a Dominican Republic native, has been a legal resident since coming to America in 1979, at age 10. He said it wasn't until he became a Human Resource Specialist that he had the most problems, "Because of my legal status, I couldn't receive the security clearance needed."

"I feel a great sense of pride of what I have accomplished in the past few years but there was still something missing and that was my citizenship." Working in Manhattan as a concierge for 14 years, Ares didn't follow a presumed path into the military shortly after high school. It wasn't until June, 2006, that he joined the Pennsylvania Army National Guard, and following a 2007 deployment, went on active duty, July 2008.

Later this fall, Ares will be returning to Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, along with the rest of the 8th MP Watchdogs...not as he arrived, but as "one."

"Nothing will make me more proud than to serve in the military and serve my country as a United States citizen," Ares said. 



Photo by Maj. Jeff Parker, 8th MP Bde. PAO, MND-B

In front of the flag that has welcomed millions from around the world, Spc. Benny Ares, an 8th Military Police "Watchdog" Brigade Soldier, proudly displays his United States citizenship certificate and memorabilia after joining 235 other service members in becoming United States citizens. The Naturalization Ceremony was conducted in al-Faw Palace on Camp Victory, Iraq, July 4.



Photo by Maj. Jeff Parker, 8th MP Bde. PAO, MND-B

Nearly 240 service members raise their right hand to take the oath of citizenship during a naturalization ceremony conducted here in the al-Faw Palace on Camp Victory, Iraq, July 4. Vice President Joe Biden was on hand to welcome the new citizens and shake their hands.

A Troop mechanics keep vehicles up to standard

Photos by Sgt. Joshua Risner, MND-B PAO



BAGHDAD – Spc. Jeremy Williams (left), from Poca, W.V., holds a nut in place while Spc. Paul Brown, a native of Sumerco, W.V., loosens the bolt it is attached to, July 1 at Victory Base Complex here. Both Soldiers are assigned to A Troop, 1st Battalion, 150th Armor Reconnaissance Squadron, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team.



(Above) Spc. Paul Brown, from Sumerco, W.V., assigned to A Troop, 1st Battalion, 150th Armor Reconnaissance Squadron, 30th HBCT, prys a windshield loose from a light medium tactical vehicle at Victory Base Complex here, July 1.

Spc. Jeremy Williams (left), from Poca, W.V., and Spc. Travis Garnes, from Sissonville, W.V., both assigned to A Troop, 1st Battalion, 150th Armor Reconnaissance Squadron, 30th HBCT, move a windshield for a light medium tactical vehicle into place. The ballistic windshield weighs more than 100 lbs.



Soldier in focus: Sgt. 1st Class John Pollard

By Pfc. Kelly LeCompte, 30th HBCT PAO, MND-B

BAGHDAD – When Soldiers of Company B, 252nd Combined Arms Battalion, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, arrived at Joint Security Station Saydiyah, just south of Baghdad, in May 2009, they found conditions that were livable, but could use improvement.

Sgt. 1st Class John Pollard, of Fremont, N.C., has been applying his civilian job skills to help make the deployment site feel a little more like a home for his fellow Soldiers of the Smithfield, N.C.-based company.

Pollard, an infantryman in the National Guard, has worked for SE&M Constructors in Rocky Mount, N.C., for more than 20 years. He mostly does heating and air-conditioning work, but has practiced other trades with the company.

“It’s mostly a construction outfit,” Pollard said. “But when work gets slack, the workers get applied to other fields; electrician work, plumbing work, mechanical work... and I do a little bit of all of it.”

Because of his background, he was assigned as the “mayor” of JSS Saydiyah. As mayor, Pollard is in charge of checking the site’s facilities, organizing groups for daily cleanup and general maintenance around the station.

“Everything I do here, I pretty much learned from my job in that construction outfit,” Pollard said.

He oversees improvement projects on the JSS with Iraqi contractors. He said he is currently working on upgrading some of the electrical networks.

Pollard said one project recently completed was installing a 900-kilowatt generator.

“The electrician needed to know the specifics of how we needed it done,” Pollard said. “I gave him the specifics and told him exactly how to get everything done.”

“If it’s something as simple as changing a trip breaker, I repair it myself,” Pollard said. “If it’s a simple fix and it can be fixed immediately, I take care of it.”

Pollard said people think of him as a handy-man, and will knock on his door day and night when something breaks.

“He’s more than a handy-man,” said Company B 1st Sgt. Charlie Sanders, of Raeford, N.C. “I would call him the subject-matter expert of carpentry, water supply, electrical work and he’s mechanically inclined; a jack of all trades, basically.”

Pollard has been in the North Carolina National Guard for 20 years. ✂



Photo by Pfc. Kelly LeCompte, 30th HBCT PAO, MND-B

Sgt. 1st Class John Pollard, of Fremont, N.C., helps a contractor fix electrical connections in a circuit breaker box at Joint Security Station Saydiyah, just south of Baghdad, July 1. Pollard is a platoon sergeant with Company B, 252nd Combined Arms Battalion, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, and is serving as the JSS “mayor” because of his extensive background knowledge in construction, heating and air conditioning, electrical and plumbing. As mayor, he is responsible for maintaining the site and has also made several improvements.

Engineers provide additional security for Soldiers moving to “The Belts”

By 1st Lt. Stuart Redus, 46th ECB (H), 225th Eng. Bde.

Photos by Staff Sgt. James Lister, 277 Eng. Co., 46th ECB (H), 225th Eng. Bde.



TARMIYAH, Iraq – Sgt. James Bartholomae, Sgt. Marcos Delgado, and Spc. Moses Briseno, all from San Antonio and assigned to the 277th Engineer Company, 46th Engineer Combat Battalion (Heavy), 225th Engineer Brigade, improve the method of installation by affixing the sniper screen to the fence prior to mounting on the brackets at Joint Security Station Tarmiyah, on the outskirts of northeast Baghdad, June 27.

(Right) Grand Prairie, Texas, native Spc. John Crawson, team leader, heavy equipment operator, 277th Engineer Company, 46th Engineer Combat Battalion (Heavy), 225th Engineer Brigade, installs brackets on top of a barrier wall June 27 at Joint Security Station Tarmiyah. The brackets being installed will support a fence and sniper screen, providing added security for personnel living at the base.



Engineers set up test fire pit at Rawandan Palace Complex

By 1st Lt. Marvin Nelson, 46th ECB (H), 225th Eng. Bde.

Photos by Sgt. Ervina Miller, 46th ECB (H), 225th Eng. Bde., MND-B



BAGHDAD – Spc. Christopher Balcom, heavy equipment operator, 46th Engineer Combat Battalion (Heavy), a native of Jacksonville, N.C., and Pfc. Christopher Zimla, heavy equipment operator, from Shelton, Conn., inspect the test fire pit to ensure proper depth and wall integrity, June 28. The Soldiers of the earth moving platoon used the scoop loader to create the 10-foot hole into the earth, which took approximately a day to accomplish. Soldiers will shoot down into the pit to fire with their small arms and crew-served weapons. The new test fire pit was created so Coalition forces could make sure their weapons were fully functional when traveling off the Rawandan Palace Complex.



Pfc. Christopher Zimla, heavy equipment operator, assigned to the 46th Engineer Combat Battalion (Heavy), 225th Engineer Brigade, and a native of Shelton, Conn., and Pfc. Dorian Bush, heavy equipment operator, from St. Anthony, Minn., positions heavy seven-foot HESCO bastions in place with the assistance of a bucket loader June 28, at the Rawandan Palace Complex.

Educational opportunities abound for deployed 1st Cavalry Soldiers

Story by Sgt. 1st Class Ron Burke
MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD—One word sums up what a post-secondary education creates for someone: Opportunity. A person with a college degree, on average, can earn twice as much, or more, in their lifetime compared to someone who only has a high school diploma.

A degree from an accredited college or university can be a key that opens the door to a promising future. A deployed Soldier, however, cannot always attend the college of their choice and must work around their busy schedule to earn a degree online.

An increasing number of Soldiers are doing just that with the help of the Staff Sgt. Russell J. Verdugo Education Center here on Camp Victory. Between 700 to 1,000 service members a week pass through the doors for counseling and assistance in their quest for higher education.

“They [service members] can come in for any type of educational assistance and Soldiers can process and use their tuition assistance within 24 hours,” said Paul Karczewski, of Washington, D.C., and one of the three counselors who work at the education center. “We don’t process National Guard or Reserve tuition assistance here, but all active duty Soldiers can use Title 10 money for college,” he added.

The education center works closely with Central Texas College which is based in Killeen, Texas. It has a lab with computers for student use and proctors are available for examinations. The counselors and Soldiers use GoArmyEd, an online portal established in 2006, which allows students to research colleges and universities, register for classes, and request course materials and books. The portal services

more than 140 accredited colleges and universities.

“The education center has helped me a lot with proctoring my exams and adding classes,” said Pfc. Randi Boardman, Joint Visitors Bureau administrator for the 1st Cavalry Division. “GoArmyEd is so easy too. I got my schedule and registration done and my materials and books were mailed to me with no problem.”

Boardman, who is from Chana, Ill., is attending Central Texas College online and plans to study architecture at Arizona State University. “I like the lecture setting, but sitting down and forcing yourself to actually read the textbook and learn the material is harder,” she said. “Luckily, I get a lot of spaces in between work so I pull out a book and work on coursework.”

The online community is just as diverse, maybe even more so, than a college lecture hall. Just down the road from division headquarters, Sgt. 1st Class Julia Palma, the Budget Manager for the 1st Cav. Div., is working to earn her Masters in Business Administration from the University of Phoenix online. “It fills the time when you’re separated from your family,” said Palma, who is from Lafayette, La.

Being deployed has not stopped the 19-year veteran from working to earn her master’s degree. “You have to be disciplined to complete online coursework,” she said. “You work it into your schedule and stay up late to complete the work.”

Discipline and dedication is what drives Sgt. Magdalena Sweesy, the executive administrative noncommissioned officer for Brig. Gen. Frederick Rudesheim, deputy commanding general for support, 1st Cav. Div. Sweesy is working 8-week semesters which will earn her double the college credit that a traditional semester

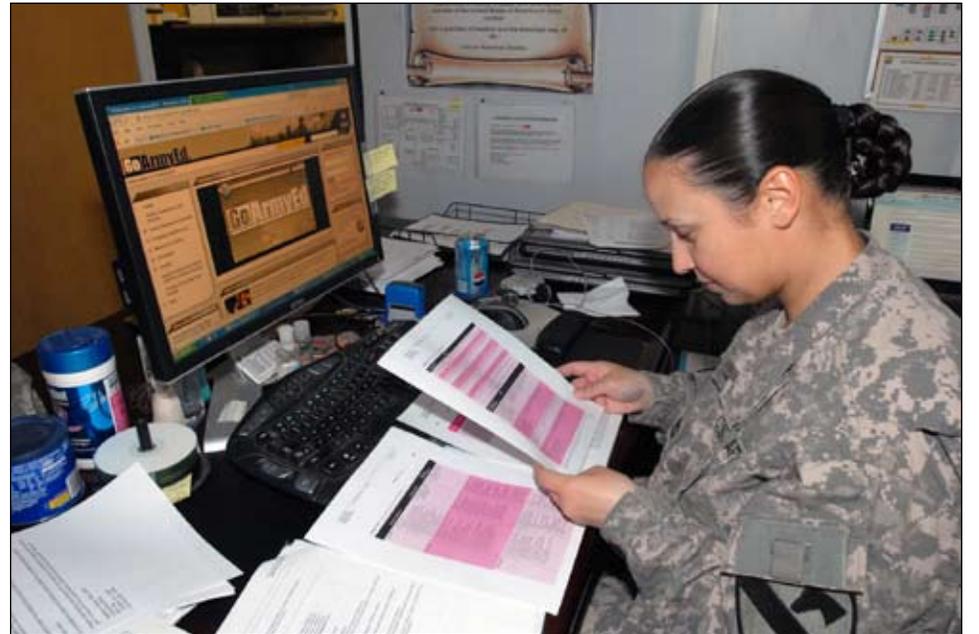


Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Ron Burke, MND-B PAO

Sgt. 1st Class Julia Palma, of Lafayette, La., the budget manager for 1st Cav. Div., Multi-National Division-Baghdad, works on a statistics lesson during her lunch hour. Palma is working toward completing her Masters in Business Administration at the University of Phoenix online. “My advice to Soldiers starting their online classes is to utilize tutorials and the education center and don’t forget that your instructors are there to help you [customer service],” said the 19-year veteran.

offers.

“This is hard; I’m very busy and work after hours to complete all my class work and research,” said Sweesy, who hails from Honolulu. She is attending Barton County Community College online and aspires to major in criminology at Kansas State University in 2010. “GoArmyEd is very helpful here because of the time difference,” she said. “I don’t have to wait for someone to be in the office for registration. My career counselor is always online via email.”

Whether single or married, working in an office or not, Soldiers have increasingly jumped into the virtual world to begin their college coursework. The Army’s tuition assistance program makes it easy.

Sgt. Ryan Sweesy, one of the personal security officers for Command Sgt. Maj. Rory Malloy of the 1st Cav. Div., and husband to Sgt. Magdalena Sweesy, has started his first semester of classes. “I’ve started class work here because there are fewer distractions,” he said. “I either have a mission going out or a paper due.” Sweesy, who is from Cleveland, is attending Central Texas College online and plans to major in astronomy.

The opportunities for Soldiers who have the desire and dedication to earn a degree online outnumber the hurdles they may encounter. Time management is essential for deployed Soldiers who are working online to attain a degree.

“Make sure you’re really ready to do this because it’s so easy to say you’ll do the assignment tomorrow and put it off because you don’t have to physically go to class,” said Magdalena Sweesy. “It’s all on your initiative.”

A deployment can be an excellent opportunity for Soldiers to begin or continue their post secondary education. Determination, creativity, time management and the help of the education center here and GoArmyEd, can make that opportunity become the key that will open to many doors to a better future. ✂



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Ron Burke, MND-B PAO

Sgt. Magdalena Sweesy, the executive administrative noncommissioned officer for Brig. Gen. Frederick Rudesheim, deputy commanding general for support, 1st Cav. Div., Multi-National Division-Baghdad, makes effective use of her free time by working on her geography assignment. “There is no better time to get college coursework done than now while we’re here,” said the Honolulu native. She plans to major in criminology at Kansas State University.

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Location: across from the Coalition DFAC on Camp Victory, 485-2648



Mother, son serve together in Iraq

Story by Sgt. Jon Soles

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – One Pennsylvania National Guard Soldier has two ways he can address Capt. Dorothy Watkins. He can call her ma'am or he can call her mom.

Spc. Joshua Watkins and his mother, Capt. Watkins, are both deployed to Camp Taji, Iraq, a base camp north of Baghdad, with the 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 28th Infantry Division. The mother and son from Hazleton, Pa., are able to enjoy lunch together most days, and celebrate family holidays such as Mother's Day.

Capt. Watkins was already in Iraq, deployed with another unit of the Pennsylvania National Guard when her son received orders to deploy to Iraq with the Philadelphia-based 56th SBCT.

Capt. Watkins, an officer in the adjutant general corps, scrambled to find a slot so she could deploy with her son. She was home from Iraq only nine days before she mobilized with the 56th SBCT.

"We were fortunate enough that Col. Marc Ferraro [56th SBCT commander]

and the chain of command gave us the opportunity to serve together," said Capt. Watkins, who is now assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 56th SBCT. "Not many people get to say they served with their mom or son."

Spc. Watkins, a cavalry scout assigned to A Troop, 2nd Battalion, 104th Cavalry Regiment, 56th SBCT, said he is glad to be deployed with his mother.

"I think it's cool," said Spc. Watkins. "It's nice having family here, especially for my first deployment."

On duty, Spc. Watkins salutes his mother and calls her "ma'am." But off duty, mother and son often spend time together, taking advantage of the circumstances that have allowed them to be deployed together.

"Usually at night, when she gets off work, there's a group she hangs out with," Spc. Watkins said. "They all know me and we sit around and exchange stories and I get to meet a lot of great people."

Spc. Watkins marked the Mother's Day holiday in a way that can only be appreciated by deployed Soldiers, according to Capt. Watkins.

"We had lunch together in the dining facility and for the evening meal, he brought me a Taco Bell dinner, a card and a pair of Oakley sunglasses," Capt. Watkins said.

The sense of family is twofold for the Watkins. Back home, they have James Watkins, Capt. Watkins' husband and Spc. Watkins' father. But in Iraq, they also have the Pennsylvania National Guard family.

"This is our family away from family," Capt. Watkins said. "The 56th SBCT is making history and we are honored to serve."

When mother and son return home, their civilian careers will still parallel their military careers. Capt. Watkins is a parole officer and Spc. Watkins, who attends Luzerne Community College in Hazleton, aspires to be a Pennsylvania State Trooper. Whether they are at home, or defending America abroad, they have a bond that goes beyond blood.

"We get to wear the same combat patch together and that is special," Capt. Watkins said. "It's been a great learning experience for both of us and if anything, it has brought us closer together." ✂



Photo by Sgt. Jon Soles, MND-B PAO

Capt. Dorothy Watkins and Spc. Joshua Watkins, both of Hazleton, Pa., are deployed to Camp Taji, a base camp north of Baghdad, with the 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 28th Infantry Division, Pennsylvania National Guard. Capt. Watkins volunteered for the deployment so she could be with her son. Spc. Watkins is a cavalry scout assigned to A Troop, 2nd Battalion, 104th Cavalry Regiment. He joined the Army after his junior year of high school.

MAVERICKS



NFL Coaches Tour visits MND-B

Photos by Maj. Annmarie Daneker, MND-B PAO



BAGHDAD – Spc. Laura Johnson, a photojournalist with the 211th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, is interviewed by NFL head coach Jeff Fisher of the Tennessee Titans at Camp Liberty here, July 4. Coach Fisher picked Johnson, a native of East Orange, N.J., for an interview because her younger brother, Kenny Britt, is a rookie wide receiver with the Titans. In her interview, Johnson had some words of wisdom for her brother. "Don't drop any passes", she said. Fisher was at Camp Liberty visiting U.S. troops as part of the USO-sponsored NFL Coaches Tour.

(Left) First Sgt. Apollo Williams, of Company A, Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, shows off the Super Bowl ring of former Oakland Raiders and Tampa Bay Buccaneers head coach Jon Gruden at Camp Liberty here, July 4. Williams, a Los Angeles native, was appreciative of the Independence Day event. "I've been a Raiders fan for over 30 years and meeting one of the Raider's head coaches, Jon Gruden, was great," he said. Gruden was at Camp Liberty visiting U.S. troops as part of the USO-sponsored NFL Coaches Tour.

277th Engineers help make streets of Baghdad safe

Story by 1st Lt. Michael Bauman

277th Eng. Co., 46th ECB (H), 225th Eng. Bde., MND-B

BAGHDAD – Route sanitation remains a vital piece in the war on terrorism. When piles of trash and debris are removed from the side of the roadway it eliminates places for terrorists to hide bombs and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) that would disrupt the lives of the neighborhood people. The Soldiers of the 277th Engineer Company work diligently with their combat arms brethren to ensure the main and alternate supply routes of Baghdad are clear of debris.

The 277th Eng. Co., an Army Reserve unit based mainly in San Antonio, but also deployed Soldiers from Washington and Missouri, attached to the 46th Engineer Combat Battalion (Heavy), continues to work through the night to make the streets of Baghdad a safer place for the local populace and Coalition forces.

The 277th engineers work collaboratively with the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division who provided the security for the route sanitation operation. They conduct route clearance (security) before the route sanitation (clearing) begins.

Many of the engineers were excited to work with the well-known “All-Americans” of the 82nd Airborne Division.

“The 82nd Soldiers were a fun group of people to work with and I always enjoyed hearing them respond back with “Airborne!” said Spc. Dalton Newell, 277th Eng. Co., a native of St. Louis, and a heavy equipment operator.

To prevent too much disruption of traffic, the sanitation team conducted their missions in the late hours of the night with a Husky route clearance piece of equipment. The Husky operator’s job is to inspect and investigate suspicious trash, dirt, or debris sitting on the roads. It is a very important and dangerous job.

After the site was cleared by the Husky operator and an “All Clear” was called, the 277th engineers went to

work cleaning up the streets. They used a bucket loader to remove the trash and piles from the roads and then had two dump trucks to haul away the debris.

“It was a challenge moving the loader through the narrow streets,” said San Antonio native Sgt. Daniel Tapia, heavy equipment operator, 277th Eng. Co. “It was also a challenge picking up the rubble on uneven ground of curbs, medians, or alley ways.”

However, the engineers were able to maneuver

through the streets to conduct the mission in a safe manner.

Many nights are spent driving up and down Baghdad roads in the heavy engineer equipment just to make sure the engineers do their part to defeat terrorism and help make Baghdad a safer place for everyone.

“It is a good feeling when we are doing a good deed for the local Iraqis as well as for our troops,” said Sgt. Darrin Frieberg, a Spokane Wash. native. ✂



A “Husky” operator from the 277th Engineer Company, based in San Antonio, conducts a route clearance mission along with a security element from the 82nd Airborne Division July 8 in Baghdad.

Photo by Cpl. Conrad Cain, 277th Eng. Co., 46th ECB (H), 225th Eng. Bde., MND-B

OLD HICKORY

Four 120th CAB Soldiers honored for their service

Story by Sgt. Mary Phillips

30th HBCT PAO, MND-B

MAHMUDIYAH, Iraq - Sgt. First Class Edward Kramer, Sgt. Juan Baldeosingh, Sgt. Roger Adams Jr., and Spc. Robert Bittiker, were honored, remembered, and mourned during a memorial service held at Forward Operating Base Mahmudiyah July 5.

The four, all of Company A, 120th Combined Arms Battalion, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, were killed when their Humvee was hit by a roadside bomb south of Baghdad, June 29.

“They were known for always being ready to go, first on the line,” said Lt. Col. Jack Mellott, commander for 120th CAB when he addressed the Soldiers attending the service, “They had no fear about the mission.”

Kramer, 39, a father of two from Wilmington N.C., was serving on his second deployment with the battalion. He began his military career when he was 18 in the Marine Corps.

Baldeosingh, 30, a father of three from Havelock, joined the National Guard on June 26, 2008, after leaving the Marine Corps in 2006.

Adams, 34, a father of four from Jacksonville N.C., also was a former Marine and was relatively new to the National Guard.

Bittiker, 40, a father of two from Jacksonville, was on his third deployment with the battalion, the first being to Bosnia in 2000.

“When the history of the war in Iraq is complete, it will likely not mention most of the men who fought and died here,” said Mellott, “That is our job, to keep their memory alive and honor their sacrifice.”

Kramer was remembered as being a dedicated Soldier. “He was the guy you wanted as your platoon sergeant,” said Mellott.

Sgt. Baldeosingh, known as “Sgt. B,” will be remembered for his personable nature.

“Many Soldiers in the battalion talk of the lasting relationship they formed with him after only a few weeks,” said Mellott.

Adams was remembered for his humor and his military experience, even though he was new to the unit.

“He was an experienced combat veteran,” said Mellott, “His humor often lightened the mood, allowed friendships to be made, and the mission to be accomplished.”

Bittiker, a member of Co. A for 19 years, was remembered for his driven purpose. “Whenever someone was needed for a tough task, Robert was there,” said Mellott.

All four were posthumously awarded the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart Medals. Baldeosingh and Adams were also awarded their Combat Infantryman Badges. Bittiker and Kramer had previously earned their badges. ✂

The traditional memorial of boots, rifle, helmet, and dog tags stands in honor of Sgt. First Class Edward Kramer, Sgt. Juan Baldeosingh, Sgt. Roger Adams Jr. and Spc. Robert Bittiker, during a memorial service held in their honor at Forward Operating Base Mahmudiyah, July 5. The four 120th Combined Arms Battalion Soldiers were killed in action when their vehicle was hit by a roadside bomb south of Baghdad, June 29.



Photo by Sgt. Mary Phillips, 30th HBCT PAO, MND-B

Soldiers 'Seeking Solace' with band in Iraq

Story by Spc. Ruth McClary

30th HBCT PAO, MND-B

BAGHDAD – Battling hectic guard duty schedules, sewer back-ups and multi-day dust storms, five Soldiers of 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team formed a band to play at worship services on Forward Operating Base Falcon, providing solace in the midst of war.

The band members: Sgt. Brian Douglas, of Charlotte, N.C., with the 30th Brigade Special Troops Battalion; and Sgt. Stephen Ortiz, Fort Meade, Md.; Spc. John Riggs, Kinston, N.C.; Pfc. Cesar Titus, Statesville, N.C.; and Sgt. David Shively, Eden, N.C., all of Company F, 230th Brigade Support Battalion answered the chaplain's call for volunteer musicians and 'Seeking Solace' was born.

"I was thinking of home, comfort and worship when I thought about bringing them [Soldiers] to a level of peace," said Riggs, vocalist and guitarist. "Looking for solace developed from that thought and we shortened the name to Seeking Solace because it flows better."

Three members of the band started playing together for fun in Kuwait. When the brigade moved into Iraq in April, they volunteered to play at the worship services. A few weeks later two others joined the group by way of prayer.

"We (Douglas, Riggs, and Shively) played praise music at the chapel on Sundays," said Sgt. Brian Douglas, the band manager, vocalist, tambourine and djembe

(an African skin-covered drum pronounced jim-bay) player.

"After service, we talked about adding some bass, so we prayed about it," he said. "The next day, Pfc. Cesar Titus, who knew I was the chaplain's assistant, asked if we could use a bass player."

A prayer after practice one evening for a keyboardist led to the addition of Sgt. Stephen Ortiz the very next day and the band roster was complete. All play for their churches or bands in the States.

The band recently performed during a prayer luncheon on Independence Day and later that evening traded the chapel for the stage, performing a two-hour concert for a crowd of about 100 Soldiers and civilians on the post basketball courts. They played contemporary rock music and the crowd was very responsive.

"It was a fantastic performance," said Sgt. Jessica Bucci-Hestermann, Leicester, N.C. "They have a way of raising morale through their music. There were civilians, firefighters and local nationals there and they all enjoyed themselves."

And to top it off, Shively, the drummer, had to leave the performance early for guard duty, but the crowd didn't seem to notice. The keyboard player, Sgt. Thomas Yazvac of Clover, S.C., a filler for that performance, took over the drums until the end of the concert.

"The crowd was great, very receptive and patient with sound and set-up between songs," said Douglas.

The band overcame the obstacles of that concert to gain a new purpose, which is to



Photo by Spc. Ruth McClary, 30th HBCT, MND-B

Seeking Solace, a band comprised of 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team members, gave a special July Fourth concert to entertain a crowd of about 100 Soldiers and civilians on Forward Operating Base Falcon. They usually play at Sunday worship services. The band name represents extending peace and comfort through music to Soldiers seeking it here in Iraq.

offer a musical outlet to brigade Soldiers at smaller outlying bases.

"We would love to play more and travel to other FOB's and JSS's to perform for Soldiers to boost morale," said Riggs. "Maybe this performance will give us the exposure needed to make that happen."

The band members said Soldiers here can relate to the songs they play like: "Sweet Home Carolina", and "Marga-

ritaville", which they renamed "Falconville", changing the lyrics to include parodies of the brigade base rules that Soldiers have come to 'love' so much.

"Music is such an encouragement for people here; it brings people together," said Douglas. "Soldiers need a release and we realize that our purpose for playing music is providing an atmosphere for them to let it out." ✂

ALFOODACT 130-2009: DO NOT CONSUME Dairyshake MRE/UGR-E Shake Powder

The FDA has determined a Minnesota dairy cooperative may have shipped non-fat dry milk (NFDM), fruit stabilizers, whey protein, and gum products potentially adulterated with Salmonella sp. to their commercial customers between June 2007 and June 2009. NFDM from this cooperative is known to be an ingredient used by manufacturers in the production of MRE and UGR-E Dairyshake powder, fortified with calcium and vitamin D.

DSCP is working with the FDA, Dairyshake manufacturers, and operational rations assemblers to determine the specific lots of operational rations that may contain the Dairyshake powder with the adulterated NFDM. DSCP will issue a follow-up ALFOODACT with specific lot numbers/codes and disposition of instructions when the investigation is complete.

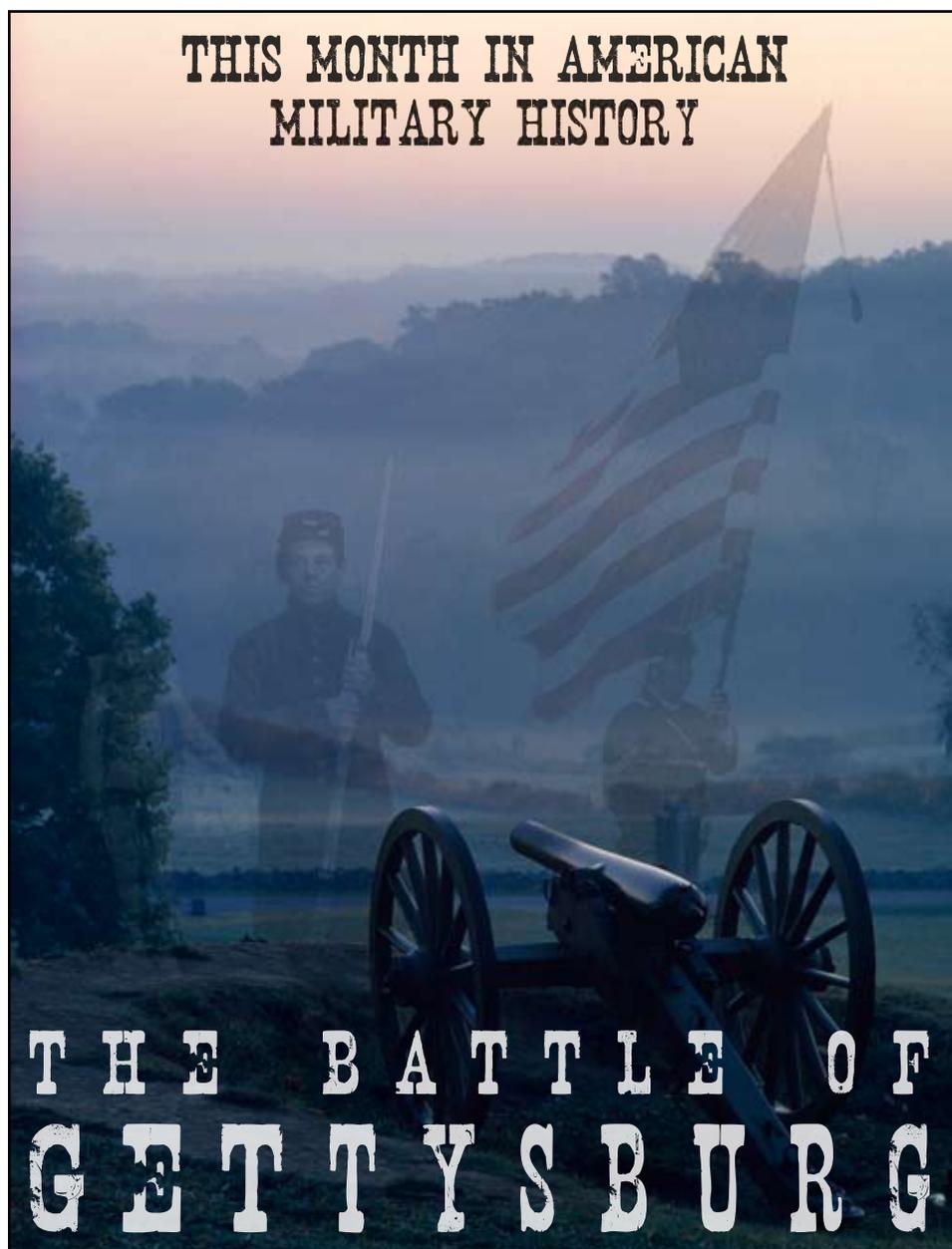
There are no known incidents of illness from consuming the operational ration Dairyshake powder. NFDM is received at the Dairyshake producer with a certificate of analysis indicating that the product is Salmonella negative; the dairyshake producer routinely submits samples of the dairyshake mix to an independent lab to ensure it is Salmonella negative prior to packaging; the USDA samples each dairyshake packaged lot to ensure it is Salmonella negative prior to acceptance by the Government.

INSTRUCTIONS:

DO NOT CONSUME operational ration Dairyshake powder until further notice. Consumers/end users should remove and destroy the Dairyshake powder in a manner to ensure it will not be accidentally consumed. The remainder of the MRE/UGR-E menu is consumable and should not be discarded/destroyed.

POC for the ALFOODACT message is:
COL John Smith, Food Safety Officer at DSCP-FTW
DSN: 444-8461, Commercial: 215-737-8461

THIS MONTH IN AMERICAN MILITARY HISTORY



THE BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG

MND-B dedicates new courtroom on Camp Liberty

Photos by Sgt. 1st Class Jon Cupp, MND-B PAO



BAGHDAD – U.S. Army Judge Advocate General, Lt. Gen. Scott C. Black (right), and Smithfield, N.C. native, Pfc. Roxanne Johnson, a paralegal specialist, 1st Cavalry Division, Multi-National Division-Baghdad, unveil a picture of Warwick, R.I. native, Chief Warrant Officer 5 Sharon T. Swartworth during the dedication ceremony for MND-B's new courtroom July 5 at Camp Liberty, Iraq. The courtroom was dedicated to the memory of Swartworth, who was a legal administrator killed in action Nov. 7, 2003 in Iraq when the helicopter she was flying in was hit by enemy fire. In her last assignments, Swartworth served as the regimental warrant officer for the Judge Advocate Corps at the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. and later as the director of operations for legal technology.



Portsmouth, Va. native, Chief Warrant Officer 2 Tujuana Johnson (center), legal administrator, 1st Cavalry Division, Multi-National Division-Baghdad, welcomes a crowd gathered for the dedication ceremony of the new MND-B courtroom at Camp Liberty, Iraq July 5. U.S. Army Judge Advocate General, Lt. Gen. Scott C. Black (second from left) was on hand for the ceremony and dedicated the courtroom to the memory of Warwick, R.I. native, Chief Warrant Officer 5 Sharon T. Swartworth, a legal administrator killed in action in 2003. Black and Smithfield, N.C. native, Pfc. Roxanne Johnson, a paralegal specialist for MND-B, unveiled a photograph of Swartworth during the ceremony.

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Safety is standard operating procedure for Lifeline battalion

Story by Staff Sgt. Peter Ford

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – Practicing safety is a standard operating procedure of the 299th “Lifeline” Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division. Hours before each mission, Soldiers of the 299th BSB are required to attend briefings and convoy rehearsals before starting their journey to support Soldiers on forward operating bases throughout Baghdad.

“We have briefings and rehearsals before each mission because we are concerned for the safety and welfare of our Soldiers,” said 1st Lt. Dwain Settles, a Universal City, Texas, native and executive officer assigned to Company C, 299th BSB, 2nd Bde, 1st Inf. Div. “Soldiers are the most valuable asset on the battlefield,” he added.

During the convoy briefings, Soldiers of the 299th BSB are quizzed on the primary and secondary convoy routes. They are questioned about different scenarios that could occur while on mission and they are also required to know the responsibilities of each job within the vehicle.

“Lifeline Soldiers are required to be familiar with all jobs on the convoy just in case someone gets hurt and can’t perform a particular job. This will allow us to continue the mission without it being compromised,” said Sgt. Tommy Evans, of Hereford, Texas and convoy security detachment noncommissioned officer in charge assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 299th BSB, 2nd Bde., 1st Inf. Div. “Our job is to be well prepared for any incident that may occur. The better prepared we are the less likely the chance of having an incident,” he added.

Lifeline Soldiers also prepare for missions through the use of convoy rehearsals. These rehearsals make Soldiers aware of the placement of recovery vehicles in the lineup. Knowing where recovery vehicles are located in a convoy is an important factor if a hasty vehicle recovery is needed.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Peter Ford, MND-B PAO

Cpl. Dustin Spear, of Placerville, Calif., a convoy security detachment team leader assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 299th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division performs checks on a blue force tracker in a humvee here at Camp Liberty, June 29. Lifeline Soldiers perform many checks before starting their mission.

“It is important each one of our Soldiers is familiar with our standard operating procedures so they can react instinctively to a situation such as a vehicle breakdown or an improvised explosive device attack,” said Evans. “The training we go through before each mission helps to build muscle memory.”

According to Evans and Settles, safety is stressed every day by their battalion commander and battalion sergeant major. “The chain of command does not stress safety because they are required to, I think they stress safety because they care,” Evans added.

The 299th BSB has not had any major incidents because strict safety procedures and the welfare of their Soldiers are a primary part of their standard operating procedures. The standards set by the 299th BSB have become habits and these habits are evident in the discipline displayed by the Soldiers of the unit. ✂



Photo by Staff Sgt. Peter Ford, MND-B PAO

Sgt. Tommy Evans, of Hereford, Texas, convoy security detachment noncommissioned officer in charge assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 299th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division watches as Spc. Derek Watson (left) of Stillwell, Kan. and Spc. Seth Oldre, of Blaine, Minn., both HHC, 299th BSB Soldiers demonstrate the loading and unloading procedures for an M249 Squad Automatic Weapon, here at Camp Liberty, June 29. Loading and clearing weapons are part of the standard operating procedures put in place to maintain safety.

WATCHDOG

Former Hussein hunting lodge becomes IP Center of Excellence

Story by Spc. Charles Iavarone

8th MP Bde. PAO, MND-B

BAGHDAD – Members of the 39th Military Police Company, 91st Military Police Battalion, 8th Military Police “Watchdog” Brigade, Multi-National Division – Baghdad completed the conversion from what was originally a hunting lodge, belonging to Saddam Hussein, into the Iraqi Police Center of Excellence, at Camp Liberty, Iraq July, 11.

“There will be 15 Iraqi Police students and one Iraqi Police Instructor teaching the classes,” said Sgt. 1st Class Michael Booker. “They will be supported by one International Police Advisor and one Coalition Soldier if their assistance is needed.”

Booker, the Shreveport, La., native is no stranger to this facility. He has worked in this facility during his 2004-05 deployment, while assigned to Louisiana National Guard’s 256th Brigade. During that time, Booker was the assistant warden for the detention facility, in what was originally built for a much different purpose.

The focus of training at the new center will be on advanced police skills, with a heavy concentration on crime scene investigative (CSI) procedures and preservation.

Through the preservation of CSI events, a data base of trends and profiles are expected to further increase the chance of bringing perpetrators to justice, according to Booker. Beyond this focus, general knowledge and police skills will continue to be taught and refined, much the way Coalition forces train.

Several 39th MP Co. Soldiers, under the direction of HHD, 91st MP Bn., started July 7 on making the facility useable, in preparation for classes to begin as early as this month.

Booker concluded, “There is a lot of history with this facility, and I see a lot of potential for the Iraqi people and the Iraqi police, in what we’re doing, here.”

The facility should be ready for its first classes in late July. ✂



Photo by Maj. Jeff Parker, 8th MP Bde. PAO, MND-B

A facility formerly used as Saddam Hussein’s hunting lodge at Camp Liberty sits unused for many months and is in the process of being renovated. The facility has been cleaned and will be transformed into the Iraqi Police Center of Excellence by Soldiers from 39th Military Police Company, 91st Military Police Battalion, 8th Military Police “Watchdog” Brigade, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.



Photo by Maj. Jeff Parker, 8th MP Bde. PAO, MND-B

Police Company Soldiers, 91st Military Police Battalion, 8th Military Police “Watchdog” Brigade, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, on Camp Liberty, Iraq converts one of Saddam Hussein’s hunting lodges into the Iraqi Police Center of Excellence. The initial clean-up was complete on July, 11. Classes for the Iraqi Police are scheduled to begin prior to August.



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Fire fighters from Fire Station 1, Camp Taji, Iraq, set barrels surrounding a truck ablaze to simulate an aircraft fire for the Soldiers of 615th Aviation Support Battalion, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, in order to train on a new fire suppression system, June 26 at Camp Taji, north of Baghdad. The Soldiers are part of a downed aircraft recovery team for the 1st ACB.

DART team trains for worst-case fire-fighting scenario

Story by Sgt. Travis Zielinski

1st ACB PAO, 1st Cav. Div., MND-B

BAGHDAD – A downed aircraft is a worst-case scenario in an aviation unit. Having a well-trained team on standby is a vital piece to this unwanted puzzle.

A downed aircraft recovery team, or DART team, is comprised of Soldiers who do a variety of jobs, including mechanical and electrical repair.

The team also has special equipment at their disposal: tools to cut the aircraft open and safely remove crew members, fire suppression equipment and a slew of tools to repair the aircraft.

Staying well trained on equipment to help prevent injury to the crews and damage to the aircraft is a high priority for the DART team, made up of Soldiers from 615th Aviation Support Battalion, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

“What we are learning to do is use our new Mckaw packs; they are a new fire fighting device we got with a new type of foam,” said Staff Sgt. Christopher Vann, from San Antonio, a DART noncommissioned officer in charge in Company B, 615th ASB, 1st ACB. “They are a little heavy, but they actually work quiet well; we are very impressed with them.”

Knowing nothing about the packs, the DART Soldiers went through training about the use of the pack and the chemicals contained within, said Vann.

“We came out to the training area and actually lit some stuff on fire with the assistance of the fire department, giving us a chance to use the packs,” he said.

Spending 13 years in the Navy dealing with aircraft fires, Ron Bailey, the fire prevention officer for Fire Department 1, Camp Taji, has experience with fire suppression equipment and hazardous situations.

“This training gives the Soldiers a realistic view on the heat coming off of a fire that large,” said Bailey. “When you are in a real situation, the adrenaline gets going and some people want to rush in, so it’s good for these guys to feel what it’s like being 10 feet from a large fire.”

Although he has years of experience, Bailey regards the outcome of an accident the best measure of success.

“I have had Soldiers come back up here and say ‘this system has saved lives,’” said Bailey

“For as small as this system is, it works wonders and will work very well for what these guys have to do,” said Bailey.

The fire training was being conducted on a broken-down vehicle with numerous barrels surrounding it. The fire department filled the barrels with fuel and set it ablaze, allowing the Soldiers to deal with a large object on fire – simulating a burning aircraft.

“We got right up in there and felt the heat; it was very realistic. It was the best we could do without having an actual aircraft to use,” said Vann. “The confidence in the equipment is what matters the most – the fact that we know the equipment works and we are not lugging around this thing for no reason.”

“I was impressed how little of the chemical foam it took to put out a fuel fire – a couple of quick blasts and a barrel was put out,” added Vann.

The DART Soldiers extinguished the blaze to gain experience in a skill they hope to never use during their deployment.



Photo by Sgt. Travis Zielinski, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. PAO, MND-B

Using a new foam fire repellent, Staff Sgt. Jeremy McNichol from Lockeford (left), Calif., a downed aircraft noncommissioned officer in charge in 615th Aviation Support Battalion, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, sprays barrels filled with diesel fuel, under the watchful eyes of Ron Bailey, the fire prevention officer for Fire Department 1, during a training exercise, June 26 at Camp Taji, Iraq, north of Baghdad. The burning vehicle was a simulation for the Soldiers to test out a new chemical foam and fire suppression system that will be included in a kit for a downed aircraft recovery team.



Photo by Sgt. Travis Zielinski, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. PAO, MND-B

Under the supervision of Ron Bailey, the fire prevention officer for Fire Department 1, Camp Taji, Iraq, Spc. Jose Ontiveros, from Covina, Calif., an aircraft mechanic in Company B, 615th Aviation Support Battalion, 1st Air Cav. Bde., 1st Cav. Div., MND-B, moves against the heat to extinguish a blaze during a training exercise at Camp Taji, Iraq.