

Crossed Sabers

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Texas MP Co. continues mentorship of Iraqi Police



Photo by Staff Sgt. Mark Burrell, MND-B PAO

Sgt. George Talkington (left foreground), a military police team leader from Las Cruces, N.M., Staff Sgt. Jonathan Romero (left background), a military police squad leader from San Antonio, an interpreter and Sgt. Bianca Leisure (right), an MP from Douglas, Ariz., walk back to their vehicles after checking on the progress of their Iraqi Police counterparts at a checkpoint in western Baghdad, July 24. All Soldiers are assigned to the 591st MP Company, 93rd MP Battalion, 8th MP Brigade.

Story by Staff Sgt. Mark Burrell

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – Since Sovereignty Day, an Iraqi national holiday declared on June 30, the Iraqi Security Forces have taken the lead, but the Fort Bliss, Texas-based 591st Military Police Company still has a mission to do – train their Iraqi Police counterparts to take over security on the outskirts of western Baghdad. On July 24, the MPs geared up and prepared to meet with the IPs yet again.

“Our mission hasn’t changed,” said Staff Sgt. Jonathan Romero, an MP squad leader from San Antonio assigned to the 591st MP Co. “There is still more PTT [police transition team] training that we can do even though they’ve taken the lead.”

According to Romero, the PTT mission is to help build tactical and technical skills in order to make the IPs more proficient. In order to check their progress as a blossom-

ing police station, the 591st MPs frequently visit their IP counterparts.

During this visit, they asked the IPs about what new weapons they’ve received, what investigations are ongoing, if they’ve detained anyone and if the Ministry of Interior has made any requests.

Romero noted that the amount of classes the IPs have wanted to take has dropped since June 30 most likely because the IPs thought the MPs were supposed to have been gone.

“By talking to the station commanders, we have been able to slowly spread the word that the June 30 deadline only applied to the city and not the countryside and we’re still here to help them out as much as we can,” explained 2nd Lt. Romeo Hizon, a platoon leader from El Paso, Texas assigned to the 591st MP Co., 93rd MP Battalion, 8th MP Brigade.

As soon as the MPs arrived at the al-Walid IP station surrounded by farmers

tending to their wheat fields, they were swarmed by excited IPs asking, “Class? Class?” But, since it was Friday, the Iraqi officer-in-charge already had a mission to guard a mosque in his area.

“They are good,” Lt. Ahmed Nejb Sfar, a patrol commander at al-Walid IP Station said about his CF partners. “When they come here, they help us and give my policemen classes.”

The classes, which include: hand-to-hand combat, weapons maintenance, house clearing, vehicle searches and how to run traffic-control points are all something that will make the government stronger, he added.

“These MPs have really helped our training, but we still need them,” said Ahmed while he insisted that the IP station was also self-sufficient.

Hizon agreed, but added, “For the most part it’s the minor details that are slowing them [IPs] down.”

Prayers from Baghdad

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

Prayer of the Military Working Dog

In recent years I have gained immense respect for the courageous and dependable American K-9 Soldier. I find the blend of power and gentleness, along with total loyalty to their human partner, a wondrous thing to behold. In this 4-legged Trooper we discover a battle buddy who is unique and unshakeable. This prayer is for you, the Military Working Dog.

Where's my ball, Lord?
C'mon, just throw it,
I know you have it!!

Stop, what's that interesting smell?
Follow the scent, get the ball, that's the ticket.
Here....no there.....
Run,
Run,
Can't you keep up?
Don't distract me now, I want my ball!!

Oh dang, I lost it,
Lost the scent....
No, wait, got it again!

Over the rocks,
Through the weeds,
Ignore the cross path and follow the trail.
Gotcha.
Success!

SO WHERE IS MY BALL?
Oh please
Oh please
Oh PLEEEAASSSE throw it!!!
YES!

Am I thirsty, Lord?
Oh, now that you mention it,
Maybe just a little.
You try walking on patrol
In 115 degree heat
Wearing a fur coat.
See if YOU don't need some extra fluids.

I guess I'll curl up here for a minute, Lord,
And wait for my partner
To finish his paperwork.
Help him be quick
Because my stomach is growling.
And then, if he could just
Scratch that spot behind the left ear.
You know,
The one that makes my back foot twitch.
Then I will be content to take a nap.

But wait, where's my ball??
Oh Bother.

Amen



Photo by Spc. Phillip Turner, MND-B PAO

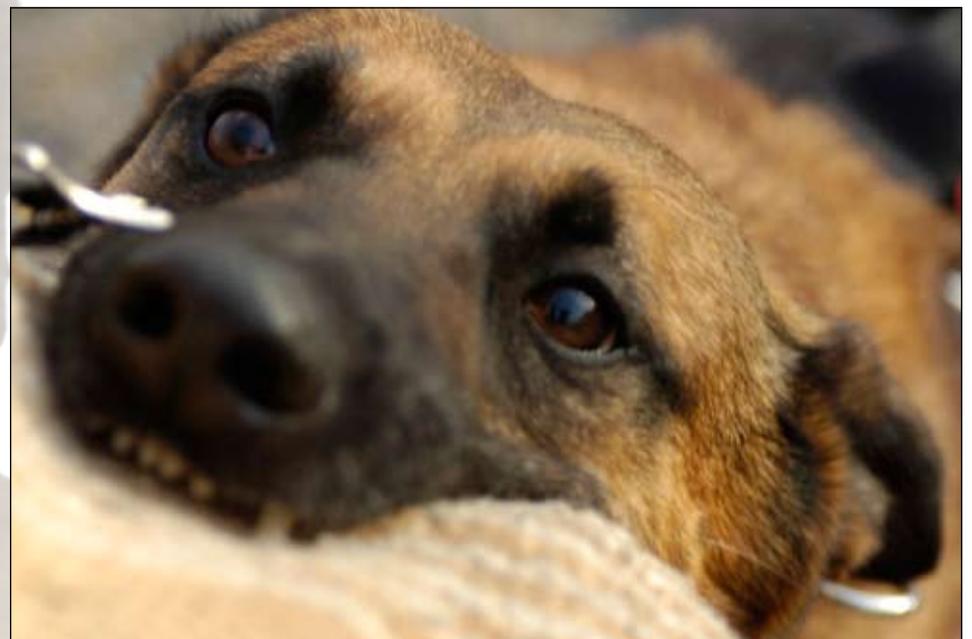


Photo by Spc. Phillip Turner, MND-B PAO



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TEXAS MPs ~ From Pg. 1

“Our role is, ‘Hey, this is what we can do if you need our assistance,’” said Romero after playing a friendly game of dominoes in the IP station to try and strengthen ties with his Iraqi counterparts. “They do still need a little support from Coalition forces...but as far as training goes and providing security for the community, they’re good to go.”

In order to check on the community and get a sense of security, the MPs loaded back up in their heavily armored vehicles and kicked up clouds of dust over the wheat fields on their way to an IP checkpoint in a quaint market.

Upon arriving, the market was deserted because most Iraqis were at prayer, said Romero. The MPs then dismounted with newspapers to hand out with the IPs at the checkpoint.

“A lot of the community doesn’t view us as bad people,” continued Romero as he waved back to an Iraqi child in the back seat of a rusted sedan. “We pass out literature on a weekly basis because it benefits the community and us.”

He explained that sometimes the flyers contained warnings of improvised explosive devices or insurgents that are wanted by the Government of Iraq. The community is quick to let the IPs or the CF know if they see anything that matches the flyers, added Romero.

“It helps the local people learn about what’s going on in their country,” said Sgt. George Talkington, an MP team leader from Las Cruces, N.M. about another benefit from passing out literature in the communities.

After shaking hands and bidding goodbye to their fellow IPs, the MPs drove back to their base knowing they helped move Iraq another step toward sovereignty. ✂



Photo by Staff Sgt. Mark Burrell, MND-B PAO

Staff Sgt. Jonathan Romero (left), a military police squad leader from San Antonio and Sgt. Bianca Leisure, an MP from Douglas, Ariz., look on as Pfc. Shane Venturi (right), a medic from Evansville, Ind., places his dominoes piece during a friendly game with their Iraqi Police partners in western Baghdad, July 24. The game took place during a routine check by the Soldiers of the 591st MP Company, 93rd MP Battalion, 8th MP Brigade, on the al-Walid IP Station.

Sgt. George Talkington, a military police team leader assigned to the 591st MP Company, 93rd MP Battalion, 8th MP Brigade provides security for his Iraqi Police partners as they hand out newspapers to local citizens in an effort to keep them more informed in western Baghdad, July 24. “It helps the local people learn about what’s going on in their country,” explained Talkington from Las Cruces, N.M.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Mark Burrell, MND-B PAO



Photo by Staff Sgt. Mark Burrell, MND-B PAO

Staff Sgt. Jonathan Romero, a military police squad leader from San Antonio, assigned to the 591st MP Company, 93rd MP Battalion, 8th MP Brigade, hands out Iraqi newspapers in an effort to keep the local citizens informed in the community his unit patrols. “A lot of the community doesn’t view us as bad people,” said Romero. “We pass out literature on a weekly basis because it benefits the community and us.”



Photo by Staff Sgt. Mark Burrell, MND-B PAO

Staff Sgt. Jonathan Romero (center), a military police squad leader from San Antonio and Pfc. Shane Venturi (right), a medic from Evansville, Ind., both assigned to the 591st MP Company, 93rd MP Battalion, 8th MP Brigade, play a friendly game of dominoes with their Iraqi Police counterparts at al-Walid IP Station in western Baghdad, July 24. “It builds rapport with them and they asked us to play,” said Venturi.



The *Daily Charge* can be viewed at the MND-B Portal, PAO homepage.



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**Freedom Radio
Baghdad 104.1
and 107.3 FM**

American, Iraqi Soldiers foster friendships

Story by Sgt. Mary Phillips

30th HBCT PAO, MND-B

FARNAN ALAMIN, Iraq – American and Iraqi Soldiers at Joint Security Station Zubaida are looking back on the friendships they have formed as the Iraqi Army prepares to take over the small post a few miles south of Baghdad.

Staff Sgt. Alan Cable, with Company G, 230th Brigade Support Battalion, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team is proud of the two groups of Soldiers, who were able to bridge the cultural gap and form a lasting partnership.

“Our biggest accomplishment is developing a relationship with the Iraqi Army that shares this JSS with us,” said Cable, of Winston-Salem, N.C. “We’ve not only developed a professional relationship with them, we’ve also developed a friendship.”

First Lt. Adnan Ganim, with 3rd Company, 1st Battalion, 55th Brigade, Iraqi Army, agreed.

“The relationship between us is very strong,” said Ganim. “It is more than a friendship. We have become brothers.”

Living together on the small JSS has made it easy for the two cultures to come together under one title: Soldier.

“They are Soldiers just like we are,” said Cable. “They

are not really different. They’re a different culture, in a different country [than the United States], but they are still human beings like us.”

Ganim believes that the friendships formed here will help bring the two cultures together on a broader scale and is hopeful for what the future holds.

“We hope that not far in the future we can go to the United States just for fun,” said Ganim. “At the same time, we hope that the American people can come to Iraq to visit, and walk around and not need security forces with them.”

The 30th Brigade Soldiers will soon be leaving JSS Zubaida in the Iraqi Army’s hands. Cable plans to keep in touch with his new friends and said he will never forget them.

“When I walk away from here, what I will take with me is remembering these guys and the friendships I have with them,” said Cable. “I am going to miss them.” ✂

Staff Sgt. Alan Cable, with Company G, 230th Brigade Support Battalion, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, (left), and 1st Lt. Adnan Ganim, 3rd Company, 1st Battalion, 55th Brigade, Iraqi Army, shake hands before returning to work at Joint Security Station Zubaida, south of Baghdad, July, 15. Cable, of Winston-Salem, N.C., and the other Soldiers have become good friends with their Iraqi Army counterparts during the time spent at Zubaida.



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

U.S., Iraqi engineers partner for construction training

Story by 2nd Lt. Brent Vance

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

BAGHDAD – Engineer Soldiers in the United States Army are known for their wide range of combat and construction knowledge. Engineer Soldiers of the Iraqi Army (IA) are beginning to have the same reputation as they joined forces with Soldiers of 1st Platoon, Company A, 46th Engineer Combat Battalion (Heavy) to receive training in wood framing and interior electrical wiring at Joint Security Station (JSS) Tarmiyah.

During the on-going joint training the engineers will construct five Army B-Huts and safety platforms in five guard towers.

One IA Soldier, Amar Kharay Hammeid, spoke about the training through an interpreter. “We are excited to get this training,” stated Hammeid. “The focus is really about us getting the skills we need so we can do this work ourselves.”

First, training began with a classroom portion where the IA engineer Soldiers were introduced to construction safety, wood framing fundamentals, and electrical wiring principles. Each Soldier received a training manual, translated into Arabic, outlining each step required to build troop housing to Coalition standards.

Spc. Joshua Smith, from Sacramento, Calif., 46th ECB (H), team leader in charge of the electrical portion of the project pointed out that it was a good thing to have the classroom instruction, but the hands-on portion is most important.

“I know that on the ground experience is the most important thing, but I’m glad the Iraqi engineers are walking away from this training with a manual,” stated Smith. “They’ll be able to use it later to pass their training on to other Iraqis.”

Another accommodation to the training were the two interpreters, on hand each step of the way.

“It’s my job to make sure that there are no misunderstandings so that the training can go smoothly,” stated an Iraqi interpreter called “John,” and thanks to his help, smoothly is exactly how the training went.

On occasion, building framers in the United States have been heard to say, ‘We’re not building a piano here,’

when someone questions the quality of their work, however three of the Iraqi engineers on the job were already capable of just that kind of precision in woodworking before receiving the training.

“We used to be furniture makers,” stated Kamel Ismael Ajeal, 6th Iraqi Army Engineer Regiment.

The Iraqis brought their woodworking skills to the table for the training mission, which increased the quality of the B-Huts and platforms; and their attention to detail attained while building chairs and tables, translated well into building the large wood frame structures.

Sgt. Heith Kafer, the joint training non-commissioned officer in charge, carpentry/masonry specialist, and a native of Medford, Ore. explained how the construction of the new B-Huts would create additional housing for Coalition

forces moving to the site located north of the city, as well as help the local citizens living outside the JSS.

Before the new structures were added, IA Soldiers and Coalition forces resided on separate parts of the base, now they will join together and combine their strength, there will be additional security added, and then a major highway near the JSS will re-open. The heavily traveled route through the city will also once again be utilized by the local citizens as there will be more overwatch of the route.

With the five new structures and safety tower platforms will improve the quality of life for Iraqi and Coalition forces living on the Joint Security Station. The most enduring and important legacies of the mission are the newly trained Iraqi Army engineers who will share their new skills with their fellow comrades. ✂

**DON'T TELL
YOUR OPPONENT
YOUR NEXT MOVE.
THINK OPSEC**

OPSEC

Iraqi Air Force rides with Air Cav on joint air assault

Story by Spc. Alun Thomas

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

TAJI, Iraq – As the Iraqi military continues its ascent to take control of their nation's defense and the war on terror, the ongoing joint training between themselves and the U.S. Army is more critical than ever.

Helping train the Iraqi Air Force is one of these crucial developments and assisting them in their progress in taking control of their skies is the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade at Camp Taji, who are using training and real combat missions to help provide hands-on experience to the Iraqis.

Obtaining a front row seat in a CH-47F Chinook helicopter to see one of these events was Lt. Col. Jassim Mohammed, Squadron 15, IAF, Al Taji airbase, who was invited by Lt. Col. Ralph Litscher, from Half Moon Bay, Calif., commander, 2nd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st ACB, 1st Cavalry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, to observe a daytime air assault, July 20, between the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division and the Iraqi Army.

Just as U.S. ground forces are trying to integrate Iraqi forces into their missions, the aviation side is trying to do the same, Litscher said, which is why Mohammed was invited to observe the air assault.

"We brought him in to show how we do air assault planning and execution with our ground forces and their ground forces," Litscher said. "It will better help them integrate with their ground forces so we don't teach their air force one thing and their ground forces the other."

Litscher said the two components should be synchronized and be able to work with each other without difficulty, which he hoped Mohammed would observe and work with in the future.

"One of the end goals we have before we leave here is to do an air assault where it's our aircraft with their aircraft and our ground forces with their ground forces," Litscher said. "We want a true joint operation so when we leave here they'll be able to execute to the same standard we do."

Litscher said it was a good opportunity for Mohammed to learn how the 1st ACB plans its operations.

"We want him to learn our planning techniques and how we do our briefings and it's obviously a bit different from the way they do it," Litscher said. "They (IAF) are good, very experienced pilots and we have a lot we can learn from them."

The 1st ACB will be able to bring their own processes to the Iraqi's and help them think in different ways, Litscher said.

"I think we can bring something with a different planning twist," Litscher said. "It's truly a partnership where we can both learn from each other."

Although the air assault itself was hampered by poor weather, Litscher said a plan had been made a day earlier in the event of weather deteriorating, which shows how key planning is.

"As we go through the planning and briefing this shows why we do it, because we briefed about it yesterday," Litscher said. "It was executed flawlessly and we are still on the exact TOT (time of travel) we had planned for."

Mohammed said it was an honor for him to be able to fly with 2-227th on a Chinook as they picked up and dropped off the air assault squads to perform their mission.

"I am here to see how they (the 1st ACB) box the Soldiers in the helicopter and take them to their point on the ground," Mohammed said. "In the future I can use this in case we have trouble of our own. We will be ready."

The Iraqi Air Force will be able to competently defend their airways once they are left to their own devices, Mohammed said, with the help from the 1st ACB benefiting them greatly.

"They (1st ACB) have helped us with many things,"



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

Soldiers from both the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division and the Iraqi Army make a rapid departure from a CH-47F Chinook helicopter before they perform a clearing operation, July 20, outside Ma-mil powerstation, Iraq. The air assault teams were flown into their area of operation by 2nd Battalion, 227th Aviation Brigade, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

Mohammed said. "We are not at 100 percent right now, maybe 75, but we are learning everything we can."

It was Mohammed's first trip on a Chinook and being able to sit with the pilots gave him a close and detailed view of the aircraft's systems, he said.

"I checked all the instruments and indicators and am trying to understand where everything is," Mohammed said.

Litscher said he hoped for future interaction with Mohammed.

"I look forward to working with him more in the future and the rest of the 15th Squadron and the whole Iraqi Air Force wing that's here," he said. ✂

"We want him to learn our planning techniques and how we do our briefings and it's obviously a bit different from the way they do it. They (IAF) are good, very experienced pilots and we have a lot we can learn from them."

-- Lt. Col. Ralph Litscher, commander, 2nd Bn., 227th Avn. Regt., 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div., MND-B



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

Soldiers from both the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, and the Iraqi Army come bursting out from a CH-47F Chinook helicopter at Forward Operating Base Hammer, Iraq, July 20, as they make a final practice run before attempting the real air insertion for a clearing operation.

Taji firefighters complete Chinook training with Air Cavalry Brigade



A firefighter from the Taji fire department moves swiftly to react to a mock fire on a CH-47F Chinook helicopter, July 17, at Camp Taji, Iraq, as part of a training exercise designed to test the firefighters familiarization with the aircraft in the event of an actual fire. The firefighters must be certified every six months as part of refresher training with 1st Air Cavalry Brigade aircraft.

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

Story by Spc. Alun Thomas

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

TAJI, Iraq – Fire trucks and emergency services roared onto the airfield, sirens blaring, followed by the rapid entrance of fully suited firefighters, hoses in hand, ready to extinguish the flames rising from a blazing CH-47F Chinook helicopter at Camp Taji, north of Baghdad.

It was only a practice exercise, but for the Camp Taji fire department it was necessary training in the event a real life emergency should occur involving a Chinook or other aircraft.

The firefighters worked alongside members of 2nd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, July 17, at Taji airfield, to complete certification training on familiarization with shutting down aircraft in order to correctly put out a fire.

The firefighters need to know exactly how to shut down the Chinook before fighting a fire, as lives may depend on it, said Sgt. 1st Class Danny Hill, from Choctaw, Okla., company standards instructor, Company B, 2nd Bn., 227th Avn. Regt., 1st ACB.

“They need to know where the personnel will be located in the aircraft if it (a fire) does happen,” said Hill, who instructed the firefighters. “They must know how they are seat belted in and where to point the fire hoses.”

Hill said the firefighters must also know how to get in and out of the aircraft and correctly shut it down – making the training essential.

“Some of them may know how to do this but when they have a changeover (of

new firefighters) they need to get recertified,” Hill said, prior to the training. “Every six months they get refresher training. They called us and said they needed 30 people trained, so we’re facilitating the training they requested.”

The training involves a variety of shut down procedures, Hill said, which he guides the firefighters through before they perform a hands-on exercise.

“I’ll instruct them how to open the doors and take them off and then go into how to shut down some of the systems on the outside of the aircraft,” Hill said. “Then they’ll do the same thing on the inside; learn how to get in and shut things down in there.”

Hill said there are parts of the Chinook that the firefighters would not be able to spray during the exercise.

“We don’t want to damage anything so I’ll show them where the exhausts are so they know exactly where to put the water if there is a fire,” Hill said. “It’s not difficult training but for the newer firefighters it might take getting used to.”

One of the newest firefighters at Camp Taji is Nicolae Boica, from Sacramento, Calif., who said the familiarization is crucial in his development as a firefighter at Camp Taji.

“I need to know exactly what’s most important to get to on the helicopter and all the danger areas to avoid,” Boica said. “You need to be aware all the time. We have to know what to turn off and where the fuel lines are.”

Boica said his role is to make sure the path is always clear for the rescue team.

“I make sure they aren’t getting burned and always have a path to get through so they can save people on the helicopter,”

Boica said.

Boica and his fellow firefighters executed the run through, turning everything off in the correct order and evacuated Hill, acting as a victim, from the pilot’s seat – paving the way for the hoses to be used.

“The exercise went very well and this was the first time we ... got to train on a CH-47 which was very informational for our new guys,” said Anthony Johnson, from Ocean Springs, Miss., captain, Taji fire dept. “We are constantly trying to train with the military on their aircraft to make sure we are readily accessible for them.”

The familiarization was the most impor-

tant aspect of the training, Johnson said, because the fire crew had rarely experienced a Chinook before.

“It’s not the main one flying out here so it really helped a lot,” Johnson said.

Johnson could not have been happier with the final exercise, which showed his team is ready in case a real fire breaks out on the Chinook.

“It went flawlessly and was our whole purpose for being out here,” Johnson said. “In case of an emergency we can do it by muscle memory and not have to second guess ourselves.”

“It was a great exercise,” he said. ✂



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

Fully suited firefighters from the Taji fire department move quickly to shut down vital systems on a CH-47F Chinook helicopter so they can battle a mock fire, July 17, at Camp Taji, Iraq. This was part of a training exercise held by 2nd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, designed to test the firefighters familiarization with the aircraft in the event of an actual fire.

Moving from dollar to dinar

Story by Staff Sgt. Mark Burrell

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – “Can I get fifty bucks in Iraqi dinar?” That may sound like an odd request from an American Soldier at a finance office in Baghdad, but in the next few months it will be as natural as buying DVDs or energy drinks from the Iraqi shops here.

However, the Army and Air Force Exchange Services run shops and the military postal services will still only accept U.S. dollars, explained Maj. Timothy Lancaster, the commander of the 208th Finance Company, 10th Sustainment Brigade Troops Battalion.

“The goal is to migrate from using primarily U.S. dollars to primarily Iraqi dinar by Oct. 1, 2009,” said Lancaster. He stressed that October isn’t a deadline, but a reasonable goal.

Lancaster, from Mannheim, Germany, is in charge of six finance detachments from all over the world that support finance in Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

“Iraq is their own country and sovereign,” Lancaster added. “Their currency is the Iraqi Dinar, so we need to respect that and start adopting what we can to support them.”

As Coalition forces have left the cities and Iraqi Security Forces have taken over security, Army finance is trying to transition the economy back to the shoulders of Iraqis using the Dinar to lessen CF visibility here, according to Lancaster.

“The advantage of switching over is we inject their economy and that makes the Dinar stronger,” said Capt. Jason Hempstead, the 828th Financial Management Detachment commander, 208th Financial Co. The Pennsylvania National Guard Soldiers from the 828th run the Camp Liberty Finance Office.

“It helps us accomplish our mission and it helps Iraqis become more economically stable,” added Hempstead, who hails from Richmond, Va.

In theory, the goal to lessen the CF footprint, help stabilize the Iraqi economy and spend more local currency in markets in Baghdad should be easy, but that isn’t the case, said Lancaster.

“The switch from the dollar to the dinar has been harder than expected because it’s been so ingrained in Iraqi vendors,” explained Lancaster. “Vendors are so used to seeing cash and U.S. dollars, there has to be a mental shift.”

That shift is already starting to take place around bases in Baghdad as more and more local shop owners don’t bat an eye when asked if they take dinar, said Lancaster.

“It shouldn’t be a problem, the vendors usually accept local currency,” added Hempstead.

Though many Soldiers come in to request money from their Eagle Cash card, the need for U.S. currency is mostly coming from paying agents that pay their contractors, added Hempstead.

“We issued about four million U.S. dollars from this office last month,” said 1st Lt. Donald Warren, a disbursing agent from Indiana, Pa., assigned to the 828th Financial Management Detachment. “But for every day operations, we have both types of currency to fulfill the need for the mission.”

In the market, the price of the Iraqi dinar fluctuates daily, but for the past seven months the military exchange rate has held at 1,170 Iraqi dinars to one U.S. dollar, explained Lancaster. Differences in on base and off base exchange rates can lead to black market currency prices and fear of counterfeit currency coming into circulation.

“We have guaranteed currency from trusted sources, like the National Bank of Iraq, so it’s safe to get your dinar from our finance offices,” said Lancaster. There are also security measures that Lancaster’s offices take that check for watermarks among other things.

Using the dinar will also cut out steep costs of transitioning cash from the United States to Iraq with Soldiers carrying it every step of the way, added Lancaster.

“Is it a simple flip of a switch? No, it really isn’t,” said Lancaster. “We will always be here for the Soldiers, but we want the banks here to do the banking for the Iraqis.”

As word spreads and more Soldiers start to take advantage of the dinar, the easier it will be to transition out of Iraq when the time comes, the easier it will be to get a better deal on those DVDs and energy drinks at the markets. ✂



Photo by Staff Sgt. Mark Burrell, MND-B PAO

Spc. Christopher Cuomo (right), a disbursing cashier from Harrisburg, Pa., assigned to the Pennsylvania National Guard 828th Financial Management Detachment, 208th Finance Company, 10th Sustainment Brigade Troops Battalion, 10th Sustainment Brigade, prepares to give U.S. dollars to Spc. Perry Osborne (left), a military policeman from Greenbrier, Tenn., assigned to the 267th Military Police Company, 93rd MP Battalion, 8th MP Brigade, at Camp Liberty Finance Office, here, July 15. Military personnel can take up to \$200 from their Eagle Cash card and \$200 from checks for a total of \$400 each month in cash from their local finance office.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Mark Burrell, MND-B PAO

Spc. Myra Vance (left), a casualty liaison specialist from Perry, Ga., assigned to the 510th Human Resources Company, Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, gets help with a financial issue from Spc. Charles Yurtin, a customer service specialist assigned to the Pennsylvania National Guard 828th Financial Management Detachment, 208th Finance Company, 10th Sustainment Bde. Troops Bn., 10th Sustainment Brigade, at Camp Liberty Finance Office, here, July 15.

DAGGER

Dagger Soldiers mark progress of Abu Ghraib Hospital

Story by Sgt. Jon Soles

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – Iraqi citizens in the Abu Ghraib area of Baghdad have improved healthcare options following the latest round of hospital renovations – part of a \$1 million effort by Coalition forces.

Soldiers of the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, escorted members of the Iraqi media, here, July 12, to showcase the hospital’s improvements and upgrades.

Hospital upgrades include new paint, floors, ceilings and a newly furnished waiting room. Some of the medical hardware includes an incinerator, ultrasound equipment and communications technology.

“The doctors and staff members of the hospital have been very grateful for what we have done,” said Capt. Michael Nau, project manager for the 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div. “They wish honestly that we could do more and honestly, we wish we could do more too.”

According to Nau, \$800,000 has been spent on the hospital and another \$200,000 in renovations and improvements are planned.

A satellite Internet suite and 24-hour electricity were some of the upgrades in technology that are essential for a



Photo by Sgt. Jon Soles, MND-B PAO

An Iraqi doctor molds an arm cast for a patient at the Abu Ghraib Hospital, here, July 12. The hospital has received an estimated \$800,000 in funds from Coalition forces to refurbish the building and purchase medical equipment. The Soldiers of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, hosted Iraqi media at the hospital for a tour.

modern hospital, added Nau, a native of San Diego.

“If you can imagine having a hospital without an Internet connection, it’s the equivalent of having to send a person out, in order to coordinate for repairs,” said Nau. “That resulted in back and forth trips from the Ministry of Health back to the hospital.”

Nau said the process of rebuilding a hospital starts with communication and is followed up with many meetings.

“We visit the site, we talk to the various directors and officials at the site and we see what exactly they need to do their jobs better,” said Nau. “We then focus on the very things they need the most and provide them with it.”

Projects such as the Abu Ghraib hospital contribute to security by providing Iraqis with basic needs to be self-sufficient.

“With a project like this it helps with security because now we are meeting the basic needs of the people,” Nau added. “Now they have less of a reason to be upset and that helps with the overall situation. It’s a small piece, but it is a piece.”

According to Nau, helping meet the needs of the Iraqis in Western Baghdad not only strengthens security, but boosts the sense of cooperation and pride of the Soldiers involved in such projects.

“We have an utmost care for the Iraqi people, wherever they are, whether they are in the city, the countryside, or somewhere out in between,” Nau said. “It’s extremely rewarding for me ... to see and know we are making a difference. That’s all the reward I want.”

Caring for the Iraqi people, boosting their morale and healthcare facilities brings Coalition forces one step closer to transitioning Baghdad back over to the Iraqis - one piece at a time. ✂

Soldiers set sights on transition, targets

Story by Sgt. Joshua Risner

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – Soldiers of 1st Cavalry Division sharpened their skills during a zero and qualifying range at Caughman Range on Victory Base Complex here, July 17 to keep their tactics in good working order.

The range gave Soldiers the opportunity to keep their skills polished with their assigned weapon in case they would have to use it in a combat situation. Even though Coalition forces have transitioned away from combat operations, insurgents have not quit fighting.

“It’s extremely important because you never know what’s going to happen,” said Sgt. Tanisha Manning, from Oakland, Calif., assigned to Company B, Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division. “We can’t get complacent and we have to make sure that we’re ready to train and we’re ready to fight the enemy if we have to, to protect ourselves.”

Soldiers endured hot temperatures and dusty conditions to make sure their weapons and their skills were up to par. Space is limited on Victory Base Complex, so the Soldiers fired at paper targets on a relatively small range. “Here, it’s kind of close; in the states it’s more spread out,” said Manning.

The paper targets were a new concept for many of the Soldiers, so it was an added challenge, according to Spc. Wilbur DeShields, a native of Akron, Ohio, as-

signed to Co. A, DSTB, 1st Cav. Div.

“It’s different getting used to the paper targets,” said DeShields. “With the pop-ups, you’re moving around and reacting but these are right there in front of you and it’s easy to get complacent and let it get away from you.”

For some Soldiers, the range was a nice change of pace from normal duties, according to Pfc. Lauren McKeehan, assigned to Co. A, DSTB, 1st Cav. Div. “I like it, it’s a chance to get away from the office,” said the Texarkana, Ark. native. “Some of us don’t go outside the wire often and the practice gives us confidence.”

A big focus of the range was to strengthen and reinforce the Soldiers’ confidence in their abilities and in their equipment, Manning explained. “When they walk off the range after qualifying and they’re like ‘Hey, I’m good with my weapon!’ I think they’re a lot more confident with themselves and with their weapon,” she said. “We can’t get lackadaisical; we have to make sure that our weapons stay up to par and we stay up to standard.”

As the heat of the noonday sun seared the landscape, the firing had ceased. The Soldiers who had participated in the day’s event had come away with a strengthened sense of proficiency, both in their weapon and their warrior skills. Though the Iraqi Security Forces have taken the lead in security operations, the Soldiers of the DSTB are prepared for anything that may come their way. ✂



Photo by Sgt. Joshua Risner, MND-B PAO

Spc. Wilbur DeShields, from Akron, Ohio, assigned to Company A, Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, fires at his targets during a zero and qualification range at Caughman Range on Victory Base Complex here, July 17. Despite intense heat and dusty conditions, DeShields and his fellow Soldiers persevered to complete the task to standard.



Photo by Sgt. Joshua Risner, MND-B PAO

Sgt. Tanisha Manning, from Oakland, Calif., assigned to Company B, Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, signals to the range noncommissioned officer-in-charge that her lane is not yet ready during a zero and qualification range at Caughman Range on Victory Base Complex here, July 17. “We’re out here to make sure that everyone qualifies,” said Manning. “Our focus is safety first.”



Photo by Sgt. Joshua Risner, MND-B PAO

Sgt. Christopher Bodkins, from Denton Texas, assigned to Company B, Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, sets up paper qualification targets during a zero and qualification range at Caughman Range on Victory Base Complex here, July 17.



The American Revolution

On this day in American Military History

Washington creates the Purple Heart

On this day in 1782, in Newburgh, New York, General George Washington, the commander in chief of the Continental Army, creates the “Badge for Military Merit,” a decoration consisting of a purple, heart-shaped piece of silk, edged with a narrow binding of silver, with the word “Merit” stitched across the face in silver. The badge was to be presented to soldiers for “any singularly meritorious action” and permitted its wearer to pass guards and sentinels without challenge. The honoree’s name and regiment were also to be inscribed in a “Book of Merit.”

Washington’s “Purple Heart” was awarded to only three known soldiers during the Revolutionary War, all to volunteers from Connecticut: Sergeants Elijah Churchill, William Brown and Daniel Bissell, Jr. The “Book of Merit” was lost, and the decoration was largely forgotten until 1927, when General Charles P. Summerall, the U.S. Army chief of staff, sent an unsuccessful draft bill to Congress to “revive the Badge of Military Merit.” In 1931, Summerall’s successor, General Douglas MacArthur, took up the cause, hoping to reinstate the medal in time for the bicentennial of George Washington’s birth. On February 22, 1932, Washington’s 200th birthday, the U.S. War Department announced the creation of the “Order of the Purple Heart.”

In addition to aspects of Washington’s original design, the new Purple Heart also displays a bust of Washington and his coat of arms. The Order of the Purple Heart, the oldest American military decoration for military merit, is awarded to members of the U.S. armed forces who have been killed or wounded in action against an enemy. It is also awarded to soldiers who have suffered maltreatment as prisoners of war.

“Let it be known that he who wears the military Order of the Purple Heart has given of his blood in the defense of his homeland and shall forever be revered by his fellow countrymen.”

Original phrasing of the order

1782



EOD at COP Meade makes Soldiers feel safer

Story by Sgt. Mary Phillips

30th HBCT PAO, MND-B

ZAIDAN, Iraq – The explosive ordnance disposal team at Combat Outpost Meade helps to make Soldiers of 1st Battalion, 113th Field Artillery Regiment, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, feel a little safer about traveling the roads south of Baghdad.

The team deals with many different kinds of threats, helping to protect the Soldiers living at COP Meade. Most of these threats come in the way of improvised explosive devices.

“Pretty-much anything explosive, we’re involved,” said Airman 1st Class Hans Metz, with the 447th EOD, a native of Oakdale, Minn. “Whether there is an IED on a route, or outside Meade, we take care of it.”

The EOD team also includes a weapons intelligence team member, Air Force Staff Sgt. Joel Schanbacher.

“It’s really cool to be able to say ‘You know what? Today I was able to put away a bad guy,’” said Schanbacher, who hails from Atkins, Iowa. “We collect evidence, send it off, find out who it was [who built or placed the device], and then they can be detained.”

Although the EOD Airmen are not part of the 30th Brigade, Lt. Col. Mac Grimes, battalion commander, feels they are still a very important part of the team.

“They give our Soldiers increased confidence that if they come across something,” said Grimes, of Thomasville, N.C., “EOD will be there and be able to take care of and threat that may be out there waiting for our troops.” ✂



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

Tech Sgt. Matthew Stark, with the 447th Explosive Ordnance Disposal team, (left) helps Sgt. Mica Joseph, with 1st Battalion, 113th Field Artillery Regiment, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, put on the bomb suit worn by EOD when they have to approach an explosive device. Stark, of Buffalo, N.Y., recently spent the afternoon at Combat Outpost Meade, showing soldiers the equipment used by the EOD team.



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

Airman 1st Class Hans Metz with the 447th Explosive Ordnance Disposal team, demonstrates the remote-controlled robot used to help with disarming improvised explosive devices recently at Combat Outpost Meade. Metz, of Oak Dale, Minn. is part of the EOD team attached to the 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team.

PANTHER

Airborne medics train ISF counterparts on basic combat medic skills

Story by Pvt. Jared N. Gehmann

3rd BCT PAO, 82nd Abn. Div., MND-B

ZAIDAN, Iraq – With Iraqi forces in the lead of security in Baghdad, U.S. Paratroopers trained their partners on the importance and duties of a combat medic during a day-long training event July 22 at Joint Security Station Loyalty, Iraq.

To ensure Iraqi Security Force medics are able to assist injured personnel on the ground due to enemy action, combat medics of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, held a series of training lanes for National Police medics assigned to the 4th NP Brigade, 1st NP Division.

The training exercise allowed Iraqi medics to hone their skills by exposing them to several real-life scenarios they may need to save the lives of injured comrades.

Whether it be applying a pressure dressing to a wounded leg, placing a trauma dressing over an injured abdomen or properly using a tourniquet on a severed arm, Paratroopers taught their ISF counterparts the basics of combat medical care.

“We try to go slow and focus them on understanding why we do each step of care,” said Sgt. 1st Class Juan Almonte, assigned to the brigade’s 2nd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, served as the primary instructor during the event. “This was just basic trauma training, throwing on bandages and giving intravenous therapy was the focus of today.”

Almonte, a New York City native, added that this is about the seventh time he has done training events like this with the NP medics. Usually the events are held in small groups of one or two personnel to ensure each Iraqi medic receives step-by-step instruction on an individual level.

Ammar Nijeb, a NP medic who participated in the training said that he learned a lot of new techniques

during the event. Nijeb feels the training he received will better equip him for real combat operations in Baghdad.

“Each one of the NP medics had a chance to get hands on experience during the training,” he said. “This is the first time I have given a person an IV, and I thought that was the most interesting part of today.”

“It all went well and I am thankful for this training,” added Nijeb. ✂



Photo by Pvt. Jared Gehmann, 3rd BCT PAO, 82nd Abn. Div., MND-B

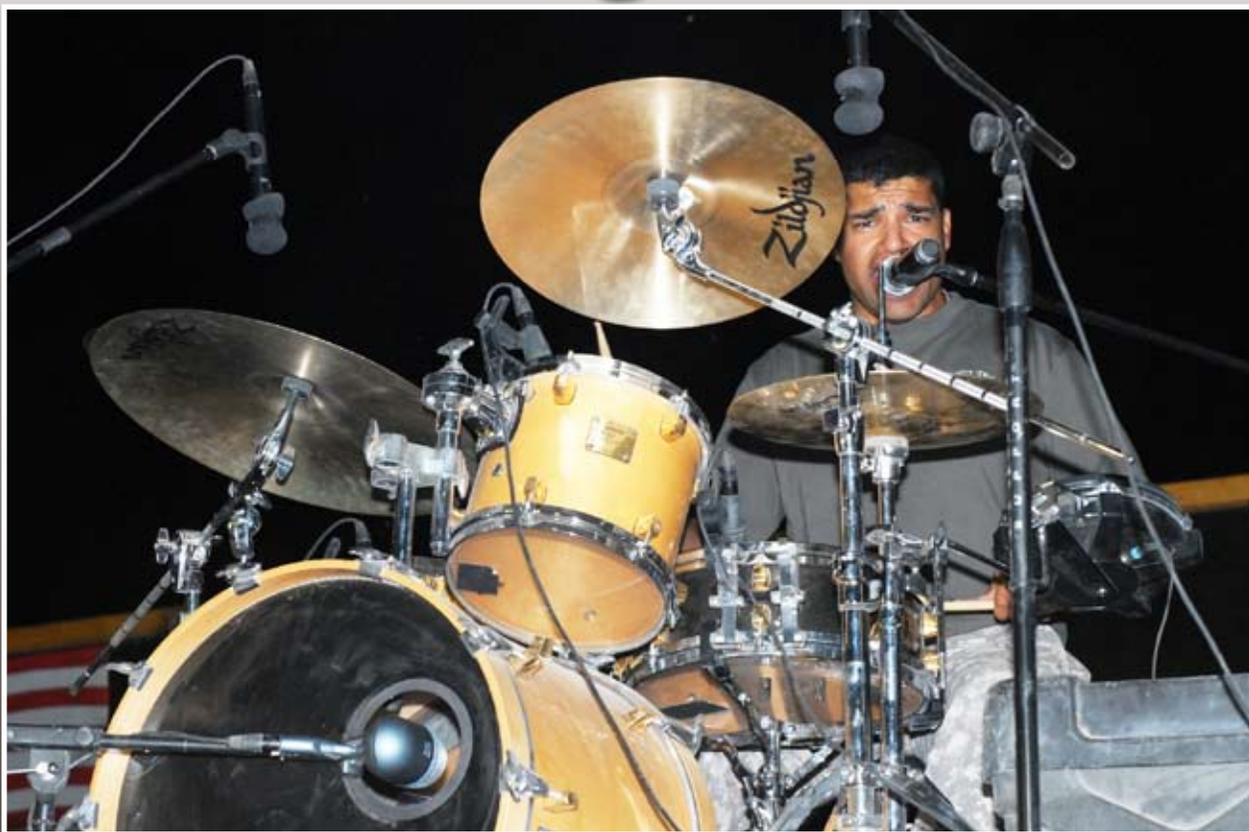
Sgt. 1st Class Juan Almonte (right), of New York City, a senior medic assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, instructs a National Police medic how to apply a pressure dressing during a combat medic training exercise July 22 at Joint Security Station Loyalty, located in the 9 Nissan district of eastern Baghdad. The event was held in order for airborne medics to train and mentor their Iraqi partners on how to treat injuries sustained in combat.



Photo by Pvt. Jared Gehmann, 3rd BCT PAO, 82nd Abn. Div., MND-B

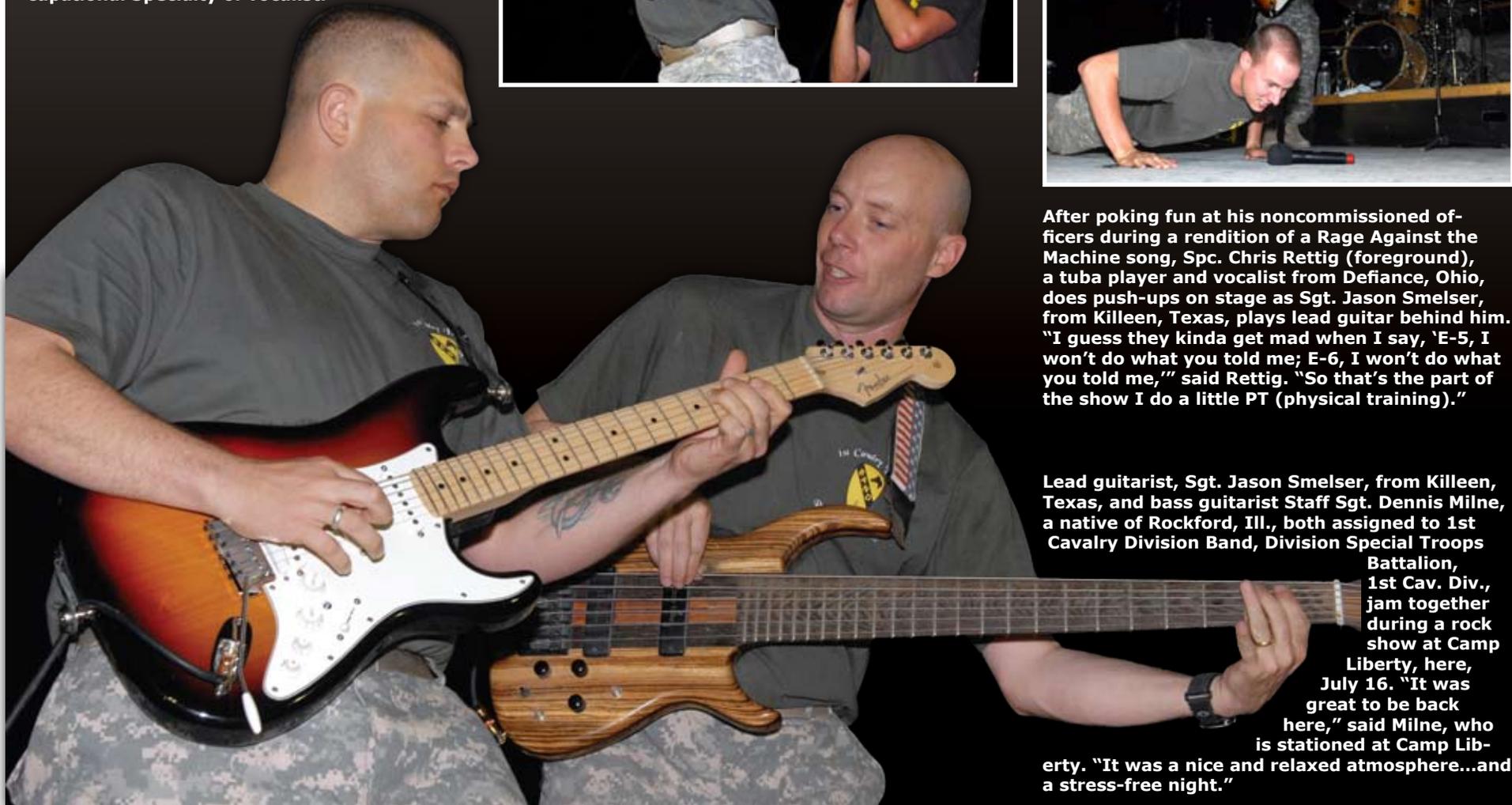
Sgt. 1st Class Juan Almonte, a New York City native, shows a National Police medic how to properly insert a needle on a patient during a combat medic training exercise July 22 at Joint Security Station Loyalty, located in the 9 Nissan district of eastern Baghdad. The medics have held a series of training events the past couple weeks to teach their Iraqi counterparts on how to treat injuries sustained in combat. Almonte is a senior medic assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, Multi-National Division-Baghdad.

#01 Underground Band rocks Iraq



BAGHDAD – While banging on the drums, Staff Sgt. Rodolfo Rendon, a native of Uvalde, Texas, assigned to 1st Cavalry Division Band, Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cav. Div., sings a tune for the crowd at Camp Liberty, here, July 16. The band, GO1 Underground, travels around Baghdad playing for service members who don't see many Morale, Welfare & Recreation shows. "We've been really busy going to [joint security stations] and [combat outposts] and a lot of people can't get out there, but we can get over there in a combat patrol on a convoy," explained Rendon.

(Right) Bemidji, Minn. native, Staff Sgt. Renatta Draper (left), a vocalist, enthusiastically sings for a crowd at Camp Liberty, here, July 16, as Spc. Chris Rettig (right), a tuba player and vocalist from Defiance, Ohio, provides backup vocals during the high-energy free rock show. Both Soldiers are assigned to 1st Cavalry Division Band, Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cav. Div. "The reason why I came out [to Iraq] is to sing for people," admitted Draper. "If we reach one person, then I'm happy." Draper is currently the only Soldier serving in the Army who holds the Military Occupational Specialty of vocalist.



Photos by Staff Sgt. Mark Burrell, MND-B PAO

Killeen, Texas native, lead guitarist, Sgt. Jason Smelser, assigned to 1st Cavalry Division Band, Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cav. Div. does his signature move playing the last song of the night, "Free Bird" behind his head at a free rock concert on Camp Liberty, here, July 16. "'Free Bird' is always our closing song...in the video game Guitar Hero, it's the closing set," explained Smelser who plays the game with his band mates on their downtime. "They wanted me to do something special like in the game, so I came up with the behind the head thing."



After poking fun at his noncommissioned officers during a rendition of a Rage Against the Machine song, Spc. Chris Rettig (foreground), a tuba player and vocalist from Defiance, Ohio, does push-ups on stage as Sgt. Jason Smelser, from Killeen, Texas, plays lead guitar behind him. "I guess they kinda get mad when I say, 'E-5, I won't do what you told me; E-6, I won't do what you told me,'" said Rettig. "So that's the part of the show I do a little PT (physical training)."

Lead guitarist, Sgt. Jason Smelser, from Killeen, Texas, and bass guitarist Staff Sgt. Dennis Milne, a native of Rockford, Ill., both assigned to 1st Cavalry Division Band, Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cav. Div., jam together during a rock show at Camp Liberty, here, July 16. "It was great to be back here," said Milne, who is stationed at Camp Liberty. "It was a nice and relaxed atmosphere...and a stress-free night."

Intense course helps Soldiers make dreams into reality

Story by Sgt. 1st Class Ron Burke

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – Twenty Soldiers gazed expectantly at the test administrator standing in the middle of the room, waiting for the signal to begin. “You may begin,” said Sgt. 1st Class Valroy Williams as he pressed the button to start the timer. Williams, the operations noncommissioned officer for Company A, Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, is the program manager and primary English instructor for the Camp Liberty DSTB GT (General Technical) Improvement Class. At his signal, heads lowered and pens began scribbling out math problems here, July 16.

GT improvement classes enable Soldiers to score higher on the Armed Forces Classification Test (AFCT). Armed Forces Classification Testing re-evaluates military personnel striving to earn a higher

GT score to meet the requirements for re-enlistment, a military occupational specialty change, warrant officer training, Officer Candidate School or Reserve Officers’ Training Corps. After three weeks of intense reviews, quizzes, homework and late nights, the Soldiers here are taking their final assessment test.

“This is my tenth class,” said Williams, who is from Trinidad, West Indies and is attached to Co. A from his parent

unit, the 18th Fires Brigade. “We wanted to make this class convenient for students because it was only held at Camp Victory.”

The course is split into a math and English section. Students review and work on math problems five nights a week as the math portion of the AFCT carrying greater weight. Students hone their paragraph comprehension skills and word knowledge four nights a week.

“You have 11 minutes to complete this quiz,” said Master Sgt. Mario Dovalina, as students moved on to the word knowledge portion of the test. Dovalina, who is from Dallas, is the operations security manager for the 1st Cavalry Division and volunteers as a

math tutor for the program. There are twenty tutors on hand that can help Soldiers with math and English when needed.

The course is challenging in a deployed environment. Students must manage their daily duties,

attend class at night and find time to complete the homework assignments for all three sections and study.

“You have to put a lot of time into it,” said Sgt. Michelle Perez, an automated logistics specialist with the 299th Brigade Support Bn., 2nd Bde., 1st Inf. Div. “I’ve learned a lot and I’m doing this because I want to become a warrant officer in the logistics field,” said the San Juan, Puerto Rico native.

Not all Soldiers are in the class to

“I’ve been able to meet a lot of Soldiers who have come from a variety of challenges, joined the military, and really started on the path to make dramatic changes in their lives and the lives of their families.”

– Sgt. 1st Class Valroy Williams, course instructor, A Co., DSTB, 18th Fires Bde., 1st Cav. Div., MND-B



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

Spc. Andrew Lemons (left), an imagery analyst with Company B, Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, Multi-National Division-Baghdad, from Houston, and Spc. Cory Elliott, a wheeled vehicle mechanic with Headquarters Service Company, DSTB, 1st Cav. Div. from Dekalb, Ill., work on a customary units of measure quiz to start off the day’s class here July 16. Each class begins with a quiz that reviews the homework assignment from the night before.

change their MOS or become an officer. One Soldier enrolled in the class simply wants to improve his math and English scores. “I wanted to improve myself,” said Sgt. Cory Elliott, a wheeled vehicle mechanic with Headquarters Service Company, DSTB, 1st Cav. Div., who is from Dekalb, Ill. “I’ve worked on everything from an MRAP (Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected vehicle) down and I like it so I don’t want to change.”

Most students in the GT improvement class increase their scores by 20 percent with an average AFCT improvement of 12 points. The goal is to attain a score of 110. A score of 110 on the GT composite would ensure that a Soldier would meet the GT standards for OCS, Warrant Officer Candidate School and many other military programs.

Spc. Andrew Lemons, an imagery analyst with B Co., DSTB, 1st Cav. Div., has his dream in sight. “I’ve always wanted to fly,” said the Houston native. “I’m going to take this test and raise my score so I can fly AH-64 Apache helicopters.”

“I’ve learned quite a bit running this class,” said Williams, who will redeploy next month. “I’ve been able to meet a lot of Soldiers who have come from a variety of challenges, joined the military, and really started on the path to make dramatic changes in their lives and the lives of their families.”

Williams also explained that the dedication needed for the course pays off.

“I’ve seen immediate results with students who put in warrant officer packets and officer packets within weeks, some who have received special assignments and others who have changed their MOS within days after achieving a GT score of 110 or higher,” he said.



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

Sgt. 1st Class Valroy Williams, an operations noncommissioned officer with the 18th Fires Brigade attached to Company A, Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, reviews the answers to the English portion of the final assessment test for the class, July 17. This class cycle is the tenth for Williams, who is from Trinidad, West Indies.

The timer beeped, signaling the end of the last portion of the test. “Stop, please put down your pens and pass your answer sheets and test packets to the front,” said Williams. Twenty Soldiers exhibited several forms of relief: stretching, rubbing eyes, nodding, and an occasional smile before shuffling out of the classroom.

The classes are ongoing. Soldiers wishing to learn more about the GT Improvement course can contact their first sergeant or visit the Camp Victory Education Center. ✂



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

Capt. Tajudeen Ottun, the division pharmacist for the 1st Cavalry Div., who is from Long Beach, Calif., reviews one of the math problems on the final assessment test for the GT (general technical) improvement class, July 17. Twenty other Soldiers within MND-B volunteer to tutor Soldiers who want additional help in preparation for the Armed Forces Classification Test.

Engineers rebuild range at Task Force Raptor



BAGHDAD – Spc. Joshua Carrington of Oneonta, N.Y., heavy equipment operator, 46th Engineer Combat Battalion (Heavy), 225th Engineer Brigade, operates the bucket loader to remove HESCO barrier debris from the old range separation berm and away from the project site in preparation for the setup of the new range separation wall July 9 at Task Force Raptor here.

*Photos by Staff Sgt. Thomas Schwenkler,
46th ECB (H), 225th Eng. Bde., MND-B*



Pvt. Gary McFadden of London, Ky., heavy equipment operator, 46th Engineer Combat Battalion (Heavy), 225th Engineer Brigade, ground guides the hydraulic excavator operator driven by Spc. Mark Dillon of Reed City, Mich., as he fills HESCO barriers with sand and dirt at Task Force Raptor here. Soldiers use shovels to even out the dirt fill in the baskets.



Soldiers of earthmoving platoon, 46th Engineer Combat Battalion (Heavy), 225th Engineer Brigade, use a Bobcat loader to set up HESCO barriers, large containers filled with dirt used for force protection, during their range construction project July 19 at Task Force Raptor here.

(Below) Soldiers of Company B, 46th Engineer Combat Battalion (Heavy), 225th Engineer Brigade, lift an empty HESCO barrier into place to create the second tier of the range separation wall July 19 at Task Force Raptor here. The wall will protect Soldiers from ricochets and allow the range to be used for a wider range of training activities.



Mile-long training trek c

Combat Lifesave

BAGHDAD – As the sun slowly rose beyond the palm trees on signal hill, Soldiers worked together in two teams of nine to complete a mile-long combat lifesaver training exercise to end a three-day CLS course, here, July 22.

“Okay, everyone set?” asked Sgt. Janelle Graham, a combat medic and course instructor with Headquarters Support Company, Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division. “You need to do a fireman’s carry from here to the quarter-mile mark.”

Soldiers in full gear lined up with stretchers, skeds and aid bags as the Sacramento, Calif. native explained the first task. On her signal, one Soldier on each team was hoisted onto the shoulders of another and the whole team shuffled down the road. On cues from the medics, teams stopped and switched ‘casualties’ and equipment so everyone got a chance to complete the first task.

The teams, sweaty and focused, worked to keep up with the demands of the medics.

“Skeds! Get your casualty on a sked! Your casualty has a gunshot wound on their left leg!” shouted Graham. As Soldiers placed their ‘casualties’ on the skeds, Graham eyed the placement of the straps across the ‘casualty’s’ chest and legs. As one team member strapped on a combat tourniquet to an ‘injured’ leg, another applied an emergency trauma bandage. Then the teams lugged their equipment and their casualty on their improvised litter to the half-mile marker.

“Okay, you need to administer IV’s,” yelled Graham as the teams reached the marker. Teams switched to four-man litters and quickly gathered items needed for an intravenous injection out of their combat lifesaver bags.

Securely strapped to her litter, Pfc. Lauren McKeehan, a supply clerk with HSC, DSTB, 1st Cav. Div., from Texarkana, Ark., extended her arm to Pfc. Kenny Lawson of Battery E, 3rd Battalion, 4th Air Defense Artillery Regiment from Philadelphia, who quickly applied a tourniquet and had IV fluid flowing into her vein in less than two minutes. After taping the line to her arm, Lawson, an air defense control computer operator and maintainer, held the bag of fluid aloft as he and the rest of his team took off for the finish line.

Everything the Soldiers have learned the past two days was being put to the test. Day one of instruction consisted of controlling bleeding of an extremity, opening and maintaining the airway, treating penetrating chest wounds and decompressing a tension pneumothorax. Training on day two consisted of evacuating a casualty using a sked or improvised litter, inserting a nasopharyngeal airway tube, initiating a saline lock, administering an intravenous infusion and initiating a medevac card and requesting a medical evacuation. The CLS class usually lasts five days but, in a deployed environment, there is a limited amount of time that Soldiers can be away from their daily duties so the class is taught and evaluated in three days.

“I like that there is a lot of hands-on training,” said McKeehan. “You get to interact with new people and there are a lot of things that have changed since the last time I took a CLS class in Korea.”

Lots of things are changing.

“All Soldiers are now required to be combat lifesaver certified,” said Capt. Marolyn Pearson, the division’s senior physician’s assistant assigned to HSC, DSTB, 1st Cav. Div. “If we’re in a mass casualty situation, encounter an improvised explosive device, or injuries during a patrol, there are usually one or two medics around,” she added. “If a medic is not available, a Soldier who is CLS qualified can do almost anything a medic can do.”

Fatigue set in as Graham warned about communication and teamwork when lifting and lowering the litter as McKeehan’s teammates shuffled along the side of the road, struggling, stopping and switching out from carrying the litter to carrying equipment. The end was in sight and Cpl. Michael

Warren, an information technology specialist with Company B, DSTB, 1st Cav. Div., encouraged his team. “We’re almost there, keep it up!” Warren, who hails from Dexter, Mo., led his team past the finish line. The Soldiers lowered the litter and proceeded to suck in air and suck down water.

With the exercise complete for team one, Lawson withdrew the IV from McKeehan’s arm and the team moved to some shade to wait on team two. As they waited and drank water, Warren pulled out his notes and began reviewing his team for the written test that was set for later in the day.

“You really have to learn to depend on each other,” said Pfc. Seth Crowell, a supply clerk with Company A, DSTB, 1st Cav. Div. “Communication is important and I’ve also learned that you have to be conditioned or you’ll burn out physically. It was a good experience,” the Buffalo, N.Y. native said as he poured water over his head. “I have a new respect for medics.”

The combat medic who taught the class and supervised the practical exercises for the past three days was happy about the results.

“I saw a lot of good teamwork today,” said Graham. “Lawson and his team did great with the IV, they were communicating, and I think they need to work on their PT [physical training] more,” she said as she walked back to her ambulance.

“I’m proud of them,” said Graham. “They all passed and we now have 18 more combat lifesavers here to help if needed.” ✂



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

Sgt. Andrew Reinheimer of Battery E, 3rd Battalion, 4th Air Defense Artillery Regiment attached to the Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, from Radcliff, Ky., transports a ‘casualty’ during the final training exercise of a three-day combat lifesaver course, here, July 22. Eighteen Soldiers worked in two teams of nine to complete various tasks that were taught during the past three days.



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

concludes +

er class

(Right) Two Division Special Troops Battalion Soldiers drag another on a sked improvised litter as part of a mile-long final training exercise designed to evaluate 18 Soldiers' skills and knowledge acquired during the past three days of combat lifesaver training here at Camp Liberty, July 22. Soldiers also had to perform a fireman's carry, transport a casualty on a four-man litter, evaluate a casualty, administer a saline lock and intravenous infusion to pass the course.



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

(Left) Pfc. Kenny Lawson of Battery E, 3rd Battalion, 4th Air Defense Artillery Regiment attached to the Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, from Philadelphia, quickly administers a saline lock and inserts an IV into the vein of Pfc. Lauren McKeehan, a supply clerk with HSC, DSTB, 1st Cav. Div. from Texarkana, Ark., during a mile-long final training exercise of a three-day combat lifesaver course here, July 22. The Soldiers wasted no time moving McKeehan after Lawson secured the IV line on her arm with tape.



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



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

Spc. Evan Walker (left) from Avon, Conn., a patrol explosives dog handler with the Victory K-9 group, and Spc. Blake Clements, both assigned to Company A, Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, lead the rest of team one as they carry a 'casualty' on a four-man litter during the final training exercise to conclude the first combat lifesaver course that the DSTB has offered to Soldiers here on Camp Liberty. Both teams were required to transport Soldiers by a fireman's carry, by improvised litter and sked, evaluate a casualty, and administer a saline lock and intravenous infusion during the final exercise.

CAB 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.



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.

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

MAVERICKS

DSTB medic conducts first aid refresher training

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



BAGHDAD – Spc. Jennifer Laknahour, (left) a health care specialist from Milwaukee, assigned to Headquarters Support Company, Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, opens an Individual First Aid Kit (IFAK) to show Soldiers how all six items are organized before having them conduct an inventory of their own during IFAK refresher training, July 16. The DSTB First Aid Station conducts first aid training monthly for Soldiers in Camp Liberty.



Spc. Jennifer Laknahour, (left) a health care specialist from Milwaukee, assigned to HSC, DSTB, 1st Cav. Div., talks Sgt. Alexi Agosto, a clarinet player from Pequannock, N.J., assigned to the 1st Cavalry Band, DSTB, 1st Cav. Div., through the use and position of the combat action tourniquet as he straps it on her arm during Individual First Aid Kit (IFAK) refresher training here, July 16.



(Right) With a nasopharyngeal airway tube positioned on the side of her face, Spc. Jennifer Laknahour, a health care specialist assigned to HSC, DSTB, 1st Cav. Div., explains to Soldiers how the tube slides down your airway and allows casualties to breathe whether conscious or not. Laknahour, a Milwaukee resident, lined the tube on the side of her face to show Soldiers how to choose which size to use by the distance from your nose to your ear during Individual First Aid Kit (IFAK) refresher class here, July 16. The purpose of the refresher training is to familiarize Soldiers with the six items that make up the IFAK.

MEDICS HONE CRITICAL SKILLS DURING TRAINING EXERCISE

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



BAGHDAD – Sgt. Braden Kotlarz, of Rockford, Ill., applies a trauma wound dressing on a role-playing wounded Soldier during a trauma lane training exercise July 16 on Joint Security Station Loyalty, located on the 9 Nissan district of eastern Baghdad. The Paratrooper medics conducted the exercise in order to hone their skills and know how to react in case their fellow Paratroopers suffer a serious, potentially life-ending injury during a combat operation. Kotlarz is assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division Multi-National Division-Baghdad.



Sgt. Scott Baird, of Pigeon Forge, Tenn., a medic assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division Multi-National Division – Baghdad, reaches for his medical pouch in order to retrieve a bandage to stop excessive bleeding on the neck of a role-playing wounded Soldier during a trauma lane training exercise July 16 on Joint Security Station Loyalty, located on the 9 Nissan district of eastern Baghdad. Several medics conducted the exercise in order to keep their skills sharp in the event of a medical emergency suffered during a combat operation.



Sgt. Jay Council, of Franklin, Va., a medic assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division Multi-National Division – Baghdad, applies a tourniquet on a role-playing wounded Soldier during a trauma lane training exercise July 16 on Joint Security Station Loyalty, located on the 9 Nissan district of eastern Baghdad. Several airborne medics conducted the exercise in order to hone their skills on how to when react to a serious, potentially life-ending injury.

1st ACB Battalion CSMs hand over responsibility of Soldiers, mission

Sgt. Nathan Hoskins, 1st ACB PAO, 1st Cav. Div., MND-B



TAJI, Iraq - Command Sgt. Maj. Glen Vela (left) from Dallas, the command sergeant major of the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Multi-National Division - Baghdad, slaps a 'First Team' combat patch on Command Sgt. Maj. Jose Soliz (right) of Sandia, Texas, the new command sergeant major for 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st ACB, during a change of responsibility ceremony, July 18, on Camp Taji, Iraq. Soliz comes to the 1st ACB with years of experience - some in special operations - and is now a part of the Air Cav family, said Vela during his remarks.



Command Sgt. Maj. Glen Vela (left) from Dallas, the command sergeant major of the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cav. Div, MND-B, passes the 4th Bn., 227th Avn. Regt., 1st ACB guidon to Command Sgt. Maj. Douglas Greene (right) of Harker Heights, Texas, the new command sergeant major for 4th Bn., during a change of responsibility ceremony, July 18, Camp Taji, Iraq. After accepting the guidon, Greene told the crowd of Soldiers - in his own way - that he was ready to get to started. "I'm going to end this with something my grandfather always used to say, 'Let's stop all this love-making and get to work,'" said Greene to laughter and applause.



Command sergeants major, past and present, of the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cav. Div., MND-B, stand and watch as a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter from the 1st ACB flies over during their change of responsibility ceremony, July 18, Camp Taji, Iraq. From left to right are Sgt. Maj. John Taylor of Grand Junction, Colo., former command sergeant major of 1st Bn., 227th Avn. Regt., 1st ACB; Command Sgt. Maj. Jose Soliz of newly appointed command sergeant major of 1st Bn.; Command Sgt. Maj. Glen Vela of Dallas, command sergeant major of the 1st ACB; Command Sgt. Maj. Douglas Greene of Harker Heights, Texas, newly appointed command sergeant major of 4th Bn., 227th Avn. Regt.; and Sgt. Maj. Gary Durant, former command sergeant major of 4th Bn.

State governors visit 1st Air Cavalry Brigade

Story by Spc. Alun Thomas

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

TAJI, Iraq - Removed from their home states, continents away in the hot, arid climate of Iraq, it might be easy for Soldiers to become distant from the places they like to call home, as life goes on without them.

However, for some members of the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade at Camp Taji Iraq, a base camp north of Baghdad, their states came to them, bringing with them a reminder of the homes they left behind to serve their country.

Governors from Illinois, Minnesota, Missouri, Nevada and Texas made a goodwill visit to the 1st ACB, 1st Cavalry Division, Multi-National Division - Baghdad, July 18, and met with Soldiers from their respective states, while receiving a tour of the airfield and learning about the everyday activities of the 1st ACB.

The tour was a chance to meet the Soldiers and boost morale, said Texas Gov. Rick Perry, who said this is his third trip to Iraq since 2006.

"I'm coming in to see the troops, especially the ones from Texas, but also the other 49 states and territories," Perry said. "It's important to see them and tell them we appreciate what they're doing and (that) the folks back home are pulling for them and praying for them."

Perry said he is proud to come over and fly the flag for not just Texas, but the United States, by thanking deployed members for their service, adding the reception is worth the trip.

"It's awesome, the kids love to see us, but I think we get a bigger charge out of it than they do," Perry said. "It's great to see the excitement of everything they're doing out here."

The situation in Iraq is significantly better than it was in 2006 on his first visit, Perry said.

"It's amazing the progress that's been made in the country and seeing Baghdad getting back to somewhat of a semblance of normalcy shows what an impact we've had here," he said.

Getting to visit the 1st ACB while they are deployed was also an honor for Perry, who was inspired by his visit with the brigade.

"I've seen the Cav. back home at (Fort) Hood but never in Iraq," Perry said. "It was nice to touch hands, touch hearts and touch minds."

Joining Perry on the trip was Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn, who said the Soldiers he met from the 1st ACB are among the most dedicated people the U.S. has to offer.

"Our state (Illinois) is the land of Lincoln so we believe in patriotism and serving others and all the men and women I've talked to here have served with heart," Quinn said. "Everyone I've met on this trip has more than paid



Photo by Sgt. Nathan Hoskins, 1st ACB PAO, 1st Cav. Div., MND-B

Nevada Gov. Jim Gibbons (left) and Texas Gov. Rick Perry (center), listen as Lt. Col. Ralph Litscher (right), from Half Moon Bay, Calif., commander of 2nd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Multi-National Division - Baghdad, explains medevac procedures, July 18, at Camp Taji, Iraq, as part of the governors visit to the 1st ACB. The governors from Illinois, Missouri and Minnesota were also present during the visit.

their service to others."

The trip is not just to honor those serving from Illinois, but every state, Quinn said.

"I really admire volunteerism and answering the call of duty because this is a tough deployment," Quinn said. "We honor every person from our state and every other state for standing up for our democracy."

Having the chance to visit and experience the 1st ACB was also an honor, Quinn said, who was excited to sit in an AH-64D Apache attack helicopter and meet enthusiastic 1st ACB troopers from Illinois.

"You can just see the spirit and ability here and it's inspiring," Quinn said. "The kind of enthusiasm and energy that each one of these service members brings to the job is important and that's what teamwork is all about."

An Illinois native, who had an opportunity to meet with Quinn, was Maj. David Dinkelman, from Chicago, support operations officer, 615th Aviation Support Brigade, 1st ACB, who said he was moved by Quinn and his words to fellow Soldiers from his state.

"Whenever you can get the governor from your state to visit and talk to the troops, it's a tremendous opportunity," Dinkelman said. "You could see it on everyone's faces while he talked. You can't beat that kind of inspiration."

The trip was a highlight of the deployment thus far for Dinkelman and he is certain all of the 1st ACB Soldiers who experienced the governor's visit appreciated it.

"I don't think you could find a Soldier who didn't," he said smiling. ✂



Photo by Sgt. Nathan Hoskins, 1st ACB PAO, 1st Cav. Div., MND-B

Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon (right), gestures enthusiastically as he discusses baseball with Sgt. Thomas Adams (center), from St. Louis, Mo., transportation coordinator, Headquarters Support Company, 615th Aviation Support Battalion, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Multi-National Division - Baghdad and Spc. Scott Waller, from Steelville, Mo., armament support, Co. B, 615th ASB, 1st ACB, July 18, at Camp Taji, Iraq. Nixon was part of a visit which also included governors from Illinois, Minnesota, Nevada and Texas.



Photo by Sgt. Nathan Hoskins, 1st ACB PAO, 1st Cav. Div., MND-B

While standing in front of an AH-64D Apache attack helicopter, Texas Gov. Rick Perry (right) discusses weapons systems with Col. Douglas Gabram of Cleveland, Ohio, commander of the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Multi-National Division - Baghdad, during a visit to Camp Taji, Iraq, July 18. Perry, along with governors from Illinois, Minnesota, Nevada and Missouri also visited the troopers of the 1st ACB. "I've seen the Cav. back home at (Fort) Hood but never in Iraq," Perry said. "It was nice to touch hands, touch hearts and touch minds."

Angelina Jolie visits 1st Cav., MND-B Soldiers

Photos by Spc. Phillip Turner and Sgt. 1st Class Jon Cupp, MND-B PAO



BAGHDAD—Academy award winning actress Angelina Jolie shares a light-hearted moment with Maj. Gen. Daniel Bolger (right), commanding general for 1st Cavalry Division and Multi-National Division-Baghdad and Command Sgt. Maj. Rory Malloy (left), the division's senior enlisted advisor, during a visit by Jolie to Camp Liberty, Iraq July 23. The actress took time out of her busy schedule as a United Nations Goodwill ambassador to meet with Soldiers from the 1st Cavalry Division and Multi-National Division-Baghdad. In her Goodwill ambassador role, Jolie serves as an advocate for refugees in Iraq and throughout the world.



Chicago native, Pfc. Bryan Ward, who is a human resource specialist for the 211th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment attached to Multi-National Division-Baghdad, visits with United Nations Goodwill ambassador Angelina Jolie, after she made a promise to "make him smile," during her visit to the MND-B headquarters on Camp Liberty, Iraq July 23. Over 300 Soldiers lined up to see the Academy Award winner during her stop here.



Fargo, N.D. native, Sgt. Adrienn Falk, administrative assistant to the commanding general, 1st Cavalry Division, Multi-National Division-Baghdad, presents a 1st Cav. Div. hat and division coins to actress and United Nations Goodwill ambassador Angelina Jolie July 23 during a visit to Camp Liberty, Iraq. Jolie took time to speak with and meet MND-B Soldiers while in Iraq as an advocate for the rights of refugees.

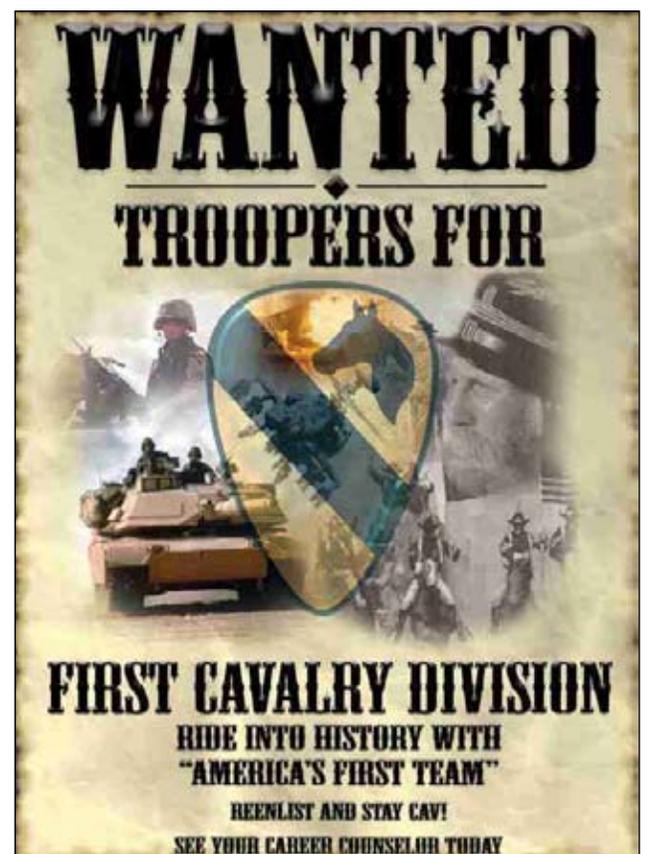


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www.hood.army.mil/1stcavdiv



Stryker vehicle proves to be good fit for Pennsylvania Guard's cavalry troopers

Story by Sgt. Doug Roles

56th SBCT PAO, MND-B

TAJI, Iraq – Decked out in pope glass, camo netting and possibly an ice chest or two, the vehicle begins to resemble a parade float. But Soldiers who depend on the Stryker each day at Camp Taji, Iraq, a base camp north of Baghdad, are fond of their “trucks” that bring a new level of versatility and mobility to the battlefield.

Soldiers of one 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team unit also praise the eight-wheeled, all-wheel-drive Stryker for its high-tech communications package and its safety features. First Lt. Eric Tomlinson of Warminster, Pa., leader of 1st Platoon, A Troop, 2nd Squadron, 104th Cavalry Regiment, said he appreciates the armor package of the Stryker.

“It’s a lot more robust than what you’ve got in a humvee,” Tomlinson said. “And the other thing that’s great about it is the flexibility of being able to have more dismounts in a concentrated vehicle platform.”

The Stryker, produced by General Dynamics Land Systems, comes in 10 variants. The infantry carrier variant can shuttle a full squad of seven Soldiers, in addition to a vehicle commander, driver and gunner. The vehicles feature fire-suppression systems and operators can adjust tire pressure to terrain.

The 56th Brigade’s units have tailored the air-conditioned passenger area of their vehicles to meet their needs. Baggage or bulky gear can be stowed on the roof or secured to the sides of the Stryker. Ice chests are typically found lashed to an inside shelf while additional cases of bottled water and foodstuffs are stored in various nooks and crannies. Padded bench seats add to the comfort factor.

“It’s great in the sense that what you need you can bring it with you, whether it’s more Soldiers, more equip-

ment or more supplies,” Tomlinson said.

Tomlinson served as a platoon sergeant with the 2nd Sqdn., 104th Cav. Regt. when it was a humvee-mounted force. He witnessed the transition to a Stryker force as he transitioned to the officer corps and moved into the job of platoon leader. Tomlinson said he “couldn’t be happier” working with a Stryker unit, saying every vehicle has its pluses and minuses.

He said the Stryker offers more room than the humvee and better mobility than the military’s Mine Resistant Ambush Protected family of vehicles. He said his platoon, as a tactical area command (TAC) attached to the headquarters troop, often has to roll out on missions across the brigade area of operations with little advance notice. He said the versatility of the Stryker matches the flexibility of his Soldiers.

Sgt. Charles Chiao of Mahanoy City, Pa., a First Platoon Stryker vehicle commander, trained on the Stryker vehicle for two years prior to the mobilization and deployment of the 56th SBCT in September 2009. He said he “has faith in the Stryker” and agreed that Soldiers don’t have to use a “stock out of the box” vehicle. Chiao said the vehicles can be configured for various missions by moving or adding storage shelves. Additionally, Soldiers can mount the M2 .50-caliber machine gun, 240B machine gun or MK19 grenade launcher as the infantry carrier variant’s main armament. Hatches in the vehicle allow for “air guards” to pull security in all directions, from behind the safety of the bulletproof pope glass.

Chiao said one of the keys to success has been for the platoon’s Soldiers to realize the limitations of their vehicles and not put themselves in dangerous situations.

“When we were driving back at the Gap [Fort Indian-town Gap, Pa.] we put the Stryker through its paces. We purposely went out and tried to get it stuck. We couldn’t really do it,” he said.

“If you have a good driver, you’re going to have a really good Stryker,” Chiao said. “There are really not a lot of places we can’t go and we get there quietly.”

The so-called “bird cage” slat armor adds three feet of width to the roughly 18-ton vehicles, something drivers have to remember when navigating the streets of the Taji region.

“You have to get used to the size,” Spc. Carson Mensinger of Berwick, Pa., a First Platoon driver, said. “You get in a mindset of how wide you are going down the road and of how powerful the vehicle is.”

Stryker drivers look through three periscopes of glass. Their visibility is limited to about a 90-degree field of view.

“I don’t think you ever feel 100 percent safe. I certainly feel safer in this vehicle than probably just about any other vehicle.”

– Spc. Carson Mensinger, First Platoon, A Troop, 2nd Squadron, 104th Cavalry Regiment driver

“We depend a lot on the VCs [vehicle commanders] to be our eyes where we can’t see,” Mensinger said.

Mensinger said the deployment is “a lot calmer” than he imagined. He said as a driver he is in one of the most protected places in the vehicle.

“We know the Stryker can handle a lot,” Mensinger said. “I have tons of confidence in the vehicle.”

Tomlinson said the first time his platoon came into contact with the enemy FM radio communications were not available. The platoon was able to use the onboard FBCB2 graphics communication system.

“It was good to know that I was able to communicate with the people who I needed to come and to support me,” Tomlinson said. “I don’t think you ever feel 100 percent safe. I certainly feel safer in this vehicle than probably just about any other vehicle.”

Mensinger explained that the Stryker can traverse two feet-wide ditches and climb a vertical barrier one-foot in height. He said thanks to the vehicle’s suspension system drivers and passengers have a smooth ride.

“It can be fun. It’s like monster truckin’ just not as high off the ground,” Mensinger said. ✂



Photo by Sgt. Doug Roles, 56th SBCT PAO, MND-B

Spc. Elliott Smith of Reading, Pa., a Soldier with A Troop, 2nd Squadron, 104th Cavalry Regiment, 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, talks on a radio headset in a Stryker vehicle July 20. The eight-wheeled Stryker vehicle is fielded in 10 variants. The infantry carrier variant can haul a seven-man infantry squad.



Photo by Sgt. Doug Roles, 56th SBCT PAO, MND-B

Pfc. Glenn Carter (right) of Wrightsville, Pa. and 1st Lt. Eric Tomlinson (center) of Warminster, Pa. patrol through Sab al Bour, southwest of Taji and north of Baghdad, with a column of Stryker vehicles July 20. The Soldiers are from A Troop, 2nd Squadron, 104th Cavalry Regiment, 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team.

DSTB Soldiers step into NCO world

Story by Staff Sgt. Mark Burrell

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD—In the pastel opulence and ornate chandelier-covered ceilings of al-Faw Palace, 36 Soldiers from the Division Special Troops Battalion, Multi-National Division – Baghdad were inducted into the noncommissioned officer corps, here, July 20.

“Because of the noncommissioned officer corps, our Army is what it is today,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Lawrence Wilson, the senior enlisted advisor in Iraq. “Without the corps, our great warriors would not have the leadership and guidance to execute this mission in Iraq and Afghanistan.”

As command sergeants major from Multi-National Forces – Iraq, Multi-National Corps – Iraq, MND-B and DSTB were present for the ceremony, the new NCOs were excited and honored to be inducted.

“I worked really hard to get here and it’s just nice to be recognized,” expressed Sgt. Theresa Leal, an intelligence NCO from Solomons Island, Md., assigned to Company B, DSTB, 1st Cavalry Division. “You’re over here and every day doing the same thing over and over again...it’s nice, especially downrange, when someone takes the time to recognize the hard job you’re doing.”

The ceremony had many levels of meaning for the Soldiers and was a memorable event.

“I don’t think they’ll ever forget it – the Year of the NCO, in Iraq, in al-Faw Palace...it’s got that hooah factor, is what I like to call it, for the NCOs,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Clinton Joseph, the DSTB senior enlisted advisor from New Orleans



Photo by Staff Sgt. Mark Burrell, MND-B PAO

Newly inducted noncommissioned officers respond to Command Sgt. Maj. Clinton Joseph (background), the Division Special Troops Battalion senior enlisted advisor from New Orleans assigned to 1st Cav. Div., during an NCO induction ceremony at al-Faw Palace, Camp Victory, July 20. “I don’t think they’ll ever forget it – the Year of the NCO, in Iraq, in al-Faw Palace...it’s got that hooah factor, is what I like to call it, for the NCOs,” said Joseph.

assigned to 1st Cav. Div., who presided over the ceremony.

The ceremony was rife with NCO tradition and history passed down from the Revolutionary War, to include a quiet moment to salute a traditional memorial for the fallen Soldiers.

“One of the things is the traditions of the NCO Corps. There are numerous traditions that have got to be passed on,” added Joseph. “It’s something that the NCOs need to know how to do...the Year of the NCO gives us the opportunity for NCOs to focus on those traditions.”

Another tradition exhibited was the lighting of the red, white and blue spirit candles that symbolize the attributes the NCO holds highest. Also, the new NCOs each stepped through the NCO archway.

“Today, when you walk through the doorway from specialist to sergeant, remember...you are stepping into the NCO world...you are becoming the leader, not the led,” explained Wilson, the MNF-I Command Sgt. Maj. and a native of Pinebluff, N.C. “When you put those chevrons on today... it’s different – you must take care of your warriors and their families...it’s tough and if anyone could be a leader, everyone would be.”

Having the senior enlisted advisor in Iraq address the NCOs in a room packed to capacity was one highlight among many.

“At one point in time when the first sergeants were lighting the candles and when the first NCO came through the arch, there was a solemn moment of soberness that people were realizing these Soldiers are becoming NCOs,” added Joseph.

The job before these young NCOs isn’t easy Joseph stated. “As a leader, your credibility is just as important as your capability,” he said.

The new NCOs from the DSTB held their heads a little higher and pushed their chests out a little further when the cer-



Photo by Staff Sgt. Mark Burrell, MND-B PAO

After stepping through the NCO archway, Sgt. Aleshia Turner, human resources awards NCO, assigned to Company B, Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, salutes the memorial for the fallen Soldier during an NCO induction ceremony at al-Faw Palace, Camp Victory, July 20. Turner, along with 35 other new NCOs, participated in the tradition-rich ceremony which introduces new NCOs to the world of the NCO.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Mark Burrell, MND-B PAO

Cpl. Gregory Bonine (left), an honor guard from Colorado Springs, Colo., and Cpl. Sean Connell (right), from Tampa, Fla., who is also an honor guard, perform during an NCO induction ceremony at al-Faw Palace, Camp Victory, here, July 20. Both Soldiers are assigned to Company A, Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division. “I love this job,” said Connell who has been doing honor guard duties for four years. “There’s not a bad thing about this job.”

emony was over.

“This was a great day for the officers and NCOs of the DSTB and we’re proud of each of the inductees,” said Joseph.

But those weren’t the only Soldiers affected by the ceremony. Three specialists, who each won Soldier of the Quarter boards at the battalion level, were selected to recite the Soldier’s request to the NCOs.

“I was speaking from the heart in a way,” said Spc. Nicholas Randall, a switch board systems operator and maintainer from North Adams, Mass. assigned to Co. C, DSTB, 1st Cav. Div. “I asked them to show me how they got there so I can get there myself...my goal is to redeploy as an NCO.”

For Soldiers like Randall, learning the tradition and witnessing the meticulous preparation for an NCO induction ceremony is inspiring.

“You come and see something like

this where they recognize you and want you here, it motivates me to get better,” added Randall with a smile. “I’m confident I’ll get there, come hell or high water.”

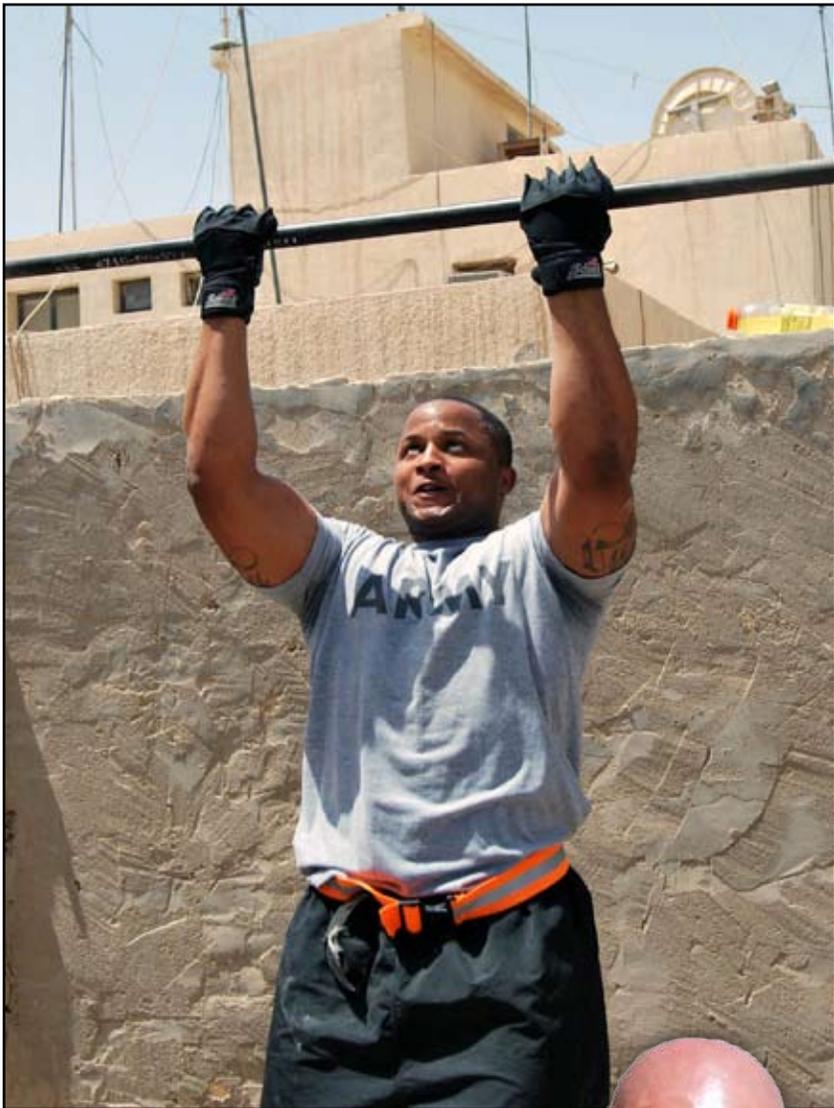
As the honor guard completed their performance and handed over the NCO saber to Joseph, the ceremony’s dignified air lifted and light-hearted laughs echoed throughout the palace while the NCOs were congratulated. The traditions of the NCOs before were upheld by Soldiers that are making history in Iraq as new NCOs.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Mark Burrell, MND-B PAO

First Sgt. Robert Niter (left), from Memphis, Tenn., assigned to Headquarters Service Company and 1st Sgt. Michael Strate assigned to Battery F, 26th Field Artillery Regiment, pour water over the rank of Sgt. Jason William, a production NCO assigned to Company A, Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, during the traditional rite of passage at an NCO induction ceremony in al-Faw Palace on Camp Victory, here, July 20. “I have a sense of pride that these are our future leaders and they are taking a step in the right direction to win future battles and take care of our Soldiers,” said Strate, from International Falls, Minn.

TROOPERS TEST PHYSICAL ENDURANCE



Los Angeles native, Spc. Hershell Brown from the 1st "Black Knight" Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, attached to the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division completes 100 pull ups during the "Black Knight" 1000 Competition at Joint Security Station Shield, east of Baghdad, July 12. The competition consisted of seven partner-based events.

(Right) Austin, Texas native, Sgt. Cliff Conner from the 1st "Black Knight" Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, attached to the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division flips a 110 pound truck tire while competing in the "Black Knight" 1000 Competition July 12 at Joint Security Station Shield.



BAGHDAD – Soldiers from the 1st "Black Knight" Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, attached to the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division push a 10,000 pound humvee the final 100 yards of the "Black Knight" 1000 Competition July 12 at Joint Security Station Shield, which is east of Baghdad. The Soldiers were challenged with completing seven events with a partner.

IN BLACK KNIGHTS 1000 COMPETITION



Killeen, Texas native 2nd Lt. Brent Beadle drags a 75-pound humvee tire 100 yards during the "Black Knight" 1000 Competition at Joint Security Station Shield, east of Baghdad, July 12. The 1st "Black Knight" Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, attached to the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division held this seven-event partner relay to test the endurance and stamina of the Soldiers.

*Photos by 1st Lt. Scott Lewis,
IBCT PAO, 1st Cav. Div., MND-B*

Stryker route clearance teams clear roads for Soldiers, local civilians

Story by Sgt. Doug Roles

56th SBCT PAO, MND-B

TAJI, Iraq – Soldiers of the 856th Engineer Company, 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team slowly cruise the roads of the Taji area, north of Baghdad, trying to find anything that might hide a roadside bomb. When the engineers find something suspicious, they poke it.

It may seem like a strange job but it's a necessary one. Soldiers on the route clearance missions have a goal of finding emplaced improvised explosive devices before they can be used against other Soldiers or civilian motorists. Their toolbox includes Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles equipped with hydraulic arms that can "poke" at suspect items and dig through dirt or piles of trash. The teams also use metal detectors and the engineer-variant Stryker vehicle. Teams don't move very quickly. But speed is not the goal; vigilance is.

"It's very interesting because you never know what's going to happen out there," said Staff Sgt. Joshua Bentley of York, Pa., a squad leader with 856th's 2nd Platoon.

A typical mission can last hours. Bentley said the heat and the repetitiveness of the job wears on Soldiers. He said his squad has seen the same stretches of road, and the same garbage, many dozens of times. He said the key is for team members to keep the radio chatter going between vehicles and to call out familiar and unfamiliar objects by the road.

"You try to talk amongst each other," Bentley said, adding that driving a route every day helps Soldiers "know what's trash and what's not."

Bentley, a communications and sign language interpretation major at Bloomsburg University, deployed to Iraq with the 28th Infantry Division's Taskforce Dragoon in 2004-05. He said he believes the route clearance teams have done a good job so far. He said they have twice been attacked by IEDs, with "no real damage" to the vehicles, let alone to Soldiers.

"A lot of our job is months of boredom and minutes of terror," 1st Lt. Richard Gordon of Logan, Utah, 2nd platoon leader, said.

Gordon said his Soldiers performed well during those scary moments, adding that the most recent IED attack on his column, last week, did minimal damage to a vehicle though the subsequent investigation resulted in the arrest of two suspected insurgents.

Asked about the repetitiveness of the missions, Gordon said he stays focused by writing out his pre-mission briefing to the platoon every time, even though it's the same briefing. He likened his method to sergeants who still

make sure junior enlisted Soldiers have performed their preventative maintenance checks on vehicles even though "They've done this PMCS hundreds of times."

Bentley said the engineer company also participates in missions to search for weapons caches. He said he feels both missions – route clearance and cache search – help make the local civilians safer.

"A lot of guys have come up and said 'We appreciate you guys,'" Bentley said.

Gordon said his platoon has come together as a team, saying the route clearance mission is not an easy one to master. Gordon moved to Pennsylvania to attend law school, from 2005-08, and jokes that he "stayed for the war." Before joining the Pennsylvania Army National Guard, he had served in the Utah National Guard as a medic.

One of Gordon's "junior" enlisted Soldiers brings a wealth of experience to the job. Spc. Joseph Biddle, an MRAP Buffalo arm operator and explosive ordinance disposal-trained engineer, said of the 120 missions his platoon has conducted, he's been on 110 of them.

"I'm here to go out. That's why I'm here," he said.

Biddle, a grandfather, enlisted in the active Army in 1980 and served until 1992, as a combat engineer. He reenlisted in 2004, with the Pennsylvania Army National Guard's 2nd Brigade. He then volunteered to deploy with the 56th SBCT. Part of the on-mission banter in Biddle's MRAP involves trading friendly barbs with younger Soldiers.

"I got out a long time ago," Biddle says. "But I'm certainly capable of doing the job of some kid."

Biddle, of Morgantown, W. Va., describes the morale of the platoon as good, but is quick to point out that "It's a Soldier's inalienable right to complain."

Jokes aside, Biddle says he gets focused for missions by reviewing on his laptop information he has compiled on various types ordinance. He said having knowledge of explosives is the key to operating around them with confidence. Biddle, who as a civilian is a large truck hydraulics system mechanic, has completed the operator and sapper portions of the Army's Route Reconnaissance and Clearance Course. He praised the military's "excellent" MRAP



Photo by Sgt. Doug Roles, 56th SBCT PAO, MND-B

Operators use the bottom prong of this hydraulic arm to dig through suspicious areas while on route clearance missions. The vehicle is the Buffalo version of the Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle. Their Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles come equipped with hydraulic arms that can "poke" at suspect items and dig through dirt or piles of trash. The teams also use metal detectors and the engineer-variant Stryker vehicle. Teams don't move very quickly. But speed is not the goal; vigilance is.

family of vehicles, saying he feels safe carrying out his mission in the vehicles.

"We've pulled right up to suspected IEDs," he said. "It's probably the safest vehicle here."

"Like others in the platoon, Biddle said he and his teammates "keep each other awake" by calling out roadside items on long missions. He said that the number of known items his team points out on missions continues to grow.

Biddle uses his years of experience to encourage other soldiers. He said he tells young Soldiers to be sure to hold on to keepsakes from this mission, especially coins given to them by sergeants major or certificates earned for service.

"We're out there everyday poking at weird stuff," Biddle said. "I tell them, there's not a lot of people who go around poking bombs with sticks. You should be proud of that." ✂



Photo by Sgt. Doug Roles, 56th SBCT PAO, MND-B

Two Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles move along a highway in the vicinity of Taji Market, north of Baghdad, July 13, followed by an engineer-variant Stryker vehicle. Soldiers of 856th Engineer Company, 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, used the vehicles during an hours-long route clearance mission.



Photo by Sgt. Doug Roles, 56th SBCT PAO, MND-B

Staff Sgt. Joshua Bentley of York, Pa., pulls security from the roof of a Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle July 13 near Taji, north of Baghdad. Bentley and other Soldiers from the 856th Engineer Company, 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, were conducting a route clearance mission.

113th Field Artillery Soldiers find little change in post June 30 operations

Story by Sgt. Mary Phillips

30th HBCT PAO, MND-B

ADWANIYAH, Iraq – Soldiers of 1st Battalion, 113th Field Artillery Regiment, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, have found that little has changed in their operating area south of Baghdad since the June 30 security agreement went into effect.

The battalion operates in a large swath of countryside bordering the Tigris River with Soldiers from the 55th Iraqi Army Division.

“Since our tour started [in April 2009], we began conducting operations within the [security agreement] guidelines.” said Capt. Brian Grey, the battalion’s Battery B commander. “That way, the coming of June 30th would be as smooth as possible.”

Capt. Joe Boles, Battery A commander, said he has noticed only small changes in their patrol schedule since then.

“The difference now is that we have to coordinate several days in advance,” he said.

Soldiers are going on fewer patrols, but they are still going out into the community regularly. Their main role is to support the Iraqi Army when needed.

“Combined planning and missions continue,” said Grey, “but with more direction to ensure we are synchronized with their operations.”

Battalion Command Sgt. Maj. Ralph Johnson believes the Iraqis are getting used to their new role and are taking the

lead.

“They are leaps and bounds above where they were in 2004.” said Johnson.

“We really want to work ourselves out of a job.” said Boles. “I think the local population has confidence in the IA for security. They see them out there on check points and patrolling.”

Many Soldiers say they have noticed a boost of morale in the IA soldiers since implementation of the security agreement.

“On June 30th, the Iraqi soldiers had a sense of pride that comes with this milestone.” said Grey. ✂

“I think the local population has confidence in the IA for security. They see them out there on check points and patrolling.”

-- Capt. Joe Boles, Battery A commander, 113th FA, 30th HBCT

(Right) Sgt. Jonathan Hinson, Battery B, 1st Battalion, 113th Field Artillery Regiment, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, of Charlotte, N.C., (left), and an Iraqi Army soldier, secure the perimeter of a home, south of Baghdad, while on a joint patrol July 18. The battalion was prepared for the implementation of the June 30th security agreement by conducting joint patrols from the start of their deployment in April 2009.



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

IRONHORSE

Ironhorse Soldier in Focus – Spc. Shaheed Zachary

Story by Sgt. Shejal Pulivarti

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

BAGHDAD - Spc. Shaheed Zachary currently serves as a truck commander for the military police platoon assigned to 1st Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division on Joint Security Station War Eagle, north of Baghdad.

The MPs have a very significant and unorthodox mission this deployment. They play a vital role in escorting and providing the necessary security to the Infrastructure Coordination Element (ICE) as they develop Iraqi capacity and deliver essential services to the people of Iraq.

Zachary, a 24 year-old Houston native states about the military “I fell in love with the Army; it’s pushed me to levels I never thought I could go.”

Tell me about your first name, Shaheed?

“It’s an Islamic name meaning one who sacrifices or one who is a martyr. My father, who is Islamic, named me and all my siblings with different Islam-derived names.”

It sounds like you have a good relationship with your father, were you two close?

“Yes, I remember growing up; I and my father would watch boxing together. I actually named my son after my

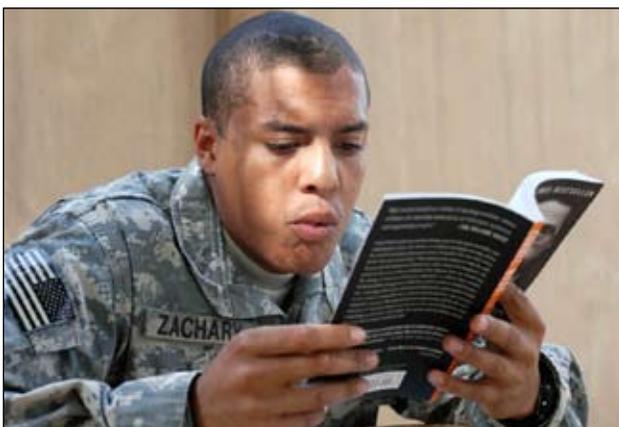


Photo by Sgt. Shejal Pulivarti, 1BCT PAO, 1st Cav. Div., MND-B

Houston, Texas native Spc. Shaheed Zachary, a truck commander for Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division reads one of his favorite books, Democracy Matters by Cornell West, during his down time.

favorite boxer of all time, Ali, which is also an Islamic name.”

What is your son, Ali, like?

“Well, he will be seven very soon. He loves video games and his daddy. He’s a very smart kid whose light impacts all the kids around him. I know every parent says this, but I truly believe that he will be someone very special one day and he is going to make an impact

somewhere.”

How do you keep up with him with the Army pace?

“That actually is why I don’t know what exactly I’m going to do when we redeploy. I’ve heard my son grow up on the phone for the past seven years, and I don’t want to do that anymore. I’m exploring my options and might take my brother up on his offer to open a business together selling cars.”

What is something interesting about you that no one really knows?

“My mother is Mexican and I always heard Spanish being spoken. So when I was 14, I decided that I wanted to learn a second language. So I taught myself German and can speak it fluently. I wanted to pick one that would just surprise people.”

What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

“In my spare time I am either at the gym, writing or reading. I love to read; I read a lot of autobiographies, famous literature, plays etc., anything that will stimulate my mind and challenge me mentally.”

What was your childhood like?

“I grew up rough. But living where I was, one of the biggest metropolitan cities in the U.S.; I was around a lot of different types of people. I learned a lot from the people in the area. Everything I experienced made me who I am today. I knew that my story wasn’t going to end there though.” ✂

Zaidon begins market road refurbishments, other projects

Story by Sgt. Dustin Roberts

2nd HBCT PAO, 1st Inf. Div., MND-B

BAGHDAD -The clink of a shovel against a dirt road promised a better future for the people of the Zaidon area of the Abu Ghraib county west of Baghdad.

In a ground-breaking ceremony, members of the 24th Iraqi Army Division, local leaders and Soldiers serving with the 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 63rd Armor Regiment, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad celebrated the beginning of four projects in the area July 22.

The first project is to pave the main road that leads to Zaidon's market, where daily customers buy the essential nutritional edibles for their families to consume.

The second project is to reconstruct the area's milk storage facility near the market, which will keep milk fresh for a longer period of time.

Plans have also been made to bring more electricity and cleaner water to Zaidon, as well as install solar lights in the area, said Lt. Col. Jim Bradford, a native of Lynchburg, Tenn., commander, 1st Bn., 63rd Armor Regt.

"The area is important because it sits at a crossroad among three Qadas: Yousifiya, Abu Ghraib and the Fallujah Province," he said. "As improvements have been made inside the Amanat and the city of Baghdad it's now time to start focusing on the Qadas and the rural areas to bring those same essential services that we are now starting to enjoy inside the city."

The projects, which will be funded by both the Government of Iraq and the Coalition forces, took a lot of



Photo by Sgt. Dustin Roberts, 2nd HBCT PAO, 1st Inf. Div., MND-B

Engineer Mohammed Khalaf Hashim (left, holding shovel), Capt. Jabbar Noury, 24th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, and religious leaders of the Zaidon community smile at the July 22 ground-breaking ceremony of the Zaidon Market road refurbishment. The community leaders will work with the Government of Iraq and the 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 63rd Armor Regiment, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad to refurbish the road.

planning among the CF, the Iraqi Security Forces, the leaders of Zaidon and the contractors hired to complete the developments.

"The people living in the area are very cooperative; they are good people and they deserve good services here. We are doing whatever we can to improve the situation in this area, which is a farming area," said Capt. Jabbar Noury, 24th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division. "Everybody is trying to be partners and are trying to work



Photo by Sgt. Dustin Roberts, 2nd HBCT PAO, 1st Inf. Div., MND-B

Lt. Col. Jim Bradford, a native of Lynchburg, Tenn., commander, 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 63rd Armor Regiment, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, addresses leaders of the Zaidon community at the ground-breaking ceremony of the Zaidon market Road in Abu Ghraib July 22. The ceremony kicked off a series of essential service improvement projects in Abu Ghraib, which will be completed in partnership with the Government of Iraq.

together to enhance the quality of life in the area."

As the quality of life has improved in Baghdad, Bradford said all the parts are coming together to try and equal the level of services in Zaidon.

"None of this could be possible today or in the future without cooperation among the people, the government leaders, as well as the Iraqi Security Forces," said Bradford. "Today is a small step that is one step for many that we are going to take to improve things in Zaidon." ✂

FIRST TEAM

Civil affairs Soldier trades real estate for helping rebuild Iraq

Story by Sgt. Jon Soles

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD -One civil affairs Soldier serving in the Multi-National Division-Baghdad has traded selling homes in southern California for helping rebuild a country – a job he says motivates him to volunteer for future deployments.

Staff Sgt. Dionisio "Danny" Alcalá, a civil affairs Soldier assigned to the 425th Civil Affairs Battalion, 364th Civil Affairs Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, is approaching his 13th month in Iraq and says he hopes to stay here 18 months.

"Here I am, in my 12th month going on my 13th month and I still want to stay, because I truly believe in it," said Alcalá.

Alcalá, a resident of Los Angeles, served in the Army Reserve from 1994 to 2000 as an aviation mechanic. After his discharge from the Army, Alcalá began working for his family's real estate business – a career he says he thought he would continue with through retirement. But he said he still missed being in uniform.

"I finished in 2000 and got out, but I always kind of missed it. You miss the camaraderie of having different Soldiers around," Alcalá said.

After the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, Alcalá said he was motivated to return to the Army. In retrospect, Alcalá said he felt his six years in the Army Reserve was not enough and decided to enlist again after an 8-year break in service.

"I looked back and remembered being a Soldier and realized something was missing," Alcalá said. "I didn't have a combat patch and I didn't deploy to serve my country."

Alcalá said the move came as a surprise to his family.

"I gave up a pretty good life. I don't even think my parents really understood why I came in," Alcalá said. "I went from full civilian to mobilizing Soldier in a manner of 60 days."

Alcalá said another inspiration for joining and volunteering to deploy was his love for freedom and a democratic society.

"California has a lot of free-thinking people and there is a lot of freedom," Alcalá said. "Both of my parents are immigrants so the American ideal means a lot to me."

For Alcalá, the fulfillment and the excitement of Army Civil Affairs is derived from working with his fellow Soldiers and mingling with the Iraqi people.

"In a way, you're a liaison between the military force and the local provincial force," Alcalá said. "The one other thing I love about this job is, you're engulfed in the culture."

A self-described "people person," Alcalá said his job allows him to work on relationships with the Iraqis to help bring peace and stability to the country. He quoted a Marine Corps general's summation of counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan.

"If we're not eating a lot of goat and drinking a lot of chai, we are not working hard enough," Alcalá said.

Alcalá said his work with the Iraqi people will hopefully bring security and peace to the country. Despite the long hours and the physical and mental exhaustion, Alcalá said he is creating irreplaceable memories in Iraq.

"I tell you, there are many mornings I wake up and wish I was back in Los Angeles at the beaches," Alcalá said. "But I can look back and be proud of what I did; I can be proud of serving in Iraq."

Alcalá is an individual Soldier, part of a small team, but his efforts and dedication will help bring peace for the Iraqis and rewards that couldn't be earned in his civilian job back in California. ✂

(Right) Staff Sgt. Dionisio "Danny" Alcalá, a civil affairs Soldier assigned to the 425th Civil Affairs Battalion, 364th Civil Affairs Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, said he enjoys the camaraderie of the Army. Meeting the Iraqis is another highlight. "The other thing I love about this job is you're engulfed in the culture," said Alcalá, a Los Angeles native.



Courtesy photo

Staff Sgt. Dionisio "Danny" Alcalá, a civil affairs Soldier assigned to the 425th Civil Affairs Battalion, 364th Civil Affairs Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, makes new friends while on a mission. The Los Angeles native left his family's real estate business to join the Santa Barbara-based 425th CA Bn. Alcalá said he enjoys his job so much, he plans to extend his deployment and volunteer for a future deployment to Afghanistan.



Courtesy photo

To ship or not to ship?

Story by Sgt. Joshua Risner

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – It's almost inevitable that during a year-long deployment, a Soldier will acquire more items, souvenirs and other things that won't fit in his duffel bag when it comes time to redeploy. That leaves the Soldier with one option: shipping the items back home.

Soldiers are allowed to mail items back home as long as they follow a few simple guidelines.

Any cardboard box will do for shipping purposes, but any addresses and barcodes on them need to be blacked out, according to Russell Henning, the postal supervisor for Liberty Post Office, which services an average of 260 customers per day.

"Look at [the box] and if it's confusing to you, it will be confusing to anybody," said the Enid, Okla. native. "Just make it so you can look at it and tell where it needs to go. It could be kicked out to the wrong address otherwise."

Footlockers purchased at the Post Exchange are authorized for shipping, according to Sgt. L.J. Willis, a mail clerk from Joanna, S.C., assigned to Company C, Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division. "The footlockers from the PX, the [tactical] boxes you get from supply, usually those are the biggest things we ship," he said.

The most a package can weigh is 70 lbs, Henning added. "That is absolutely the most you can mail," he

said. "No matter what it is, if it's over 70 lbs, it's not going anywhere."

Being able to mail a large box doesn't mean that anything put in it can be mailed, however. There are a number of items that are prohibited.

Anything to do with a weapon: ammunition; brass; parts; accessories, are all unauthorized to mail. "A lot of people try to ship weapons parts; they don't know they're not supposed to ship them," said Willis. "We can't even ship a bipod – practically nothing that has to do with a weapon can be mailed."

One exception to the weapons policy is a knife, though it cannot be more than six inches in length, Willis added. "You can't mail home a sword or any of those big knives that you can buy at the bazaar," he said.

Anything that contains alcohol cannot be mailed, Henning explained. "This includes things like Nyquil, aftershave, cologne, perfume and mouthwash," he said.

Anything containing any kind of powder, to include protein shakes and the like, must have an unbroken seal to be shipped. "If something happens and that powder gets loose, it causes a big scare," Henning explained. "Basically, nothing can go if it's in danger of spilling all over everything."

Animals or animal products cannot be shipped due to U.S. Customs regulations, according to Henning. "A lot of people buy those little scorpions under glass; even that can't go," he added.

"That is absolutely the most you can mail. No matter what it is, if it's over 70 lbs, it's not going anywhere."

-- Russell Henning, postal supervisor for Liberty Post Office



Photo by Sgt. Joshua Risner, MND-B PAO

Sgt. 1st Class Eric Tizol, from San Juan, Puerto Rico, assigned to Company B, Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, prepares to mail some packages at the Camp Liberty Post Office on Victory Base Complex, July 24. Soldiers wanting to ship items home must follow the guidelines in place in order to do so. Some items, such as weapons parts and accessories, are not authorized to mail. "Don't try to sneak unauthorized items through," Henning urged. "If it gets out of the post office, you are not the only one who could get in trouble. The mail clerk who helped you could get fired."

In addition to the aforementioned items, there are many other things that cannot be mailed. The mail clerks at the post office will be happy to help sort out what is unauthorized – it's their job, Henning added.

"Don't try to sneak unauthorized items through," Henning urged. "If it gets out of the post office, you are not the only one who could get in trouble. The mail clerk who helped you could get fired."

The Post Office allows Soldiers the opportunity to get excess property back home without the hassle of having to take it on the plane. Keep that in mind when gathering your items in a box to send back to the states. ✂

OLD HICKORY

150th ARS receives Old Hickory combat patch

Story by Spc. Ruth McClary

30th HBCT PAO, MND-B

BAGHDAD - West Virginia National Guardsmen from the 150th Armored Reconnaissance Squadron receive the 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team's insignia patch during a ceremony at Camp Stryker July 22, as recognition of wartime service.

The combat patch, a tradition started by the Army during World War II, is worn on the right sleeve of all Soldiers assigned to U.S. Army units that actively participate in or support ground combat operations against hostile forces.

"Wearing the patch signifies a rite of passage, a sense of pride and significance," said Capt. Walter Hatfield of Charleston, W. Va.

The 150th, based out of Bluefield, W. Va., is comprised of four troops and one company. The squadron's lineage dates back to the War of 1812 and includes service in the Civil War, World Wars I and II and is currently on its second tour to Iraq.

The unit deployed with the North Carolina National Guard brigade, which known as the Old Hickory Brigade.

Col. Gregory Lusk, the 30th HBCT brigade commander, presented the Old Hickory patch to Lt. Col. Robby Scarberry, squadron commander, and Command Sgt. Maj. James Allen, the squadron's senior enlisted advisor.

Troops filed out of formation to personally receive the Old Hickory patch from Lusk, Swart, Scarberry and Allen.

Placing a patch on one of the Soldier's sleeve, Lusk raised his hand and slapped the patch down with a bit



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

of force, securing it to its Velcro base; signifying an enduring Old Hickory connection.

"Their attitude (Lusk and Swart) is what made me want to wear the patch," said Staff Sgt. Lionel Jones, of Huntington, W. Va., about the insignia on his right sleeve. "It was cool how he (Lusk) slapped it on; I wear the patch with pride." ✂

Soldiers of 150th Armored Reconnaissance Squadron salute during "The Star-Spangled Banner" at their combat patch ceremony July 22, at Camp Stryker. The Soldiers were awarded the Old Hickory patch from the 30th Heavy Combat Team commander in recognition of their wartime service. The squadron is based out of Bluefield, W. Va., and its history dates back to the War of 1812.

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DSTB mechanics keep warriors in the fight



BAGHDAD – Spc. Thomas Parker of Salem, Ore., drains transmission fluid from a humvee in the Division Special Troops Battalion motor pool, here, July 24. Parker, a mechanic assigned to Headquarters Support Company, DSTB, 1st Cavalry Division at Camp Liberty here, said maintenance prevents expensive transmission replacement and keeps vehicles from breaking down on missions. “If the vehicle goes down outside the wire, it could mean a Soldier’s life, so you’ve got to make sure maintenance is done right,” said Parker.

Photos by Sgt. Jon Soles, MND-B PAO



Chicago native, Pfc. Travis Simpson looks for a socket for his wrench while checking the transmission of a humvee at Camp Liberty here, July 24. Simpson, a mechanic assigned to Headquarters Support Company, Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, said the Army has taught him a skill with applications for the civilian world. “When I was at the Universal Technical Institute learning electronics, transmission and hydraulics, I noticed most of the guys catching on fast had military backgrounds,” said Simpson.

(Right) Sgt. Corey Elliott of Dekalb, Ill., Pfc. Cory Harding of Spokane, Wash., and Pfc. John Acosta of Victoria, Texas, install a wire mitigation kit on the top of a Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle in the Division Special Troops Battalion motor pool at Camp Liberty here, July 24. The kit helps protect Soldiers from low-hanging power lines in Baghdad. Elliott and Acosta are mechanics assigned to Headquarters Support Company, DSTB, 1st Cavalry Division. Harding is an infantryman assigned the 1st Division National Police Transition Team. “Overall, the maintenance part of the mission is critical to keeping the warfighters in the mission,” said Sgt. 1st Class Deighton Little, a native of Bloomfield, Conn. Little is the DSTB, 1st Cavalry Division, motor sergeant.

