

THE DIGGER EDGE



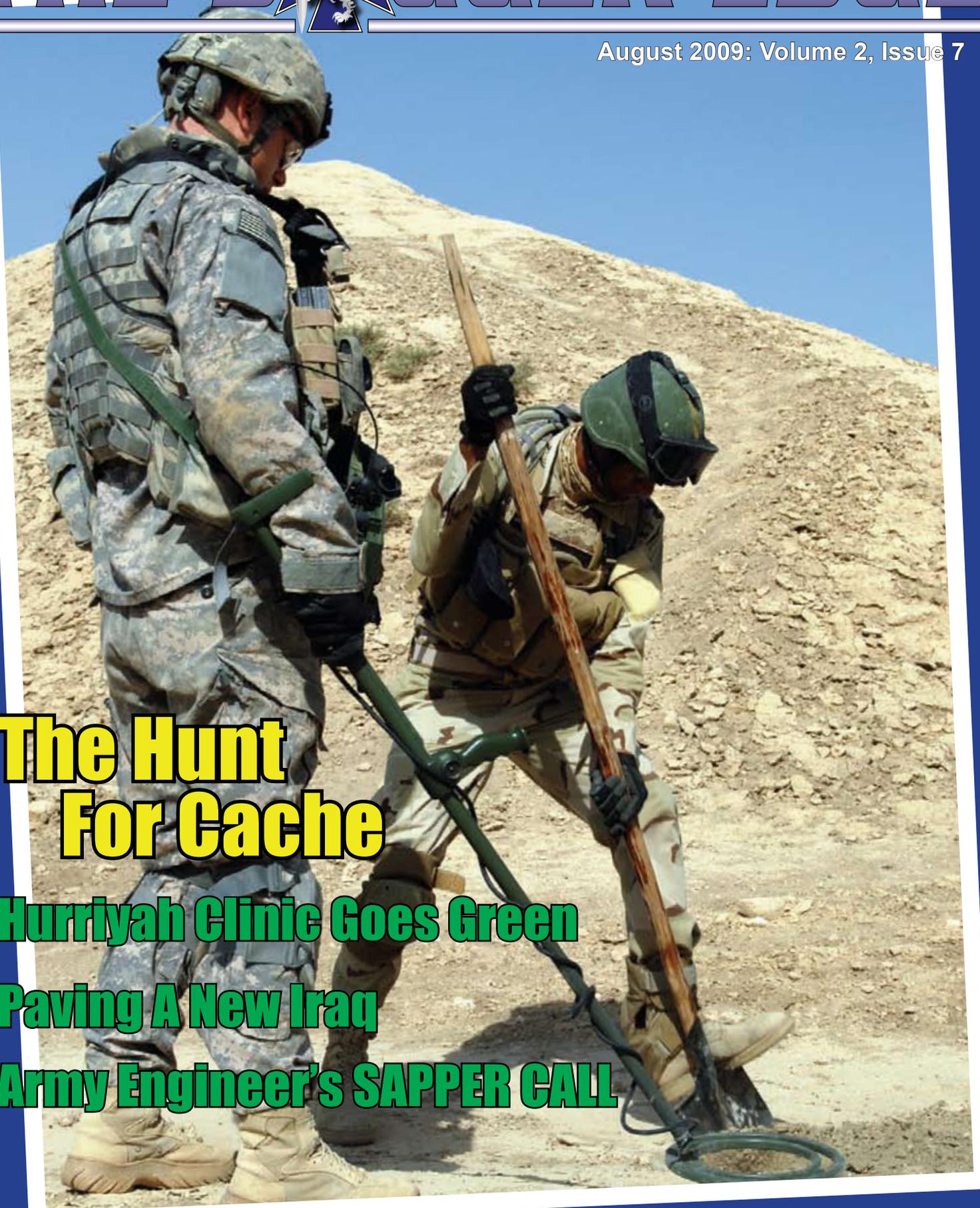
August 2009: Volume 2, Issue 7

The Hunt For Cache

Hurriyah Clinic Goes Green

Paving A New Iraq

Army Engineer's SAPPER CALL





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◀ *After Pfc. Daniel Parker's metal detector alerted to a buried metallic object, an Iraqi soldier from the 3rd Company, 4th Battalion, 24th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, used a shovel to dig up the object. Parker, a native of Jacksonville, Fla., is an infantryman assigned to Company D, 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 63rd Armor Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Jon Soles, MND-B PAO)*

▶ *Staff Sgt. Joel Sickler and Sgt. Raul Lopezdeleon stand guard in front of an art mural at the opening ceremony for the Baghdad School of Art for Girls June 23. Attendees to the event included Dr. Nihad Abbas Shihad al-juburi, Deputy Minister of Education and Lt. Col. Chris Beckert, deputy commanding officer of the Dagger Brigade. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Brian Tierce, 2HBCT-11D PAO)*



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

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DAGGER SIX

2HBCT COMMANDER
COLONEL JOSEPH M. MARTIN



Transitions

Greetings to all Daggers from Command Sergeant Major Battle and I as we approach our last full month in Iraq! The Soldiers, Civilians, and Leaders of this brigade combat team continue to amaze me with your loyalty, duty, and professionalism that set you apart from many other units. Regardless of extreme heat, long days, and a consistently ruthless enemy, you exceed the expectations and standards for every mission, everywhere. It's time now to think about upcoming transitions and changes which will dominate the months of August and September.

First of all, remain mission focused. The enemy will attempt to identify RIP/TOA and transition timelines and exploit them. After six years in Iraq, terrorist and insurgents know that units routinely rotate, and if you believe that they don't know our approximate times to redeploy, then think again! An offensively-oriented force protection posture is the greatest weapon in your inventory as you execute battle handover to incoming units.

Second, there are multiple layers to the upcoming transitions. We rotate with inbound forces at the Staff Level, Small Unit Level, Company Level, Battalion, etc. All are happening simultaneously so synchronize your efforts and ensure that you're all tracking the higher, lower, and adjacent units' plans. Everyone will be competing for one important resource: time. We can't afford to have someone miss a suspense since it has 2nd and 3rd order effects on everyone.

Conduct good, thorough handover of your Iraqi counterparts to the incoming unit—relationships are everything over here in Iraq. Every training event prior to deployment highlighted the criticality of knowing the Iraqis in our sector, and it's proven to be true. Don't wander off and forget to introduce your replacements to the key and influential people and Iraqi Security Force units in your areas. Professionals handle this step with dignity and respect, and the payback to our replacements will be invaluable.

If you're remaining in theater, and taking over for outbound units, you are the keepers of the knowledge, experiences, and TTPs that will be vital to 4th Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division units when they arrive. Greet them and immediately begin to advise and support their requests for information. I'm confident that you are ready to handle the transitions with the attention to detail necessary to carry the mission forward and prevent our combined enemies from exploiting the changes.

Finally, think through the upcoming return to your families, friends, and Fort Riley. This will close a significant chapter for this brigade and add to its legacy and lineage. You walk in the footsteps of the giants—the veterans and heroes—of the Dagger Brigade stretching back to 1917. Your ability to successfully integrate back into the local community, back into garrison-driven battle rhythm, and back into your families will be assisted every step of the way by the professionals awaiting us in Kansas. Take advantage of their expertise and their programs as needed to enhance the reunion experiences.

I'm ready to keep pressing the fight on terrorists in Iraq, all the while begin a serious of challenging but necessary transitions. If you think we're done yet, and you're reading this in Iraq, well, think again! We're the Daggers, and we're Polite, Professional, and Prepared to Kill...Ready Now!

COL. JOSEPH MARTIN

Dagger 6

"Ready Now!"



▲ Gen. Raymond Odierno (left), commander, Multi-National Force – Iraq walks alongside Col. Joseph Martin, a native of Dearborn, Mich., commander, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad on Camp Liberty. Odierno visited the Dagger Brigade to receive an operational update on the Dagger Brigade's progress working in the Abu Ghraib area west of Baghdad.



DAGGER SEVEN

2HBCT COMMAND SERGEANT MAJOR
DONALD L. BATTLE



Every Step Of The Way

Soldiers of the Dagger Brigade, I was recently back home on EML to the states for a couple of weeks, during which time I got the opportunity to visit some of our wounded Warriors at Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

It was truly amazing to see the attitudes of these great Soldiers who never complained about anything other than wanting to get back in the fight or wanting to continue to serve if they could not get back in the fight. SSG Canine, SPC Aguilar, SPC Hill, and PVT Gallucci are proven examples of why I am so proud to wear the uniform as they are truly professionals and represent the best in our ranks.

Those Soldiers displayed courage, perseverance and a winning attitude. I am very proud of every wounded Soldier in our ranks for the greater service of our nation. I would also like to thank their families for the continued support that they give on a daily basis. It was wonderful meeting some of the families of our Wounded Soldiers who were extremely happy with the care their spouses were receiving.

As I returned from leave, I can still see the impact this brigade is making on a daily basis. What you have accomplished in terms of security and transition will indeed have an everlasting impact for years to come.

Since Last October you have denied insurgents terrain, kept thousands of Iraqi citizens safe and given the Iraqi Security Forces the confidence they needed to take security operations over in northwest Baghdad. The confidence our Iraqi counterparts gained has snowballed into an atmosphere of hard work ethic and success that compares to our own. You have helped give the average Iraqi citizen faith in their security forces and a hope for a more peaceful and prosperous Iraq.

The brigade commander and I are incredibly proud of the way you have adapted to changes in the mission, different and larger operational environments, and dedicated yourselves to the greater good with precision and a positive attitude. You have steadily given it your all every step of the way, knowing what the sacrifices were; however, we still have a couple of steps to go before we return back to home station.

I would also like to express that we are in our 10th month of the deployment. This is a time when you look back statistically, complacency starts to set in and Soldiers discipline starts to slip. We cannot let complacency impact our mission in any way. A rise in negligent discharges, injuries, vehicle roll-overs, and loss of sensitive items is a result of what will happen should we allow our Soldiers to lose focus. NCOs this is where you must step up your game.

We will also be saying good-bye to 2-112 as well during the month of August 2009. LTC Samuel Hayes and CSM Christopher Kepner, your Soldiers are phenomenal. Under your leadership, they took every mission and ran with it. It has indeed been a pleasure to work with such true professionals as yourselves.

As we start to pack up connexes in the desert heat, remember



▲ *Command Sgt. Maj. Donald L. Battle, senior enlisted advisor, 2nd HBCT, with Jon Gruden, former coach of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and Oakland Raiders during a recent visit to Camp Liberty*

to keep hydrated and think safety. Everyone in this brigade is a Safety Officer. I charged everyone to continue to watch previous heat casualties closely as well as any possible heat casualties. Drink plenty of fluids and eat at least twice a day to give your body the fuel it needs to complete the mission. The deployment is almost over and finishing strong is essential.

I would be remised if I did not discuss the issue with leave after redeployment. I will start by saying there is nothing in the world more important than taking care of our Soldiers. The first two months of redeployment are the most critical. Nothing hurts more than to see a Soldier survive 12 months of combat, just to return and get killed from a vehicle or motorcycle incident whether it was drinking and driving or just through excessive speed. The Brigade Commander and I want to put as many mitigating factors in place as possible. The plan to take 15 days leave after our return, five days during Thanksgiving, and another two weeks through the Christmas Holidays will only set the brigade up for success. If anyone brought tickets prior to the information that was put out, I would ask that you get with your chain of command because there is no reason for any Soldier to lose money. However, buying a ticket now for thirty days is not the answer.

Dagger Soldiers your hard work has almost paid off to the fullest. Stay focused, alert, safe, and prepared for any changes in an environment that will continue to change.

COMMAND SGT. MAJ. DONALD L. BATTLE

Dagger 7

"Nothing Further"



EXPECTATION MANAGEMENT IT'S NOT JUST FOR BREAKFAST ANYMORE

After endless lines, briefings, inspections by arrogant custom agents and numerous flights from one point to the other SGT Smith has finally landed on Kansas soil. It has been a long twelve months and his head is spinning in amazement that he is finally home – well almost. He knows he has a few more things to do, a few more briefs (hopefully short ones) and then its “look out sweetheart!” Thankfully the Welcome Home Ceremony was quicker than he expected. Even at the rigid position of attention near the back of the formation he was able to covertly glance around the waiting crowd and miraculously pick out his wife and kids. Wow, she was wearing that new dress she wrote about and she looked awesome. Finally the coveted command of “dismissed” echoed through the air as civilian formation merged into Army formation like two reaching amoebas. After such a long deployment he was finally holding his wife and kids; all they had to do now was to drive home and he couldn't wait. During the drive SGT Smith was simply basking in the moment when his wife looked his way with glassy eyes and said, “I've got a surprise for you at home.” SGT Smith just smiled wryly, no response was necessary, he knew exactly what she was talking about. As they pulled into the driveway it even sunk in more that he was finally home. He grabbed



▲ *Chaplain (Maj.) Peter Johnson, a native of San Diego, 2nd HBCT, speaks to Dagger Soldiers after a Financial Peace university Class at Camp Liberty*

his bags and headed into the front door with his family when he was immediately greeted with “Surprise!” There they were, right in his living room, his parents and hers clamoring in the excitement. His wife's ecstatic eyes met his as she said, “Isn't this great – and were all going to Disney World this weekend!”

All through our train-up, our prep for deployment and throughout our operations here in Iraq we have discussed expectation management. What's so important about expectation management? After all, we're in the Army; we simply do what we're told. What difference does it make what our expectations may be? We're Soldiers, we “suck it up and drive-on,” “we shut-up and color” and do whatever the mission demands. Well, to be

honest there is some truth to this in the life of a Soldier, but there is more to the story. The rest of the story is that if we know what to expect we are more inclined to meet the challenge, we are better prepared for the mission, and in the end knowing what to expect promotes efficiency, builds moral, and smoothes out the rough spots. So whenever conceivably possible we manage expectations because it's good leadership.

We need to do the same with our personal life as we prepare for re-deployment. To one degree or another changes occurred at home while we've been deployed and these changes will lead to different expectations of what our reunion will be like. We need to manage these expectations with the ones we love not only because it smoothes out the rough spots, but because it's the right thing to do.

So I challenge you to start discussing your expectations now with your spouse and family. Remember, any expectation you don't discuss here in Iraq may become the “elephant” sitting in the room that you both are trying to ignore once you are home, and ignoring the “elephant” inevitably leads to a conflict. So, let's finish strong the mission here until it's through and prep the objective at home. We can do both without losing focus on either mission. May God richly bless you, your family, and your re-union.



Stitches:

Preventative medicine advice

Redeployment Stuff

Redeployment is rapidly approaching, and with it comes a myriad of medical screenings and health education briefings. This month we're going to talk about that process and how to make the most of it.

Be Patient

Waiting in long lines at the Soldier Readiness Processing center is not on my "Top Ten List" of things I'm looking forward to doing when I get home, but remember this: The paperwork completed during SRP ensures that every single Soldier receives the support they deserve, financially, legally, and medically. Without the SPR site, Soldiers would be left to fend for themselves, wasting hours and hours driving all over post trying to get those same benefits. The SRP site isn't there to torture you, it's there to serve you quickly and efficiently.

Maintain Your Records

I know this comes as a shock to many of you, but the military isn't perfect. Save yourself some hassle by maintaining your personal records meticulously. That advice goes for your entire medical career, not just SRP. If you haven't developed a system, or you're unsure about what kinds of documents are important to keep, ask for help. Find an anal retentive friend with some years under their belt to tell you how they maintain their records. No one will take care of you better than you'll take care of yourself.

Be Honest

Save the machismo for the gym. If you're struggling with medical/legal/financial issues, don't let it fester. Redeployment is the perfect opportunity to reach out to Soldier support services to help you get back in the fight.

You Get Out What Your Put In

The briefings you'll sit through both here in theater and back at home station are carefully chosen to help you be as safe and successful as possible. It's easy to blow them off, but why? The warnings and strategies in those presentations have been collected from Soldiers like you who learned those lessons the hard way.

Finish the Fight

Every deploying unit is psychologically ready for the fight at the beginning of their mission, but professional Soldiers distinguish themselves with the ability to maintain the highest standards through to the end. Finishing this mission with class is not done by simply resisting the urge to choke out your roommate. It's done by serving your fellow Soldiers, driving on in the mission, and maintaining a positive attitude until every Dagger Soldier is safely home.



MOVING THROUGH IRAQ'S STREETS

Story and Photos by Staff Sgt. Peter Ford MND-B PAO

Much like blood that flows through the human body, Soldiers of the 299th Brigade Support Battalion “Lifeline”, 2nd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division move through streets of Iraq in the silence of night to support forward operating bases throughout the Baghdad area.

“Missions are done at night because there is less traffic,” said 1st. Lt. Harris Malik, a native of Strongsville, Ohio, and convoy commander for A Company, 299th BSB. “Coalition forces are less visible at night and chances of having an accident are much smaller,” he added.

Lifeline troops quietly transport vital equipment to FOBs every night;

protected by Soldiers who provide security to ensure requested items arrive at their destinations. The U.S. troops weave through the streets of Baghdad with the satisfaction of knowing they are making a major contribution to each mission on the FOBs.

“I like to use the analogy of a football team when it comes to my Soldiers,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Julia Kelly, a Pryor, Mont., native and ammunition specialist assigned to the 299th BSB. “We are like the line and the combat Soldiers are the quarterbacks, running backs and wide receiver, who get all the glory, but the line of the football team knows the star players can’t score

without the blocking in the trenches.”

The lifeline quietly moves food, water and parts to supply FOBs with the necessary equipment that will enable Soldiers to be self-sufficient and to complete their missions.

“This week we had the task of supplying FOB Justice with water and ice because they had water issue with the Iraqi water supply,” said Malik. “Thanks to the dedication of the lifeline, Justice never had to worry about drinking water, or water for personal hygiene.”

The greatest reward the Soldiers of the 299th BSB say they can receive is the appreciation of their comrades in arms for the contribution they have

made to support them over the years, continued Malik.

“I feel really good when the contributions to the mission are appreciated,” he said.

Under the cover of darkness, dedicated Lifeline Soldiers of the 299th BSB continue to drive the streets of Baghdad to provide vital equipment and supplies to keep the organizations of the Coalition forces fully functional.

▶ *Spc. Angelica Windley (left), a supply specialist from Washington, N.C., and Sgt. William Knapp, a logistics noncommissioned officer from Richmond, Va., before patrol rehearsal drills at Camp Liberty. “Our job is to make sure Soldiers have adequate supplies to be self-sufficient at the FOBs,” said Knapp.*

▶ *Sgt. Andrew Lane, a transportation specialist from Mansfield, La., assigned to Company A, 299th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, performs radio checks with the battalion tactical operation center prior to the convoy briefing at Camp Liberty.*

▶ *A leader serving with the 299th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, oversees a barrier mission at the Washash neighborhood of northwest Baghdad.*



HURRIYAH CLINIC



Another health clinic in northwest Baghdad was converted to a solar-powered facility. The new and improved Dahkel Clinic was unveiled in a ceremony in the Hurriyah neighborhood of northwest Baghdad June 17.

As the main health clinic in the neighborhood, the clinic provides health care to about 500,000 Iraqi citizens.

Before the panels were installed on the roof of the clinic, it could only be powered for about six hours per-day.

Now it can run for up to 24 hours per-day.

“By using solar power we have rejuvenated this clinic,” said Col. Joseph Martin, who hails from Dearborn, Mich., commander, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team “Dagger,” 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

The Dagger Brigade worked with the Ministry of Health

◀ *Two doctors speak with each other before the opening of the Dakhel Clinic in the Hurriyah Neighborhood of northwest Baghdad.*



IC CONVERTS TO SOLAR POWER

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

in the project to improve the clinic, which started in February.

“Now the Dahkel Clinic has the increased capacity to preserve medicine through the use of vaccine refrigerators, incubators for newborns and other medical devices,” said Martin.

Because of frequent power outages while running on Iraq’s power grid, surgical procedures were interrupted, vaccines were ruined due to the lack of refrigeration and the limited supply of fuel had to send patients home without proper health care.

“The green energy power supply eliminates all need for generators,” said Mahdi Jonny,” bilingual and bicultural advisor, 2nd HBCT. “With this great accomplishment we will give services for generations to come.”

The idea for the project came after the success of the Ameriyah Clinic in northwest Baghdad, which reopened with solar-powered capabilities earlier this year.

The brigade has also worked with the Government of Iraq to install solar-powered street lights throughout northwest Baghdad and Abu Ghraib County just west of the city.

“The improvements being highlighted here are an example of Coalition forces’ ongoing partnership with the local government to provide essential services, specifically the Ministry of Health, in order to improve local health care capacity in Hurriyah,” said Martin. “We want to continue to chose projects that we can work together with the Government of Iraq, the district councils and the local neighborhood councils to complete, which are beneficial to the people of Baghdad.”

▼ *Maj. Andrew Attar, a native of Bristol, Conn., joint project management officer, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, inspects the newly installed solar panels on the roof of the Dahkel Clinic in the Hurriyah neighborhood of northwest Baghdad June 17. As the main health clinic in Hurriyah, the solar panels will keep the clinic powered longer, providing more service to 500,000 Iraqis.*

▼ *Dr. Abbas, the deputy director general of the Iraqi Ministry of Health, speaks at the reopening ceremony of the Dahkel Clinic in the Hurriyah neighborhood of northwest Baghdad June 17. The clinic recently was fixed with solar panels on its roof, allowing the clinic to operate 24 hours per-day.*



PAVING A NEW

Story and Photos by Staff Sgt



Y IRAQ

. Peter Ford MND-B PAO



▲ *First Lt. Justin Casey, a native of Ogdensburg, N.Y., and contracting officer representative assigned to Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division and Dr. Ibrahim Al-Nedawi walk along an unpaved road discussing the asphalt and road paving equipment operator apprenticeship program in Nasir Wa Salam. "It is things like the asphalt and road paving equipment operator apprenticeship program that will help build a better Iraq," said Casey*

▲ *First Lt. Justin Casey, a native of Ogdensburg, N.Y., and contracting officer representative assigned to Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division and Dr. Ibrahim Al-Nedawi read the contract for the asphalt and road paving equipment operator apprenticeship program in Nasir Wa Salam. "The new road project not only improves the infrastructure but it provides jobs to the Sons of Iraq," said Casey.*

To improve conditions in Iraq, Soldiers of the 2nd "Dagger" Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division continue finding new ways to help reconstruct the communities in their area.

One recent project, a new two-story fire station in Nasir Wa Salam, was unveiled as part of reconstruction efforts designed to improve the quality of life while creating jobs for local Iraqis. Now, Coalition forces are paving new roads to make more improvements in the community by funding an asphalt and road paving equipment operator apprenticeship program to improve the streets of Baghdad.

"The new road project not only improves the infrastructure but it provides jobs to the Sons of Iraq," said 1st Lt. Justin Casey, a native of Ogdensburg, N.Y., and contracting officer representative assigned to Special Troops Battalion, 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div. "This project takes former militiamen of Iraq and gives them a skill to provide for their families."

The SoI were Iraqi citizens who took up arms to protect their families and property from anyone who came into their community to cause any destruction, added Casey. With improved security in Iraq, Coalition forces realized a better use for these motivated Iraqis and introduced programs aimed at providing them life skills.

"It is things like the asphalt and road paving equipment operator apprenticeship program that will help build a better Iraq," said Casey. "This program can lead the students to more permanent jobs to better support their families."

The students receive classroom training and heavy equipment familiarization that teaches the fundamentals of performing maintenance on streets and highways, according to Casey. Students that successfully complete the course will receive a journeyman's certificate according to the skill level at which they have been taught.

The CF have funded an apprenticeship program to give the SoI an opportunity to put down their weapons and learn new skills to benefit their community, and help improve the infrastructure, rebuilding Iraq one road at a time.



P.W.S.S. CHANGES HANDS

Story and Photos by Sgt. Dustin Roberts 2nd HBCT-1ID PAO



▲ ABOVE – Col. Joseph Martin, commander, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division shakes the hand of Naeem Aboob, the deputy mayor of Baghdad, after they signed the paperwork handing over the Hurriyah Public Works Sub Station to the local government in Kadhamiyah

▲ TOP LEFT – Sgt. 1st Class John Bissem and Capt. Nathan Williams, both of the 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 18th Infantry Division, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division observe the transfer ceremony.

▲ TOP CENTER – Naeem Aboob, the deputy mayor of Baghdad speaks to guests attending the transfer ceremony of the Hurriyah Public Works Sub Station. “We understand that the Coalition forces’ duty is military action, but they have done a lot of infrastructure and essential services work as well,” he said.

▲ TOP RIGHT – Essential services workers of the Hurriyah Public Work Sub Station observe the transfer ceremony of the PWSS. The PWSS has proved important to the people of Hurriyah, who rely on its services to keep the neighborhood streets clean.

The local Iraqi government in northwest Baghdad's Hurriyah neighborhood has increased its ability to provide for its people. The 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team "Dagger," 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad handed over the Hurriyah Public Works Sub Station to the Government of Iraq in a ceremony on the station's grounds June 17.

The PWSS serves the people of Hurriyah by ridding its streets of sewage and trash. The land the PWSS was built on was once a trash dump, but after some cleaning and brick work, it was turned into the centerpiece of service in Hurriyah. The compound is equipped with two garages, four buildings and 18 essential service trucks.

"As we know, there has been a big essential services problem in Hurriyah, but we are trying to fix that problem and trying to provide help with sewage removal," said Naeem Aboob, the deputy mayor of Baghdad. "We understand that the Coalition forces' duty is military action, but they have done a lot of infrastructure and essential services work as well."

The Dagger Brigade worked with Baghdad's Belladiyah, or Department of Public Works, to set up PWSS's throughout northwest Baghdad.

"We have done a lot of cooperation with the Coalition forces, especially the embedded Provisional Reconstruction Team," said Aboob. "This combined effort has given us a great result."

It has been the combined effort of the Dagger Brigade and the Iraqi Security Forces that kept the city safe and allowed for improved essential services.

"In concert with our Iraqi Security partners we will ensure the future remains stable for transitions such as this one," said Col. Joseph Martin, a native of Dearborn, Mich., commander, 2nd HBCT. "I salute the diligence of local leaders in support of continued transition toward full Iraqi control."

The goal of the essential services improvement project is to enable the Belladiyah with the tools it needs to sustain services on their own.

"The transfer ceremony] just shows one more step where we've been able to hand over things to the local government and for them to assume more responsibility, which really is what we've been trying to do since the conflict began," said Capt. Nathan Williams, a native of Raleigh, N.C., commander, Company A, 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, 2nd HBCT. "We are at the final stages of this, so I think it will be very successful. I'm glad to see that it is finished and has been turned over."



Lt. Col. John Vermeesch

Greetings to the Friends and Families of all Vanguards, we hope this finds you well and enjoying the dog days of summer! The Vanguards continue to do exceptionally well as we partner with the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) to provide peace and prosperity to the people of Northwest Baghdad. As has become much more the norm than the exception, we have entered another period of transition in the post 30 June, 2009 security environment.

As I write this people from all over Iraq are flooding to Kadamiya to visit the Kadamiya Shrine, the 2nd most holy place in Iraq in Shia Islam, in commemoration of the death of the 7th Imam. Over the next three days we expect up to 10 million visitors to our little corner of the world. This commemoration is symbolic of the incredible progress we have made here because the environment allows it to occur and the ISF are clearly in the lead providing the security. As always, we are ready to assist in any way possible. As you may have heard, as a result of further implementation of the security agreement between the U.S. and Iraq, our operational tempo has slowed considerably. We are staying busy advising and assisting our partners, manning combined command and control centers, preparing to respond to any incident that may arise on a moment's notice, and by conducting training for our own Soldiers.

You also know that we have started to think about and plan for our eventual return home in a couple of months. What I ask every Vanguard Soldier and Family member to consider, however, is that this is not just time to be endured until we redeploy, but rather that each of the remaining days we have here is an opportunity to continue to make a difference in the world and complete what we came here to accomplish. Our work is far from done, and we will remain focused and vigilant on the tasks at hand until the last Vanguard has safely returned to Fort Riley. I anticipate that we will experience at least one more period of transition that will require our undivided effort and attention.

Thank you for your tremendous sacrifice. You all continue to make a difference in the world by winning the right way every day. God Bless you all, God bless our efforts here in Iraq, and God Bless America!

Vanguard 6

"First to Battle!"



DEATH DEALERS HUNT FOR

Story and Photos by Sgt. Jon Soles

The sight of a platoon of American Soldiers and their Iraqi Army partners in the desert with metal detectors and shovels may look like a treasure hunt, but was, in reality, a search for weapons caches reported to be hidden in the area.

In the ongoing effort to deny insurgents weapons, the Soldiers of Company D, 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 63rd Armor Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, dug into sand and swamp near the village of Khadir in Abu Ghraib, here, June 23.

The “Death Dealers” of Co. D, took a rugged dirt path to reach the sand dune, overlooking the nearby village of Khadir. While some Soldiers pulled security, others used metal detectors

to look for buried objects that could be weapons or explosives. Capt. Jake Turner, an infantry officer who commands Co. D, said there was good reason to search the dune.

“We did a joint combat patrol in order to search for caches. There has been a previous history of caches in the area,” said Turner, a native of Millinocket, Maine, assigned to Co. D, 1st CAB, 63rd Armor Regt., 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div. “Beforehand, I talked with an [Iraqi Army] lieutenant about possible locations and we came up with a game plan.”

Spc. Thomas Marcello of Honolulu and Pfc. Daniel Parker of Jacksonville, Fla., both infantrymen assigned to Co. D, 1st CAB, 63rd Armor Regt., 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div., slowly walked

through the sand and along gullies with metal detectors, which emitted an electronic whine. The Soldiers were listening for sustained beeps that are the tell-tale signs of buried metallic objects.

“If it’s a small piece, it will be a little beep, but if it’s something large, it will be a big beep,” said Marcello.

A few times, the detectors gave off beeps and IA soldiers from the 3rd Company, 4th Battalion, 24th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, turned the sand with shovels. Only small pieces of rusted metal that appeared to be garbage were found. The Soldiers also searched a swampy area near the Euphrates River, but did not find any weapons caches. However, Turner said he was not discouraged, as the mission



◀ **LEFT** - *Spc. Thomas Marcello of Honolulu, searches the ground beside a swamp near the Euphrates River for weapons caches during a joint search with the Iraqi Army. Marcello and Staff Sgt. Maurice Jones (left), of New Brockton, Ala., are both infantrymen assigned to Company D, 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 63rd Armor Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division.*

◀ **CENTER** - *Staff Sgt. Jeff Paluso (right) of Chapman, Kan., pulls security from the summit of a sand dune while his fellow Soldiers and the IA conduct a cache search of the sandy area below outside the village of Khadir, in the Abu Ghraib area. The dune afforded the Soldiers the chance to take a position where they could see from all directions while providing security. Paluso is an infantryman assigned to Company D, 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 63rd Armor Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division.*

◀ **RIGHT** - *Pfc. Daniel Parker of Jacksonville, Fla., an infantryman assigned to Company D, 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 63rd Armored Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, endures the hot summer sun on a sand dune while searching for weapons caches with a metal detector near the village of Khadir, in the Abu Ghraib area. Despite the triple-digit temperatures, a light breeze swept over the elevation of the sand dune.*

gave the Americans and the IA a chance to apply their training.

“Unfortunately, nothing was found,” Turner said. “A lot of the times I measure success not by results, but by the continued improvement of the IA.”

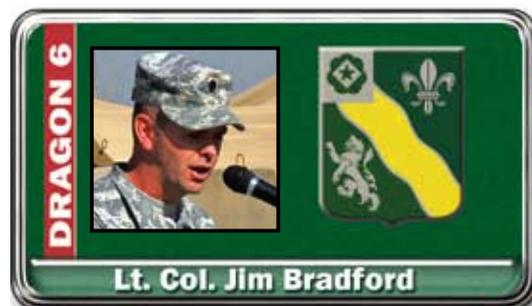
Turner said the non-commissioned officers of Co. D, have done a good job of training the IA, and the training showed during the cache search.

“I am very proud of the NCO-led instruction in this company,” Turner said. “The NCOs have done a good job coaching, teaching and mentoring for the IA.”

Turner also noted that the IA took up security positions on the summit of the sand dune, providing 360-degree security in all directions.

“I was very impressed that the IA instinctively went to the high ground without being told,” Turner said. “Today we got to see how the ISF training works in the real world.”

In the real world, insurgents often use the natural cover of palm trees, swamps and sand dunes to hide weapons, but the continued efforts of American Soldiers and the IA working to uncover caches will keep insurgents on the run.



Lt. Col. Jim Bradford

Soldiers, Families, and Friends of 1-63 SCAB, Amazingly, we are about to eclipse the 10 month mark of our deployment. August will start the process of reuniting Soldiers and Families as we send off our torch party to Fort Riley, supplementing the rear detachment to ensure we have the proper systems in place for a successful redeployment for the majority of the battalion. At this stage of a deployment, it is fun to talk about what we will do when we get back, what our next assignment may be, plans for the holiday season, and so on. It is (almost) fun to pack containers, ship equipment home, and prepare to integrate a new unit into Iraq to handle the responsibilities we have owned over the past several months. However, I cannot stress enough how important the final 60 days of our time in Iraq will be.

For the Soldiers here, you have accomplished amazing results with respect to developing Iraqi Security Forces. You have assisted cities and villages revamp their infrastructure, economic, education, electric, and water networks. You have continued to make it safe for Iraqi citizens to go to the market, attend school, and conduct governmental meetings. Our challenge over the next several weeks will be to remain vigilant. Our Families and supporters at home are depending on us to finish our job the right way, and to finish it safely.

To our Families at Fort Riley and across the country, your patience and support for us has simply been incredible. Hang in there. We'll all be dancing at the battalion ball before we know it. Please continue to support your Soldier as we wrap things up on our end. You are undoubtedly the keystone to our success. You are all great Americans, enduring a sacrifice that so many will never understand, and I cannot thank you enough for what you do.

Thanks again to everyone in our organization. I am humbled to lead this organization filled with remarkable individuals, Families, and teams.

Dragon 6.

“Dragons!”

1ST COMBINED ARMS BATTALION, 63RD ARMOR REGIMENT



LIVING BY THE SOLDIER'S CREED

Story and Photos by Staff Sgt. Peter Ford MND-B PAO

I will never quit. I will never leave a fallen comrade. All Army Soldiers are required to know the Soldier's Creed, but the Soldiers of 591st Military Police Company "Spartans," 93rd MP Battalion, 8th MP Brigade not only know it, they live by it. They always place the mission first.

The Spartans, a police transition team that advises Iraqi police, received a distress call over the radio as they prepared to go home after a long day at al-Awad Police Station, June 3. A Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected vehicle had rolled over into a ravine less than three miles away. Without hesitation, the Spartans went to the aid of their fellow Soldiers.

"We knew we had to do something when we heard ... Soldiers were possibly hurt inside a MRAP that had rolled into a ravine," said Sgt. George Talkington, a Las Cruces, N.M., native, a military policeman assigned to the 591st MP Co. "We tried to get there as soon as we could."

Once they were close enough to receive a radio transmission from the unit that sent the distress call, the

Spartans were informed they could only reach the vehicle by foot. Faced with only two options—swim across a canal or run a quarter miles to the vehicle—they ran.

"Our dismount team got off the vehicle and started to run toward the site in full gear," said Talkington. "We didn't try to swim because the water could have been contaminated and we could have become casualties."

The Spartans arrived at the rollover site tired and sweaty after running in full body armor and gear. They met with a platoon sergeant from B Troop, 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division and found Soldiers of B Troop already in action.

"After the vehicle rolled over we set up security around the vehicle, then I took some troops to assist the injured Soldiers out of the vehicle," said Vaden. "Our medic evaluated the casualties and had us put the injured on stretchers as a precautionary measure. After the area was secured and the patients had been evaluated we called for support."

The Cavalry troopers were disciplined, physically and

◀ *Crewmembers of 1st Air Cavalry Brigade prepare UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters to airlift injured Soldiers from the wheat field in the Abu Ghraib area. The crewmembers want to ensure the Soldiers carrying the litters do not get near the tail rotor.*

▼ *Spc. Cory Krogmeier, a N.C. native and a member of B Troop 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, assists fellow Soldiers as they lift his buddy over a mound to get injured Soldiers to the UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter in the Abu Ghraib area.*



mentally tough; trained and proficient in warrior task and drills. They had already set up security and pulled the injured from the MRAP, evaluated the casualties and sent up a report requesting a medical evacuation.

“Our training kicked in and we made decisions without hesitation; it was like second nature,” said Sgt. 1st Class Patrick Vaden of B Troop, 2nd Bn., 8th Cav. Regt. “No one panicked because we knew help would arrive.”

When the Spartans arrived, Vaden asked them to have their vehicles pull security on the outer perimeter of the field to provide 360 degrees of security around the landing zone for the UH-60 helicopters to land, according to Talkington. The rest of the Spartans jumped into the ravine to pull security near the MRAP.

Even after a long day, tired and hungry Soldiers of B Troop and the 591st MP Company placed their mission first and used teamwork to help their fellow Soldiers who were injured during a vehicle rollover. The injured Soldiers were successfully evacuated because B Troop and the 591st MP Company adhered to the principles of the Soldier’s Creed—I will always place the mission first. I will never accept defeat.

August 2009



Hello to all the Soldiers, Families and Friends of the Stallion organization. As we finish up another month of our twelve month deployment I am proud to share a consistent theme that resonates throughout the battalion. HIGH STANDARDS AND IRON DISCIPLINE! Everywhere we go the CSM and I can see it in the eyes of our young troopers, our NCOs and our senior leadership. Not only do we see it, but the Iraqi Army Soldiers that we partner with see it, they want to be like us. The enemy outside the wire see’s it. They rarely mess with us. The local populaces see’s it and they know that as long as the Stallions are in town they will continue to bring peace and security to far Western Baghdad and provide the local Iraqi people with an opportunity to live a better life.

Operationally, the Stallions remain “laser-focused” and always ready to tackle any problems with initiative, drive and a “can-do” attitude. On the lethal side of the house we are working hard every day through our ISF counterparts to insure the security threats in the western Abu Ghraib Qadah remain relatively low. Our non-lethal efforts have resulted in the opening of multiple facilities and the improvement of basic services such as trash clean up and potable drinking water. We are also providing the local population with a unique economic opportunity by supporting local business owners and creating a business-friendly environment. Every ribbon cutting, while seemingly symbolic, is a very powerful statement that takes us one step closer to normalcy in a country that has been ravaged by an insurgency for the past six years.

I also want to thank the Stallion team back at Fort Hood, Texas. You are amazing and tireless in your support of one another and these great Soldiers. Your letters, packages and overall dedication to the fight is truly first class and continues to impress us all on a daily basis. As our OPTEMPO continues to pick up speed just remember to take a moment each day and ask yourself, was I “lucky” or “safe” today? Safe is where you want to be in terms of risk management. Keep up the outstanding work. God Bless you all.

Stallion 6
“Honor and Courage”

2ND SQUADRON, 8TH CAVALRY REGIMENT

Baghdad School of Art

By Sgt. Brian Tierce 2nd HBCT PAO, 1st Inf. Div., MND-B

Over the past eight months Soldiers of the 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad have partnered with the Iraqi Ministry of Education (MoE) to further educational opportunities for the children of Baghdad.

A recent event designed to do just that highlighted each organization's commitment to not only the children of Baghdad but specifically to young Iraqi females who have an interest in fine arts.

The Baghdad School of Arts for Girls celebrated a renovation ceremony June 23 in the Mansour district, which was made possible by efforts of Dagger Soldiers and the MoE.

"Today's event is under the slogan art can talk," said Kareema Hashim, head mistress of the school of art for girls. "We look forward to the increased production of the students, thanks to the generosity of our friends in supporting this art school."

According to Hashim the school opened its doors in 1935 and has graduated many famous Iraqi artists over the years.

In recent years the degraded security led to the school not being able to maintain operations. During this time, the equipment the students used was either outdated or unserviceable.

After discovering the school in their area of operations, Soldiers from the 5th Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd HBCT, kick-started an effort with support from the Ministry of Education to provide the school with much needed equipment to help further the art students' talents.

With help from Dr. Nihad Abbas Shihad al-Juburi, the deputy Minister of Education, a contract was established to provide the students with the tools they need to develop their abilities.

"Through projects like this Dr. Nihad is fulfilling his vision for educating Iraq's young women in the best possible artistic techniques," said Lt. Col. Christopher Beckert, a Madison, Conn., native, deputy commander, 2nd HBCT. "I wish all of you the best of luck in the coming school year using the equipment in the great institute and I ask that you accept it as a gift from the American people."

The chance to refurbish the school was made possible by the improved security in the area.

For the contractor who performed the upgrades the situation has seen a marked improvement since he began working with Coalition forces.

"I have worked with the American Army for four years; I have worked over 50 contracts and through many difficult times," said Dr. Abbas al-Maliki. "Thanks to security improvements made by the presence of the Iraqi Army, Iraqi Police and the Sons of Iraq, the neighborhood is no longer safe for the enemies of Iraq."

With a learning environment safe from the worries of external dangers it is the hope of the Dagger Brigade and the MoE that the school can help foster an artistic renaissance in Baghdad with the assistance of the faculty and staff of the school.

"I thank the teachers and the professors here at the institute for their dedication and their love of the arts and for transferring that love of art to their students," said Beckert.





LONG KNIFE 6



Lt. Col. John B. Richardson IV

Long Knife Troopers, the June 30th Transition came and the Iraqis were not only able to take the lead, but they were able to excel. This is due in no small part to your efforts in training, advising, and mentoring your ISF partners to become a fully functional and professional security force. Your tireless efforts have not been wasted and U.S. and Iraqi Forces alike are enjoying the fruits of your labor in that attacks have consistently fallen throughout the deployment and post June 30th.

You are now a part of history. You have fought in and helped win one of your country's great wars. You have seen Iraq go through tremendous change even in our short year deployed. Under your tenure, you have guided the ISF from participating in American led joint patrols to conducting their own combat operations independently of American forces. You have much to be proud of and have earned it in the hard work and dedication I see from you every day.

As the time from redeployment draws near, I want you to reflect on your time here and your lessons learned. You will never forget this experience and will be able to pass on those lessons to other Soldiers and to future generations. Soon, our Squadron will return home victorious, but I urge you to remain vigilant and keep focused on the mission at hand.

LongKnife 6.

"Prepared and Loyal!"

5TH SQUADRON, 4TH CAVALRY REGIMENT



I.A. SURGEON VISITS BSB

Story and Photos by Sgt. Brian Tierce 2nd HBCT PAO, 1-Inf. Div., MND-B

In an effort to build on relationships that have been forged over the last nine months, Soldiers from C Company, 299th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, hosted the Division Surgeon from the 6th Iraqi Army Division, June 19, at Camp Liberty.

Lt. Col. Mortadha Jafar Mosa, a trained pathologist, visited the Riva Ridge Troop Medical Facility and also toured the brigade medical supply office or BMSO. The purpose of the event was to gain further insight into the daily operations of medical Soldiers in the U.S. Army to further develop Iraq's medical capacity.

"I think the event went extremely well; the noncommissioned officers briefed their respective areas and did an outstanding job," said 1st Sgt. Class Gary Williams, senior enlisted member, Co. C., 299th BSB. "The event was mainly NCO-driven to show the level of responsibility that

our NCO's have. Our Iraqi counterparts seemed pleased with the visit."

During the tour of the BMSO, Mortadha asked Lifeline Soldiers a number of questions, ranging from the issuing of medical supplies to the process of acquiring the supplies.

The visit was a chance to pass along the unit's knowledge, but the passing of knowledge has been a two way street for the commander of "Charlie Med."

"Lt. Col. Mortadha Jafar Mosa has taught me quite a bit of very valuable knowledge of the Iraqi Army Medical System and how they operate," said Capt. John Taylor, commander, Co. C, 299th BSB. "He has taught me many of the challenges he faces in trying to build and stand up a medical treatment system from the ground."

As the Iraqis continue to improve their capabilities, the interaction with Lifeline medical Soldiers serves to not only improve their capabilities, but it also improves the

relationships the Soldiers have built during their time together.

“I welcome these opportunities to interact with the Iraqi Army; many units in MND-B get to interact with them on a daily basis,” said Williams. “Our companies get limited opportunities, but we make the most of them to do our part in reinforcing and building the partnership that must continue to grow.”

◀ *SSgt. Maggie Wilson (left), records clerk, 299th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, explains to Lt. Col. Mortadha Jafar Mosa, 6th Iraqi Army Division surgeon, how she keeps records for patients during a visit to the Riva Ridge Troop Medical Center on Camp Liberty. Lifeline Soldiers and medics took part in the visit by detailing their daily operations to the Iraqi Medical Staff, who were trying to gain insight into American medical standards.*

▼ *Staff Sgt. Jason Abraham (right), brigade medical supply office noncommissioned officer in charge, shows Lt. Col. Mortadha Jafar Mosa, 6th Iraqi Army Division surgeon, an example of an Army document used to order medical supplies at Camp Liberty. Abraham also gave a tour of the medical storage facility to show the Iraqi Soldiers how American Forces store and disperse medical supplies.*



Life Line 6



299TH BRIGADE SUPPORT BATTALION

Lt. Col. Brian Tempest

The Battalion has completed over eight months in this deployment and a lot has changed since November when the LifeLine Battalion took over from the Performance Battalion, 526th BSB. Since then the Lifeline Battalion has expanded that partnership and training provided to all elements of the 6th Iraqi Army Division.

Soldiers of the Lifeline Battalion have been placed within critical locations of the 6th IA Division in the Dagger AO and at Taji in three man Logistics Training and Advisory Teams. These teams interact on a daily basis with the Iraqi Army monitoring the flow of supplies and maintenance to the Iraqi Army personnel and equipment. The focus of the BSB has been to give the Iraqi Army the skills they need to be able to perform their own logistical support to their units.

One of the major improvements that the Iraqi Army has made over the last eight months was the establishment of the Level II maintenance facility. BSB Soldiers have been working closely with the Iraqi Level II maintenance facility to establish an acceptable level of parts on hand for common faults that the US Army historically has seen in the vehicles that we have in common. The BSB has also monitored the first ever Iraqi Drivers Training Program initiated by the 6th Motor Transportation Regiment at Camp Taji. This will allow the drivers to be able to fix small problems on the spot and ensure their vehicles can make it through the mission they are given.

I am very proud of the success of our partnership that we have developed with our 6th Iraqi Army Logistical partners. This is a critical mission that will establish the logistical systems needed for the Iraqi Army to provide support for their own units. As we have seen the Iraqi people take control of the security for their country in the cities we will leave knowing we have assisted the Iraqi Army in being able to support their Army in daily missions.

Lifeline 6
“On Call to Serve.”



▼ Below - Command Sgt. Maj. Anna Gregory of Maringouin, La., assigned to 2-1 Special Troops Battalion, 2HBCT-11D, attempts to put a ping pong ball into a basket using a spoon and her mouth. The winner of the competition is the first contestant to put all of the ping pong in the adjacent tray.

▲ Above - Pfc. Madelaine Moore, of Jacksonville, Ill. and human resource specialist assigned to 2-1 Special Troops Battalion, 2HBCT-11D, dances with an Iraqi Soldier at their first Sapper Call in Muthana. "We saw dancing that we have never seen before," said Moore.

▼ Below - First Lt. David Fox, a Springfield, Mo. native and partnership officer coordinator assigned to Special Troops Battalion, 2HBCT-11D shows off his dancing skills at the first Sapper Call hosted by the Iraqi Army in Muthana. "This is a chance for engineers to get together and share common knowledge," said Fox.

▲ Above - Spc. Geisel King, of Indianapolis, Ind., Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2-1 Special Troops Battalion, 2HBCT-11D performs an Iraqi dance during the first Sapper Call in Muthana. The event brought together not only Iraqi engineers but also engineers from a number of MND-B units as well.



ARMY ENGINEERS SAPPER CALL

Story and Photos by Staff Sgt. Peter Ford MND-B PAO

A historic event took place in Muthana, here, June 17, when Soldiers of the 6th Iraqi Army Engineer Brigade hosted their first “Sapper Call” for Coalition forces engineers who took time from their busy schedule to attend the joyous occasion celebrating friendship and the progress in security.

Sappers perform a variety of combat engineering duties such as building bridges, roads and airfields.

“A Sapper Call is the gathering of engineers to share a common bond and fellowship with one another,” said Col. David Imhof, a Lebanon, Pa. native and commander of Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division. “We invited the 6th Iraqi Army Engineer Brigade to one of ours and now they are hosting this historic event for us.”

Soldiers of the 6th IA Eng. Bde. worked hard to put the event together. They used unique games and dances to break down formal relationships in order to make more personal connections, according to Command Sgt. Maj. Anna Gregory, a native of Maringouin, La., of 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div. The games, as crazy as they were, brought laughter and lasting memories to the Soldiers who attended the event. The entertainment, helped to strengthen the bond between two different groups with the common goal of a peaceful Iraq.

“The games were unique, you don’t see those type of games much in America,” said Pfc. Madelaine Moore, a Jacksonville, Ill. native and human resource specialist assigned to STB, 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div. “We saw dancing that we have never seen before.”

The Iraqi Soldiers just wanted to have fun. They clapped their hands and at times stomped their feet to the soulful beat of Iraqi music and a sampling of American rap music. “The Iraqi Soldiers are wild, they are not shy at all,” said Pfc. Sarah Brown, a native of Pineville, Ga., and human resource specialist assigned to STB, 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div.

After the CF and the IA danced, they ate and watched a slide show of the weapons caches and improvised explosive device the IA found by using the skills they learned from the CF. “This Sapper Call by the IA was a great experience,” said Pfc. Ashley Pedraza, Manheim, Germany, native and human resource specialist assigned to STB, 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div.

The initiative taken in hosting the sapper call and weapon caches that the IA proudly displayed during the ceremony are signs that progress is being made in Iraq. By hosting events like this, it allows IA the opportunity to establish a lasting bond with CF combat engineers.

GRIFFIN 6



Col. David Imhof

As we complete another month of our deployment, I want to again Thank every Griffin Soldier for your efforts in executing every mission to the highest standard in a professional, disciplined manner.

We recently passed the “last 100 day” mark, and as I said last month, next to the “first 100 days”, the “last 100 days” are often the most dangerous as Soldiers focus on going home instead of focusing on their daily missions. As we begin turning in equipment, loading connexes, building manifests, and redeploying Advance Party Soldiers, maintaining focus and remaining vigilant will be paramount. We must all have the ability to transition from putting maximum focus and effort into conducting redeployment actions to conducting combat patrols. In other words, whether conducting redeployment actions or a combat patrol, do not allow your battle buddy, section, squad or platoon to become complacent. Always remember to kick complacency in the “rear.”

Following the implementation of the next phase of the security agreement on 30 June 2009, we began another important phase of our deployment. Our Iraqi Security Force partners are doing a fabulous job of maintaining a safe and secure environment, and we must continue to work with, support, and encourage our Iraqi partners to ensure continued success during this transition. I know that every Griffin Soldier is up to this task, and I know we all look forward to the opportunity to partner with the Iraqi Security Forces, specifically the 6th Engineer Regiment, over the next several months.

I am extremely Thankful for the phenomenal efforts of every Griffin Soldier and humbled by all of the sacrifices every Family makes in order to support their Soldier. We have more work to do but I am reminded daily that the efforts of every Griffin Soldier are adding to the great legacy of the Big Red One and the Griffin Battalion. To every Griffin Soldier and Family Member, Thank You for everything you do each and every day to make our battalion a great team!!

Griffin 6

“Griffins! Point of the Dagger!”

2-1 BRIGADE SPECIAL TROOPS BATTALION



Orphans of Abu Ghraib

Story and Photos by Sgt. Philip Schratwieser 2nd Bn., 112th Inf. Regt

Soldiers of Company C of the 2nd Battalion, 112th Infantry Regiment, “Paxton Rangers”, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division-Baghdad conducted a combined patrol through Abu Ghraib June 25 to disrupt insurgents in the area and improve their relationship with their Iraqi counterparts.

The area they patrolled is called the “1st of June” as Iraqis often name areas after significant dates in their history.

Leading the patrol was a platoon from the 24th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division. As a result of the agreement between Coalition forces and the nation of Iraq all combat operations are now conducted jointly.

One of the goals of these joint operations is training, another is to show the people that there is a transition happening as Coalition forces begin pulling back.

Part of today’s mission was to take a small step in attempting to improve those relationships.

Under the guidance of Co C of the 2-112 “Paxton Rangers”

dozens of bags of beans, rice, canned meat, bottled water and other supplies were given to the Iraqi Army Soldiers. As they began their patrol, they stopped at a number of houses handing out these bags and holding brief conversations with the residents.

They were surprised as they came to an unofficial orphanage and were surrounded by kids.

“Finding an orphanage right away was really good,” said Staff Sgt. Andrew Fox from Reedsville, Pa., 2-112th. “We were really able to help some needy people.”

Medical issues were discussed and the location was marked in order to bring back supplies and a medic.

As is often the case, once word starts getting around that things are being given away, a crowd starts to develop as the Soldiers came upon a medical clinic, little more than a small drug store next to a shop selling automotive fluids.

Stryker’s and Iraqi Army trucks were setup around the area to provide security as Soldiers were sent in all directions in order to keep an eye out for possible attack.

Dozens of bags of food were unloaded as people started coming from all directions. The Iraqi Army soldiers kept order and quickly formed the people into a line. The residents thanked the soldiers as they left. Within just a few minutes the food was gone.

“Well, it’s important to help get the community back on its feet. We work with the Iraqi Army in joint patrols,” said Sgt. Sean Rawlings from Clearfield, Pa. “We’re kind of like role models. Seeing the kids is the best part. They’re a lot of fun.”

◀ *Sgt. Andrew Fox from Reedsville, Pa., of the 2nd Battalion, 112th Infantry Regiment, “Paxton Rangers”, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division-Baghdad shows the contents of one of the food bags being distributed by the joint Coalition force and Iraqi Army foot patrol June 25 to a newly discovered orphanage.*

▼ *An Iraqi soldier from the 24th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division distributes the contents of a food bag to residents of the “1st of June” area of Abu Ghraib during a joint Coalition Forces foot patrol on June 25. The joint patrols are designed to improve relations and trust between the Iraqi Army and the residents whom they secure.*



As we enter the last 30 days of the operational phase of our deployment, our common purpose and uncompromising commitment to excellence can not and will not wane. The Paxton Rangers will continue the attack!!! As mentioned previously, our tireless pursuit of the enemy, partnership with the ISF, and our commitment to the people of Iraq will define our mission. This is the culmination of our transformation to a Stryker Battalion and marks the end of years of training, preparation, and sacrifice. It is our legacy in Abu Ghraib. After the Paxton Strykers are gone, our names and unit designation will quickly fade from the Iraqi memory, but our contribution to Abu Ghraib will remain in the history of Iraq. The countless patrols, dozens of civil capacity projects, and unconditional professionalism of our warriors have set the conditions for Iraqi independence and self-determination.

During our campaign we brought improved security by killing and capturing nearly 50 terrorists as well as mentoring the Iraqi Security Forces. Through our civil capacity effort we brought light to dark streets, economic opportunity to impecunious communities, and provided an optimistic future with our commitment to the education of Iraqi youth. In our final days we must maintain the momentum, attacking the scourge of terrorism and building the communities and neighborhoods of Abu Ghraib. Our reward for our commitment can not be measured in monetary terms or widespread fame, but rather we will re-deploy with the enduring satisfaction of knowing that we made a difference.

As this is my final contribution to the DAGGER EDGE, I want to acknowledge the support from the Dagger team. Our experience with the Daggers will long be remembered. I’m satisfied that we will return to the 56 Stryker Brigade leaving Abu Ghraib better than how we found it, with the conditions set for continued success by the Dagger Brigade until their own transfer of authority. Shukran il musaa’atek, ma’a as salama.

Paxton 6
“Quick, Silent, Deadly.”

AND THE ARMY SAID...



LET THERE BE SOLAR LIGHT

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

Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers took a new concept in illuminating the streets of northwest Baghdad and Abu Ghraib and improved that concept with even newer technology.

Although solar-powered lights were present before the 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, MND-B arrived in Baghdad to support Iraqi Security Forces through partnership, the leadership felt there were not enough lights and individual lights did not produce enough illumination.

“We were not happy with the quality of solar lights when we arrived,” said Bristol, Conn. native, Maj. Andrew Attar, Joint Project Management officer, 2nd HBCT. “The lamps were low-pressure sodium and the light produced was dim yellow, yielding little visibility. Plus, the parts being imported were of low quality and malfunctioned frequently.”

After much research the brigade decided to make the switch to longer-lasting parts and a newer generation of lamps that produce more light.

“We came across induction lamps; they are more efficient than low-pressure sodium and produce bright, white light with great visibility,” said Attar. “You can literally see several hundred meters down a road at night, with almost day light clarity.”

The brigade informed the Iraqi Ministry of Electricity of the new technology and Attar said the ministry was very excited about the new technology, which can survive the elements of nature for long periods of time while alleviating the stress of the national power grid.

After recent sand storms the lights still worked when other lights did not.

Although they can weather the storms, Attar said it is important that the panels and light parts are cleaned



◀ **OPPOSITE PAGE** - Soldiers serving with the 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad patrol the streets of a well-lit Kadamiyah. The lights installed are powered by the sun and don't rely on the national power grid.

◀ A streetlight illuminates the surrounding area in the Kadamiyah district of northwest Baghdad. As directed by the 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, local Iraqi contractors have installed solar-powered lights throughout northwest Baghdad to keep markets open later and provide security to the people.

▼ An Iraqi contractor lays out the foundation for a streetlight to be installed in the Mansour district of northwest Baghdad July 12. The streetlights keep markets open later and do not rely on the national power grid.



regularly.

“The solar panels have a guaranteed life of 20 years and the batteries have a lifecycle of five to eight years depending on how clean the panels are kept,” said Attar. “If the panels remain heavily covered with sand for long periods of time, this will shorten the lifespan of the batteries.”

Without the lights, the business hours on the streets are also shorter.

“As we expanded the emplacement of the lights they became a safety measure along main roadways and markets, allowing businesses to stay open later,” said 1st Lt. Thomas Wilson, a native of LeClaire, Iowa, 5th Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd HBCT. “They have invigorated the local economy and allowed people safer areas to socialize and be active during the cool nights.”

While the lights help stimulate the local economy, the original intent was to suppress insurgent activity.

“The light project was initiated to provide security

and safety throughout southern Ghazaliyah in an effort to make the area inhospitable to insurgent forces. Our intent was to light the main traffic routes and market areas in order to brighten the dark avenues of approach and provide areas where the community could spend time outside shopping or socializing during the hours past sundown,” said Wilson. “Our plan was to create a safe environment for the people to be out on the streets and in turn they would be more likely to reject the use of the roadways at night time hours by the insurgents.”

As the scheduled year-long deployment comes closer to an end for the Dagger Brigade, Attar said he was glad the Ministry of Electricity was able to work with the brigade to install the lights in order to benefit the people.

“Solar street lights are important to our efforts here because when they’re done right with the right technology, they make the streets safer at night,” Attar said. “These lights help bring about irreversible momentum of positive, peaceful change to Baghdad.”

REDEPLOYMENT SAFETY

We are fast approaching one of the most dangerous phases of combat action: Re-integration. With their adrenalin still pumping, many of our young men and women who so brilliantly performed some of the toughest Army missions required to liberate the Iraqi people are on their way home. Following the “welcome home” fanfare and the emotional reunions with families and friends, these soldiers will once again face a deadly nemesis that has for far too long been the number one killer of soldiers, POV Accidents

POV accidents continue to be the number one killer of Soldiers at home. Upon return to Ft Riley, soldiers who endured high levels of stress and were in a constant state of alert during combat operations may let down their guard against the normal hazards common to the home environment. It’s critical that these soldiers stay focused and maintain situational awareness of potential hazards during reintegration. The extended periods of leave and travel for some well deserved rest and family time, elevate the potential risks of POV accidents to soldiers and their families. We must all place renewed emphasis on POV accident prevention to prevent a surge in accidental injuries and deaths.

Leaders must do everything in their power to reach all of the soldiers and ensure that they are aware of the accident hazards that await them upon their return. We must also ensure they understand and can apply appropriate risk control measures to reduce or eliminate those hazards. Specifically, leaders should review the POV accident prevention tools in the POV Risk Management Toolbox on the Army Safety Center website (safety.army.mil) and discuss, as a minimum, the following issues with soldiers prior to block leave or release from duty:

Seatbelt use - Many individuals do not wear their seatbelts for a variety of un-quantifiable reasons. However, seatbelts are known to prevent deaths in 42% of all potentially fatal crashes. Add an air bag to the buckled seatbelt and you will increase the odds of surviving the crash to 47%. Seatbelt use is mandatory for all Soldiers regardless of location (on or off post). If a Soldier is involved in an accident and is not wearing the seatbelt, that Soldier could be found to be

Not in the line of duty and be liable for all medical bills. Seatbelts save lives period,

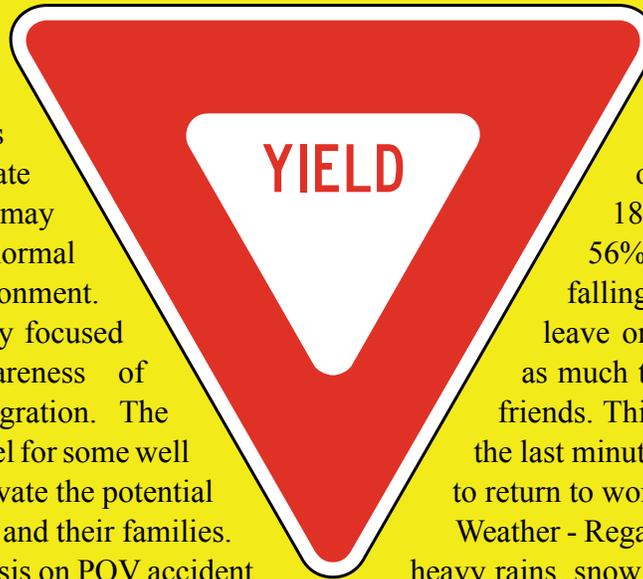
Drinking and driving - Alcohol or drug use while driving is known to be against the law. An individual that is caught DUI or DWI will lose their on post driving privileges, could lose their license, and their insurance will increase dramatically. A Soldier could also face adverse administrative actions such as separation from the service or a General Officer Memorandum of Reprimand. The worst thing that could happen to an individual that is driving drunk is to kill someone or kill themselves.

Fatigue - Fatigue is another area that we have complete control over. Drivers between the ages of 18-25 are at special risk with over 56% of fatal crashes involving fatigue or falling asleep at the wheel. During block leave or at other times, we want to spend as much time as possible with loved ones or friends. This can result in personnel leaving at the last minute or driving all night to get home or to return to work.

Weather - Regardless of where we will be traveling heavy rains, snow, ice, and winter weather will affect our travels and normal driving. Most of us have not driven in many months and it will take us a while to get back in the habit of doing so safely. Our risk of having an accident is high and very high with the affects of the weather on us. The key to safe driving is in your hands; slow down, take proper actions and pull over if need be, and just use common sense.

Every year someone gets shot or shoots themselves while checking their weapon or showing it to someone else. We’ve spent too much time in theater with our weapons at less than arms distance away to get complacent and let our guard down. Never handle/play with a weapon if you’ve been drinking. Alcohol and weapons don’t mix.

Finally, we must continue to stress the importance of Composite Risk Management (CRM). CRM is a tool that when used properly is very effective. If an individual can recognize a hazard and mitigate that hazard they will be better prepared to face that hazard. Using the 5-step Risk Management Process for all operations or during daily life will assist in your success.



New GI Bill Transfer Options Take Effect Aug. 1

The Post-9/11 GI Bill takes effect Aug. 1, but in the meantime, servicemembers may submit a request to transfer benefits to their spouses and children now.

“Transferability of Post 9/11 GI Bill benefits has been the most requested initiative we receive from our servicemembers,” said Bill Carr, deputy undersecretary of defense for personnel policy, “and we believe it will assist us in retaining highly qualified military personnel.”

Career servicemembers on active duty or in the selected reserve on Aug. 1 may be entitled to transfer all or a portion of their unused entitlement to one or more family members.

Army 1st Sgt. Steven Colbert, who serves with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd U.S. Infantry, at Fort Myer, Va., is among the first soldiers to take advantage of the new entitlement.

“I will be the first to say that the Army is probably the best thing that has ever happened to me,” Colbert said. “It has given me some of the advantages that I didn’t have as a child growing up. One of the reasons why I stayed in so long is because of Jordan, my son. Now I have the opportunity to give him something I never had.”

Colbert has spent 23 years in the Army with tour throughout Europe and across the United States. During that time, he took advantage of tuition assistance and graduated with a bachelor’s degree in management. His wife, Danielle, is working on a bachelor’s degree in business administration at Prince George’s Community College in Maryland. Jordan Colbert already has similar plans.

“I want to go in the Army and play

football,” he said with a big smile. “But I want to attend Virginia Tech first.”

“I didn’t put that in his head,” his father said. “He already has picked that out, and with us being here in the D.C. area, the Post 9/11 GI Bill is perfect. [Virginia Tech] is a pricey school, but these benefits are going to help me be able to take care of that.

“It’s just wonderful,” he continued. “I’m just overwhelmed about the opportunity to really be able to take care of him.”

For servicemembers and spouses who might want to continue with their studies, the Post 9/11 GI Bill can be used for all levels of degree programs, including a second degree, a master’s degree or even a doctorate.

Defense officials advise servicemembers to transfer at least a month’s worth of GI Bill benefits to every dependent before they leave service to lock in an opportunity to change the number of months transferred at a later time.

Any family member not approved for transferability before a member retires or separates will be denied the opportunity forever, unless the member re-enters service. Likewise, veterans who remarry or have more children after leaving service will not be able to transfer GI Bill benefits to these new family members.

“It’s recommended that soldiers add all family members as potential beneficiaries of their Post 9/11 GI Bill benefits,” said Bob Clark, the Defense Department’s assistant director for accession policy and military personnel policy. Once servicemembers retire or separate, he explained, they can no longer add new family members as

potential beneficiaries.

As a first sergeant, Colbert said, he wants to make sure his soldiers know about this benefit.

“Because I’m the first sergeant here at Headquarters Company, with all these assets like the regimental career counselors, I’m in a unique position to pass this knowledge on to my soldiers,” he said.

A program Colbert is particularly proud of is “College 101,” which the Fort Myer military community developed with the Army Education Center. It works to improve soldiers’ transition to college.

“We will have people come in from the education center who will advise soldiers to take advantage of these benefits, because they have to have some type of educational background to be successful,” he said. “A lot of us in the Army don’t realize it but, hey, it’s tough outside that gate -- real tough. You’ve got to have a balance. You’ve got to be more competitive than the next person.”

Tuition is not the only benefit extended to potential college-goers. For students attending school more than half the time, the Post 9/11 GI Bill also pays housing costs, up to a rate equivalent to the basic allowance for housing rate for an E-5 with dependents in the ZIP code where the school is located.

Students also are entitled to a yearly stipend of up to \$1,000 to cover the cost of books and supplies, and students from rural areas who are transferring to a school also may be entitled to a one-time payment of \$500.

“I get choked up just thinking about the benefits I’m able to give my son,” Colbert said.

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THE DAGGER EDGE