

Crossed Sabers

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

As AH-64D Apache attack helicopter pilots from 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, prepare for a mission, Lisa Jay, an actress, wishes the pilots good luck over the internal communications system, Camp Taji, Iraq, Sept. 5. Jay, along with psychiatric specialist Dr. Robert Irvin, accompanied Emmy Award winning actor Joe Pantoliano on his 'Stomp the Stigma' tour where his goal was to educate Soldiers on mental illness and to make them more comfortable about getting help if necessary.

Tour raises awareness for treatment of mental illness

Story by Sgt. Joshua Risner

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

BAGHDAD – Ambassadors from the land of Hollywood visited Multinational Division – Baghdad Soldiers, here, Sept. 4.

The visit wasn't the typical, run of the mill, morale visit from actors and actresses. This time, the actors and actresses had an important message to bring.

Their message was to raise awareness of mental illness in a tour called "Stomp the Stigma."

Designed as an effort to strip away the shame and other bad connotations associated with having a disease of the mind or psyche, "No Kidding, Me Too!", a non-profit organization, presented the program to help people better understand mental illnesses.

"'No Kidding, Me Too!' is an advocacy organization of celebrities to educate and to advocate the purpose of removing the stigma attached to mental illness and

breaking down societal barriers," said Joe Pantoliano, actor and founder of the organization during his recent visit to Victory Base Complex. "We seek to empower those with mental illness, to admit their illness and to embrace their openness to seek treatment."

Pantoliano, along with fellow thespian Lisa Jay and psychiatrist, Dr. Robert Irvin, talked to Soldiers about mental illness and related their own experiences.

Soldiers were invited to provide feedback on their experiences which may have contributed to a state of mental unease for them. According to Irvin, gathering feedback is an effort to better understand and treat disorders such as depression and post-traumatic stress disorder.

"The things that you experience, they are not military problems, they are human problems that happen to occur in the military," said Irvin to the assembled Soldiers. "When you come home, educate us. We need to hear your stories. It will help us help you and it will also help us help other

people to alleviate human suffering on all planes."

Pantoliano, affectionately referred to as "Joey Pants," refers to his work as a labor of love, extending from his own battle with mental illness. "I'm sharing my experience, my mental illness – I'm mentally ill," he said. "Doing this, I'm letting go of a little of it and it helps me to regulate my day today, dealing with my personal disease."

For Jay, being able to come out and relay their message is a special treat.

"Right now, this is coming in a really timely fashion because it's been in the press so much lately at home and I think everybody at home wants to help this cause," she said. "I know the military is especially concerned; they've been willing to be very proactive and they obviously really care about their men and women, so it's an honor for us to be a part of this."

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Rosh Hashanah

*By Chaplain (MAJ) Avrohom Horowitz,
MNC-I Jewish Chaplain*

The Jewish New Year (Rosh Hashanah) will be ushered in at sundown Friday, September 18th, 2009, and additional Holy Day observances will take place on Saturday and Sunday, September 19th and 20th. The special Biblical precept that is identified with Rosh Hashanah is the sounding of the ram's horn (Shofar); its source in Scripture is the Book of Numbers (Chapter 29, verse 1). The Shofar blasts are an acknowledgment of divine sovereignty over the world, and a call to spiritual self-examination. The ten days beginning with Rosh Hashanah are days of Repentance. The Fast of Gedalia is on Monday, September 21st. Gedalia was a righteous governor in the Holy Land who was assassinated, as recorded in the Book of Jeremiah, Chapter 41.

The Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) will take place from sundown on Sunday, September 27th, until nightfall on Monday, September 28th. The Biblical source for this, the holiest day on the Jewish calendar, is found in the Book of Leviticus (Chapter 23, Verse 27-28): "The tenth of this seventh month shall be the Day of Atonement for you. It is a sacred holiday when you must afflict your souls...Do not do any work on this day, for it is the Day of Atonement..." The Biblical precept to "afflict your souls" is fulfilled by abstaining from all eating and drinking. The obligation to fast, along with five prayer Services, help direct all worshippers to seek forgiveness from the Creator of the universe, and to re-order their priorities in the New Year. A memorial service for the departed (Yizkor) is a tradition of the day.

The Festival of Booths (Succoth) begins at sundown on Friday, October 2nd. The Jewish people are commanded (Leviticus: Chapter 23, verses 39-43) to build thatched huts, and make them their home for seven days. This represents the booths in which the Israelites dwelt during the 40 years in the desert following the Exodus. The Jewish people are instructed to wave four agricultural species, made up of a citron (Esrog), and branches from a date-palm (Lulav), myrtle (Hadassim) and willow (Aravos). By waving them in all directions, we praise the Creator as the source of all nature. This Festival of gathering in the harvest is the source of the American festival of Thanksgiving, the Biblical model that the Pilgrims followed when offering thanks for their first harvest in the New World. The first two days are days of obligation and mundane work is forbidden.

The eighth day of festivities (called Shemini Atzeres in the Book of Numbers: Chapter 29, verse 35) beginning at sundown Friday, October 9th, has a memorial service (Yizkor), and a prayer for rain. The ninth and final day is called Simchas Torah "The Rejoicing of the Law" and marks the festive joy and dancing with the Torah scroll, for completing the yearly cycle of publicly reading the Scripture, and beginning the cycle of readings anew with the Book of Genesis.

May we all be blessed with a good and sweet year, Amen.

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Services:
Rosh Hashanah:
Evening Service, 18, 19
& 20 Sep: 1830
Morning Service, 19 &
20 Sep: 0800

Yom Kippur:
Evening Service, 27 & 28
Sep: 1830
Morning Service, 28
Sep: 0800

Sukkoth:
Evening Service, 2, 3 & 4
Oct: 1830
Morning Service, 3 & 4
Oct: 0800

Simchat Torah:
Evening Service, 9, 10
& 11 Oct: 1830
Morning Service, 10 &
11 Oct: 0800



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

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Awareness~ From Pg1

Soldiers walked away from the presentation with a little more knowledge than they had when they came in. Having stars of stage and screen come out and relay their own battles with mental illness helped convey the message that it can happen to anybody.

The ambassadors closed with a strong statement to Soldiers: don't be afraid to seek treatment because you are not alone. ✂



Photo by Sgt. Travis Zielinski, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

Giving a warm welcome, Command Sgt. Maj. Douglas Greene (center), from Harker Heights, Texas, the command sergeant major of 4th Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, meets actor Joe Pantoliano (right), Camp Taji, Iraq, Sept. 5. Joe was visiting Soldiers during his 'Stomp the Stigma' tour to speak with Soldiers about mental illness and how to cope with it.



Photo by Sgt. Travis Zielinski, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

Emmy Award winning actor Joe Pantoliano (left) brought his 'Stomp the Stigma' tour to Soldiers of 4th Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, to help educate the Soldiers about the realities of mental illness, Camp Taji, Iraq, Sept. 5. Actress Lisa Jay (middle) and psychiatric specialist Dr. Robert Irvin (right) will accompany Joe on the tour throughout Iraq.



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Freedom Radio Baghdad 104.1 and 107.3 FM



Photo by Sgt. Rebekah Malone, 225th Eng. Bde. PAO, MND-B

Mark II boats operated by the 50th Multi-Role Bridge Company, 37th Engineer Battalion, 555th Engineer Brigade, push the pontoon holding a span of the Maybe Johnson Bridge, Aug. 31, on the Tigris River near Taji in northern Baghdad.

U.S., IA Engineers open new bridge over Tigris

Story by Sgt. Rebekah Malone
225th Eng. Bde. PAO, MND-B

BAGHDAD – On the banks of the mighty Tigris River, a track excavator slowly inched forward, pushing a land-based on ramp towards a pontoon suspension bridge.

Simple pins, connecting the two, marked the Aug. 31 completion of a spectacular engineering effort from three separate engineer entities that took a month to complete.

Engineers of the 225th Engineer Brigade, the 555th Engineer Brigade and elements of the Headquarters, 4th and 5th Iraqi Army Field Engineer Regiments have literally bridged the gap while spanning the river to reduce traffic inside of Baghdad in accordance with the Security Agreement.

On July 27, the 277th Engineer Company, 46th Engineer Combat Battalion (Heavy), 225th Eng. Bde., began the massive job of removing 6,000 cubic yards of dirt to level both banks of the river for the bridge's on and off ramps. Using the Army's largest bulldozer, the D9, San Antonio based engineers moved some 400 dump truck loads worth of dirt in only 23 days.

"The 277th Eng. Company's scope of work was to construct the near side and far side approach and the boat launch sites. This was done with a variety of engineer operations of cutting and filling; loading and hauling and grading, leveling and compacting," said plans officer, Maj. Shane Rauh, of Baton Rouge, La.

Next, Soldiers of the 555th Engineer Brigade assembled the ramps of the Maybe Johnson bridge and launched the portion of bridge suspended by pontoons over the Tigris.

The final phase of the engineer tri-fecta was a company sized element from the Iraqi Army Field Engineer Regiments. The partnership was not only great training for the emplacement of the actual bridge, but allowed the U.S. Soldiers to show the Iraqis how to maintain the bridge once U.S. troops withdraw from Iraq.

"The big significance here is this is my first time that I know of ... that we've actually built a bridge alongside the Iraqi brethren and the Iraqi Engineers. It's a huge significance because we've got [three] regiments out here worth of people helping us out to build this bridge," Capt. John Davis of Virginia Beach, Va., commander of the 50th Multi-Role Bridge Company explained.

"We were able to train them in the past on the Maybe Johnson on how to do the emplacement and maneuver of these bridges and to get them out here on site and to get them building and all come together, there's just a lot of national pride out here," he said.

For the 50th MRBC, working with the Maybe Johnson was not a first, but suspending the bridge with pontoons to make a sort of floating bridge was a first that allowed for a rare training opportunity.

"This is a non-standard bridge. This is something we bought and are using based on operational needs in Iraq right now," Davis continued. "So this is great for them to get training and get experience to carry on to the next generation of Army [bridge builders]."

"This is a Maybe Johnson Combat 200 version. It is capable of pretty much crossing any kind of traffic the military has right now. It will enable the units in this area to have freedom of maneuver ... to keep the fight progressing," said Davis.

The bridge opened to military traffic Aug. 31.



Photo by Sgt. Rebekah Malone, 225th Eng. Bde. PAO, MND-B

(Left) Straddling the pontoon holding the floating piece of a Maybe Johnson Bridge and the land-based ramp, Soldiers from the 50th Multi-Role Bridge Company, 37th Engineer Battalion, 555th Engineer Brigade and Iraqi engineer Soldiers make adjustments with a pry bar to insert a pin connecting the two pieces, Aug. 31. The huge 100 meter bridge spans the Tigris River near Taji in northern Baghdad and is capable of allowing the crossing of nearly any piece of equipment the military uses today.

(Below) An aerial view of the Mabey Johnson bridge shows the culmination of a one month long project between the 225th Engineer Brigade, 555th Engineer Brigade, and elements of three Iraqi Army Field Engineering Regiments. The bridge spans 100 meters over the Tigris River near Taji in northern Baghdad.



U.S. Army Photo

1st ACB, Iraqi Air Force strengthen partnership

Story by Sgt. Seandale Jackson

1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI— Getting to know the Iraqi Soldiers on a personal level is crucial to fostering a more professional relationship.

Soldiers of 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, have done just that.

Members of 2nd Squadron, Iraqi Air Force, who fly the UH-1H, better known as the Huey II, recently spent time with American pilots and maintenance technicians, to better understand how “First Attack” maintainers keep their aircraft aloft.

As the partnership between the 1st ACB and the fledgling Iraqi aviators grows, Soldiers on both sides help each other to cross language barriers and increase the flow of information.

As the U.S. and IAF aviators meet weekly, they now greet each other with hugs instead of handshakes.

During the 1st ACB’s last to Iraq in 2006, Lt. Col. Charles Dalcourt, the battalion’s current commander from Baton Rouge, La., served as the deputy brigade commander.

It was then he began the relationship with the IAF and can recall their solo flight over Baghdad in August 2007.

“After the first visit, and surely after



Photo by Sgt. Travis Zielinski, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

Working closely with the Iraqi Air Force to build stronger bonds and help the IAF with their maintenance systems and processes, Soldiers of 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, invited the leadership of the 2nd Squadron, IAF, to observe how maintenance meetings and maintenance organization play a vital role in keeping aircraft fully-mission-capable, here, Aug. 30.

the second visit, they knew that we were both humble and sincere in our efforts to reunite and get together,” said Dalcourt. “So that really enables us to get in and get going; to move the relationship past the professional perspective.”

The purpose of the visit was threefold – to foster a closer partnership, to celebrate the second anniversary of the 2nd

Squadron’s first solo flight and to focus on maintenance practices.

Now a plan is in place to share with them the importance of a consistent maintenance regiment.

“I want them to get out of it the sense of pride that we have in our aircraft ... we are just trying to show them how it can help them in their maintenance , us-

ing their team to facilitate making their maintenance better and a way to make them more successful on their missions,” said Haas.

The 2nd Squadron was invited to a production control meeting and shown the intricacies of what is required to maintain a group of aircraft.

The end result will be for them implement similar practices and achieve a higher number of fully-mission-capable helicopters, but Cav. aviators say that cannot happen until the personal relationships develop.

“You don’t exactly trust somebody that shows you a way to work, but if you know them as a person and what they stand for, and the camaraderie that goes with social events, I think it carries over better and [provides] a better base for [the] relationship,” said Haas.

In the near future, both the Iraqis and U.S. pilots hope to fly Huey’s and Apaches in formation over Baghdad; demonstrating the relationship between air assets of the Iraqi and U. S. Military, said Dalcourt.

“I would like to see the Iraqi Air Force grow to the extent that their doing missions and conducting operations in support of Iraqi ground forces,” said Dalcourt. “Be it air assaults, air movements or other missions that may entail greater coordination and greater synchronization between the two.”

Iraqis learn computer, sewing skills

Story by Sgt. Seandale Jackson

1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD – The relationship among citizens of the Jamiya neighborhood and their local leaders took a step forward at the Jamiya Tribal Support Council in northwest Baghdad, Aug 25.

The council worked with Soldiers from 5th Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad and the 422nd Civil Affairs Battalion to open up the council hall to train young Iraqis basic computer and sewing skills.

“These classes are beneficial because it gives women and computer users the skills necessary to obtain jobs and to succeed in the economy,” said Capt. Paul Nieves, a native of Puerto Rico, with the 422nd Civil Affairs Battalion. “Dr. Amal, the head of the Thagalaya Strategic Study Center Islamic Foundation for Women and Children, conceived this idea in order to help advance women in the local community.”

The TSSCIFWC understood that Iraqis with more education have less of a chance to turn to insurgency.

“These classes are a great chance to help women, especially the widowed and less fortunate,” said Sheik Majid of the Jamiya Tribal Support Council.

Women who showed up to the course learned professional sewing skills, which could help start a business.

“The sewing classes last two hours every day for a two week course and accommodate 40 local women. After the graduation, the women are given a sewing machine to help them get started.”

To help Iraqi computer users get started, the Soldiers and the council put together a computer class that focuses on Microsoft products.

“The computer classes accommodate 20 people per class. In these classes, young people learn the basics of Windows and Microsoft Office, focusing on Word and PowerPoint,” said Majid. “These computer classes are key in preparing young people to succeed in college.”

The project is intended to be 10 weeks long and educate 200 women on sewing and 100 young people in computer technology.

The Soldiers and the community leaders plan on expanding the program to better benefit the people of northwest Baghdad.

“This project was a great opportunity to work jointly with the community leaders of Jamiya. Both U.S. forces and the Jamiya Tribal Support Council desire to expand the project in order to positively affect more people,” said Capt. Thomas Wilson, a native of LeClaire, Iowa, 5th Sqdn., 4th Cav. Regt. “Sheikh Majid, the Tribal Support Council, and other community leaders took the lead on this project and are a perfect example of Iraqis unselfishly working together in order to make Iraq a better place.”



Photo by 1st Lt. Charles Donley, 1st Inf. Div., MND-B

(Above) Iraqi women take a sewing class at the Jamiya Tribal Support Council in northwest Baghdad Aug. 25. Soldiers from the 5th Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad helped set up the course, which lasts two hours every day for two weeks and accommodates 40 local women per course.

(Right) An Iraqi student learns basic computer skills at the Jamiya Tribal Support Council in northwest Baghdad Aug. 25. Soldiers from the 5th Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad helped set up the course, which teaches about 20 people per class.



Photo by 1st Lt. Charles Donley, 1st Inf. Div., MND-B

Equipment delivers prospect of a better future

Story by Sgt. Rebekah Malone

225th Eng. Bde. PAO, MND-B

BAGHDAD – In an effort to keep the streets of Nassir Wa Salam cleaner and safer, U.S. forces delivered a new front-end loader to the Government of Iraq in a ceremony, here, Sept. 2.

The \$175,000 project, includes 90-days of contracted trash pick-up and for the first 12 months, a guarantee on maintenance and equipment replacement, said Staff Sgt. Jeff Blanchard, a civil affairs specialist assigned to B Company, 422nd Civil Affairs Battalion, attached to 2nd Bn., 8th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division.

“It was brought up in a meeting that they needed to remove trash and debris in their streets,” added Blanchard, a native of Shelby, N.C., who attends the local leaders meetings frequently. He added that cleaning up the area isn’t just for aesthetics.

“The threat for us is trash. It’s an easy way to implant stuff...everyday trash could be an [improvised explosive device],” Blanchard explained. “Also, dysentery, cholera and malaria are all diseases related to trash. Citizens here will be a whole lot happier and healthier when their town is clean.”

During the past few years of violence, there were no municipalities for trash pick-up in the area, explained Capt. Ray Canzonier, commander of Co. B. Now that violence has somewhat dissipated, the cavalry Soldiers can shift their focus to meeting the needs of the people.

“It’s a sign of the situation,” added the Point Pleasant, N.J. native. “When violence was bad, we couldn’t do this type of work. Now it’s better and we can get contractors to work hand-in-hand with the municipalities.”

“The people realize they need essential services,” said Saeed Abbas Kh-dhyeer, an engineer and city director. “Anybody that gives us a hand we appreciate and we thank the U.S. forces for their cooperation.”

Canzonier appreciated the gratitude and added, “We make sure the right work is being done in the right place.”

According to Saeed, the ceremony and the equipment donation is a sign to the community of the Soldiers’ commitment and trust. Saeed, along with the other community leaders, are looking forward to future projects with the Soldiers of 2nd Bn., 8th Cav. Regt.



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

An Iraqi engineer directs a newly-donated front loader off a trailer for a ceremony in Nassir Wa Salam, here, Sept. 2. The Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, handed-over the equipment to the Government of Iraq to help the local community keep the area clean.

‘Lifeline,’ IA mechanics learn from each other

Story by Spc. Norman Smith

299th BSB, 2nd HBCT, 1st Inf. Div., MND-B

BAGHDAD – In the midst of what has become fairly commonplace training operations in Iraq, Soldiers from the 299th Brigade Support Battalion “Lifeline”, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad are finding their roles reversed among their intended students in the Iraqi Army.

Mechanics from the 299th Brigade Support Battalion have spent time at Forward Operating Base Constitution, on the outskirts of Camp Liberty, in the continuing effort to train their counterparts in the Iraqi Army.

With the troops decked in coveralls and the bay decorated with various petroleum products, tools are passed back and forth and fingers point here and there. When it comes to vehicle maintenance it seems that there is a universal language, but translators are on hand to ensure that the machinery of education is running properly.

Sometimes the lessons come from the Iraqi mechanics that have had to hone their craft under far different circumstances.

“These guys have accumulated their knowledge without the technical manuals and formal instruction that we know, so the process of trial and error has forced them to be intimately acquainted with every nut and bolt on this truck. In some ways they know it better than we do,” said Sgt. Brian Davis, a native of Antlers, Okla., a member of the Lifeline Logistical Training

Advisory Team. “We’re learning things from them that don’t show up in our manuals.”

The experience has exceeded expectations on both ends, but the lessons go beyond the well-worn fifteen millimeter wrenches.

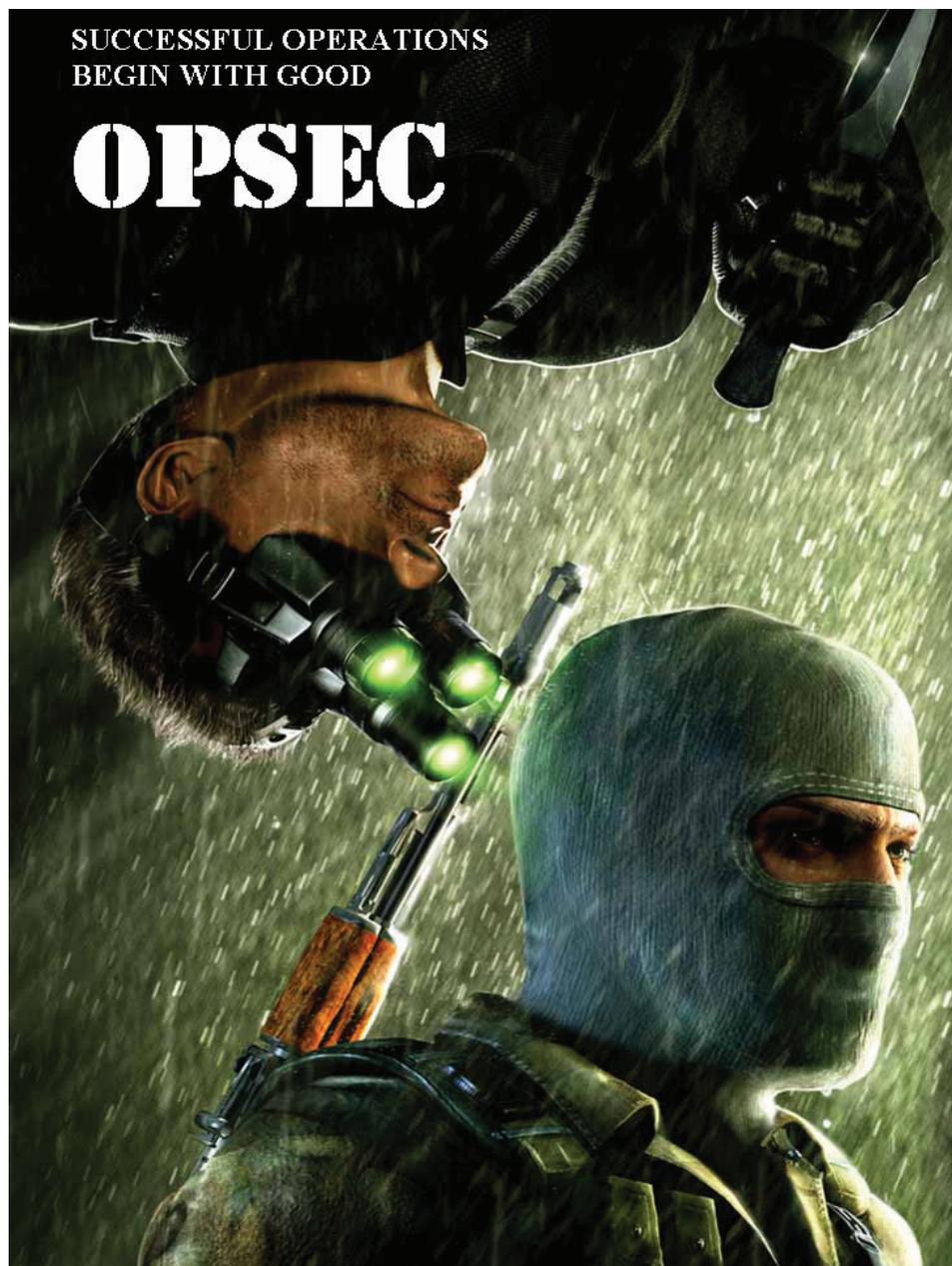
With their heads under the hood, these mechanics have been able to share a great deal of life experience as well. As wrenches turn so does the conversation and Lifeline Soldiers are able to put a much more human face on a culture that can seem so far removed from western culture.

“It really hits home how unfortunate the image of this people is; that a handful of extremists have been able to overshadow the real culture here in the eyes of so many people,” said Spc. Douglas Bruno, a native of Syracuse, Utah. “These guys remind us of some of the mechanics in our own company.”

Recently several Soldiers from the Lifeline LTAT stood in the shade of the small bays with their Iraqi Army counterparts and received honors from the Lifeline battalion’s Command Sgt. Maj. Julia Kelly.

The bonds that have formed across the cultures were obvious in the playful banter before and after she presented the mechanics with coins and certificates. Kelly, who takes a great deal of pride in the accomplishments of her battalion, was touched after departing from the ceremony.

“It’s good to have these moments,” said Kelly. “With all of the other things that I have to deal with on a regular basis, I look forward to times like this.”



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The year of transitions: Daggers in Iraq

Story by Lt. Col. Christopher Beckert

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

BAGHDAD – For Soldiers of 2nd “Dagger” Brigade, their year in Iraq has been anything but ordinary.

Dubbed by many as “The year of transitions”, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division’s third deployment to Iraq since 2003 is one for the history books.

Iraq’s provincial elections, the Security Agreement between Iraq and the United States, celebrations of Iraqi sovereignty, and the beginning of force withdrawals all contributed to over 15 separate changes to the unit’s mission while in Iraq. Add a ruthless enemy and this seems insurmountable.

However, Dagger Soldiers, noncommissioned officers, and leaders prevailed, refusing to allow shifts in the operating environment to deter them from accomplishing their mission of protecting Iraqi citizens, partnering with Iraqi Security Forces, and providing the foundation for the new Iraqi government to legitimately lead their nation.

As the brigade returns to Kansas this month, this story will unfold in countless interviews and discussions, but here’s a preview of the newest chapter in the 1st Infantry Division’s proud history.

Emerging onto the blistering tarmac of Baghdad’s International Airport back in September 2008, the Daggers were met by counterparts from the 2nd BCT, 101st Airborne (Air Assault) Div. A “surge” brigade, the air assault troopers had won amazing victories securing a fragile stability and the grateful confidence of the Iraqi people in northwest Baghdad.

This setting would be the Daggers’ new home; 52 square miles of downtown Baghdad bordered by the Tigris River in the east, and in the west by the city limits and the airport. Over 2.1 million inhabitants in this area witnessed some of the worst sectarian violence of the city in 2006-2008, in areas like Ameriyah, Ghazaliyah and Hurriyah. Now it was the Daggers’ turn to protect the population and capitalize on successes to return the region to normalcy.

Conventional tactical wisdom suggests that transitional points, or changes, in a campaign, especially while in direct contact with the enemy, aren’t just difficult; they are the most challenging operations that military professionals can face. The 2nd Brigade Soldiers witnessed 15 transition points throughout the year deployed to Iraq. All of these were experienced while targeting and eliminating dangerous insurgent cells that were terribly desperate to discredit the local government and cause maximum injury to U.S. and Iraqi Security Forces.

Examples of the changes that Dagger units experienced were; an expanding area of responsibility, growing from 52 square miles to 352 square miles and almost 4 million inhabitants, for six months, the Daggers were the largest brigade combat team in Baghdad, to include working with four battalions from around the Army,



(Courtesy photo)

Lt. Col. Christopher Beckert (left), deputy commander, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, back briefs Col. Joe Martin, commander, 2nd HBCT, Jan. 20, after a car bomb attack at the Mansour District Council in northwest Baghdad.

moving from inside the cities out to the rural area while closing over 15 security sites in the city, and adhering to Security Agreement articles which yielded full Iraqi sovereignty.

Throughout these changes to the operating environment, the American Soldier remained the nation’s greatest treasure, rapidly adapting while staying vigilant and pressing the fight to the enemies of Iraq’s inhabitants. As the brigade redeploys, the stories and lessons learned from these major transitions are being developed into an engagement strategy for Dagger commanders and leaders to share with the Army, the local communities, and fellow Big Red One units.

The top lessons learned from the adapting to changes in 2009 are enduring maxims. Planning early was the first essential, and as brigade and battalion leaders identified the upcoming decision points, Col. Joe Martin, the brigade commander, initiated new arrays or operational adjustments earlier to give sufficient time for his units and subordinates to make refinements before the required transition point.

Next, the brigade coordinated extensively with their Iraqi security and civilian counterparts; launching a series of information blitzes that allowed for better acceptance of the changes. Dagger leaders would often pull their subordinates into a short training session before the changes occurred, empowering the junior leaders with a better understanding of the new environment through vignette-based instruction.

For example, every Dagger Soldier carried a card with the articles of the new U.S.-Iraqi Security Agreement, fully equipping them to understand how it applied on

the ground during everyday operations.

Finally, Dagger troops would constantly re-assess the effects of the change or transition on daily operations, adjusting or re-calibrating leader guidance to ensure no Iraqi citizen went unprotected. As the changes rolled throughout 2009, the Daggers became better and better with transitions in order to maintain the initiative while on point in Iraq.

The training at Fort Riley prior to deployment, the tremendous command climate established from top to bottom in the brigade, and the adaptive, intuitive nature of today’s American Soldier were other critical factors that were significant to the Dagger Brigade’s ability to turn potential

adversity into a rewarding opportunity while deployed to Iraq.

As General Martin Dempsey, commander, 1st Armored Division, said in Baghdad, March 2003, “It’s good to be for what’s going to happen.”

A positive attitude is critical to taking military transitions and quickly assimilating the change into the unit’s way of doing business, especially while in contact with enemy forces. These lessons learned, and the legacy they’ve left with the Soldiers of 2nd “Dagger” Brigade will be proudly shared and discussed as part of Operation Dagger Legend, the unit’s outreach plan, which begins on Custer Hill Parade Field with the uncasing of the Unit’s Colors.



(Courtesy photo)

Col. Joe Martin (center), commander, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, and assorted guests attend the opening of the Shuuda Fish Market in downtown Baghdad, Feb. 2009.

MND-B Soldiers ensure job is done right

Story by Sgt. Joshua Risner

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – U.S. forces have spent time and money on various civil projects in Iraq, whether building something from the ground up or repairing existing infrastructure.

With U.S. forces providing funding for most civil projects, with Iraqi contractors executing the work, Soldiers have gone from builders to administrators, ensuring that the work is to specifications.

“We’re here to check the progress of the work and make sure the quality of work is up to standard,” said 1st Lt. Robert Bowe, of Helena, Mont., assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 163rd Combined Arms Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division. “We pay half the contract when the work is 50 percent completed and we pay the rest when the work is done.”

The quality assurance/quality control team visited four projects in the Zaidon area, here; a water pump station, a water treatment plant and two schools, Aug. 27.

“The area is pretty rural and until last year, a lot of the focus was still on Baghdad proper,” said Bowe. “There’s a lot of



photo by Sgt. Joshua Risner, MND-B PAO

Staff Sgt. Bryan Wall (left) from Ball, La., assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 225th Engineer Brigade, and 1st Lt. Robert Bowe, from Helena, Mont., assigned to HHC, 163rd Combined Arms Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, check the windows at a school in the Zaidon area, here, Aug. 27. Bowe and Wall are checking to ensure the quality of work is up to standard.

projects we can still do out here.”

The al-Zooba water pump station has a new building beside it where none existed before, providing shelter and bathroom facilities.

“Before it was built, the operator would just be out there exposed to the elements,” said Bowe. “What happened a lot of times is they would just leave, and no one would be operating the pump station. This way

they have a roof over their heads and a bathroom, so hopefully we’ve solved that problem.”

Next, the team headed to the al-Yatama water treatment plant, one that services approximately 100 families, according to Staff Sgt. Bryan Wall, from Ball, La., assigned to HHC, 225th Engineer Bde. “The contract here was to make minor repairs and replace the generator and the filtration system,” he said.

From there, two schools: the al-Surat and Zuhair Bin Aby Sulma primary schools, were on the agenda. Bowe and Wall toured the grounds, reviewing the work that had been done there.

“We had a few things to look at here, mainly doors, bathrooms and a perimeter wall around the schools,” said Bowe. “On one, we pointed out a few things that still needed to be done but the other one was complete.”

The projects show a different kind of partnership between U.S. troops and Iraqis. It is allowing Iraqi contractors to learn and benefit from their American counterparts.

“Most of the work done over here is substandard compared to what we’re used to back in the states,” said Wall. “But we try to help them out by showing them new ways of doing stuff and new techniques.”



BAGHDAD – From left to right, engineer Soldiers Pvt. Chris Troyer of Wyoming, Mich., Spc. Heung Kim, of Las Vegas, Nev., and Pvt. Aaron Piggot of Jackson, Mich. hold subfloor sheeting in place while an Iraqi Engineer nails it down during the building of the Karkh Tactical Operation Center in al-Muthana, Sep 5. The joint partnership between the 1434th Engineer Company, 101st Engineer Battalion, 225th Engineer Brigade and the Iraqi engineers not only gives Iraqis much needed engineer training on wood frame construction, it leaves with a product that will help conduct critical military missions in the future.

CONSTRUCTING PARTNERSHIPS

Photos by: Lt. Col Pat Simon



BAGHDAD – Pvt. Aaron Piggot, of Jackson, Mich., shows an engineer Soldier with the 6th Iraqi Army how to shave sheeting for the subfloor during construction of the new Karkh Tactical Operation Center in al-Muthana, Sep 5. When the joint partnership effort between the 1434th Engineer Company, 101st Engineer Battalion, 225th Engineer Brigade and the Iraqi engineers is complete, the new center will give high ranking military leaders an even greater ability to conduct important military missions in the future.



ACB maintainers keep Apaches in air

Story by Spc. Ruth McClary

30th HBCT PAO, MND-B

CAMP TAJI – AH-64D Apache attack helicopter pilots are usually the ones that get all the glory in an attack aviation unit.

But, behind the curtains are the maintainers that make flying the aircraft possible.

Long hours are spent doing preventive maintenance, finding small problems before they become major issues that could cause harm to the pilot and damage to the airframe.

To keep the aircraft in top shape, major inspections are scheduled at regular flight-hour intervals.

The crew chiefs of Company A, 4th Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, conducted one such inspection to ensure standards and safety.

“A 125-hour is an aircraft inspection where we take off the four main rotor blades and the lead lag links to inspect and check to make sure they are within tolerance, to make sure the components aren’t bad,” said Sgt. Russell Neal, from Lexington, Ky., an Apache crew chief in Co. A.

Lead lag links are components that keep the main rotor blades attached to the main rotor head by a system of bearings, pins and bolts.

Removing the blades and lead lag links exposes areas that are not normally seen, so this opportunity is taken to clean and inspect any components that we would not normally have access to, said Neal.

“We have TIs (technical inspectors) that actually come out and do an inspection on the Teflon bearings on the lead lag links,” said Neal. “They also check out the blades to make sure they are not de-bonding.”

Technical inspectors ensure the quality of work being done on the aircraft, perform specific inspections that will be recorded and kept on a six month archive. TIs are also custodians of all documentation proving the air worthiness of the each aircraft in the unit.

“Once the lead lag links are off, a TI will measure the diameter of the bearings and if they exceed a certain tolerance that component will get replaced,” said Staff Sgt. James Ignacio, from Mangilao, Guam, a TI in Company D, 4-227th.

“We also look at the over-all job and make sure the crew chiefs are doing their inspections properly and we also enforce safety,” he said.

These are flight critical components and they need to be inspected at regular intervals to ensure the aircraft remains flight worthy, said Ignacio.

The amount of work that gets completed while the aircraft is down for inspection is limited only by the crew chiefs’ experience combined with their ability to work smart.

“While the aircraft is grounded for the inspection we take advantage of this time to fix other issues with the aircraft. For instance, tonight we are replacing one of the CPG (co-pilot gunner) windshields,” said Neal. “We are also having a couple repairs being done to some of the aircraft panels.”

More muscle equals more work completed, thus many crew chiefs chip in and do their part.

“We have seven Soldiers working on this tonight and then including the next shift we should have it finished within the next 24 hours,” said Neal.

Once the aircraft is put back together and has been looked over by a TI, a maintenance test pilot will come out and perform a main rotor track and balance, then take the aircraft for a test flight, said Neal.

Maintenance test pilots, or MTPs, go through extra training in trouble shooting procedures and theory of operations on the specific airframe they fly. Following all major maintenance procedures certain maintenance operational checks need to be performed by these MTPs.

“The crew chiefs go out and take care of the inspections and put the aircraft back together, we (MTPs) are that last line of defense. We check everything out and then fly it before it is issued back out for the regular aircrews to fly,” said Chief Warrant Officer 3 Jack Bibbee, from Woodbridge, Va., an Apache MTP in Co. A.

The crew chiefs, T.I.s and MTPs come together as a team to ensure that the quality of aircraft maintenance is to the highest standard so regular pilots can support the ground troops throughout MND – B.

photo by Sgt. Travis Zielinski, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs



photo by Sgt. Travis Zielinski, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

After a crew of seven Soldiers removed all four blades and lead lag links from main rotor head of an AH-64D Apache attack helicopter, Spc. Alexander Honey, from Lowville, N.Y., an Apache crew chief in Company A, 4th Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, cleans all the components to properly inspect the parts for any wear or damage received from flying. The parts are removed and inspected as part of a 125-hour scheduled maintenance procedure to ensure the air worthiness of the aircraft.



photo by Sgt. Travis Zielinski, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

Before pulling the pins that hold a main rotor blade in position, Sgt. Russell Neal (right), from Lexington, Ky., an AH-64D Apache attack helicopter crew chief in Company A, 4th Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, and Cpl. Calvin Tran (left), from Garden Grove, Calif., also a crew chief in Co. A, position a blade sling so it can be lifted off for a 125-hour inspection, here, Aug. 22.



photo by Sgt. Travis Zielinski, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

(Left) Spc. Eli Logan, from Manhattan, Kan., an AH-64D Apache attack helicopter crew chief in Company A, 4th Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, removes screws from one of the helicopter’s windshields during an inspection. Crew chiefs take advantage of the down time an aircraft has during an inspection to fix issues with the airframe.

(right) Spc. Travis Tobiasen, from Fullerton, Calif., an AH-64D Apache attack helicopter crew chief in Company A, 4th Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, loosens hardware holding a lead lag link to the main rotor head of an Apache, here, Aug. 22.



photo by Sgt. Travis Zielinski, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

Celebrémos Hispanic Heritage month

Story by Sgt. Joshua Risner

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – Beginning with a 10 kilometer run/five kilometer walk around Z Lake, here, Sept. 19, Soldiers of Multi-National Division – Baghdad will participate in a month-long series of events and celebrations honoring Hispanic Heritage Month.

Hispanic heritage month, which runs from Sept. 15 to Oct. 15, is a time to celebrate and commemorate the contributions that Hispanic Americans have made to American culture and the U.S. Armed Forces, according to Sgt. 1st Class Tamatha Denton, from New York, assigned to Company A, Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division.

Originally designated as Hispanic Heritage Week in 1968 by President Lyndon

Johnson, it was later given a whole month in 1988 by President Ronald Reagan.

“Instead of being given a more orthodox time period, the commemoration starts on the 15th of September, which reflects the independence days of five Latin American countries; Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica, Nicaragua and El Salvador,” said Denton. “Additionally, the independence days of Mexico and Chile are the 16th and 18th of September, respectively.”

The celebration ends Oct. 15th, marking Columbus Day (Oct. 12).

“Many of the Latin American countries celebrate Columbus Day as Americans do,” said Denton. “However, some Latin countries know it as Discovery Day, the Day of the Race or the Day of the Cultures.”

Hispanic Americans have made significant contributions to the American Armed

Forces, with more than 40 Medal of Honor recipients dating back to the Civil War, according to Denton.

During the Korean War, the Boriqueneers (Buccaneers) of the 65th Infantry Regiment, Puerto Rican National Guard, led the last recorded battalion-sized bayonet charge by the U.S. Army on two hills held by the Chinese 149th Division on Feb. 2, 1951.

Hispanic Americans continue to serve proudly in the Armed Forces, at home and abroad, in the Global War on Terrorism.

“I personally think of Hispanic Heritage Month as a time to look back and see the many contributions from Hispanics of all walks of life; what they contributed to our military and our country,” said Sgt. 1st Class Frank Rodriguez, from San Marcos, Texas, assigned to Co. A, DSTB, 1st Cav. Div. “The thing I like most is that it gets to show everyone the culture, heritages and

background and we can learn from that.”

In the coming weeks, there will be several events scheduled in honor of Hispanic Heritage Month, including a softball tournament, a soccer tournament and movies every Friday at the division dining facility.

Also, for the Hispanic Heritage Month 10k run/5k walk, the first 400 participants to show up on Sept. 19 will receive a t-shirt. It will kick off at Z Lake at 6 a.m.

There will be an observance day on the 9th of October, complete with ethnic food cooked by Soldiers following family recipes, a salsa band and two dance groups in an effort to bring Hispanic culture to Iraq and share it.

For more information about events during Hispanic Heritage Month, or to register for the softball or soccer tournaments, send an email to tamatha.denton@mnd-b.army.mil or daniel.cobosmunilla@mnd-b.army.mil.

Preparing for Flu season: H1N1 vaccine is in your future

Army News Service

WASHINGTON – Soldiers and families can expect to get two flu shots this year.

In addition to the conventional flu shot administered each fall, the H1N1 or “Swine Flu” vaccine should be available by mid-October, said Col. Deborah Knickerbocker, chief of Emergency Preparedness and Response, the Office of the Surgeon General and Army Medical Command.

Knickerbocker spoke during the Army Emergency Management Conference, Sept. 1, at the Pentagon. The conference coincided with the start of National Preparedness Month.

Getting flu shots, in addition to taking measures to prevent exposure to the virus or spreading the virus is part of preparedness, Knickerbocker said. And it is important to maintaining mission readiness.

“When Soldiers and family members take care of themselves and prepare, they not only help the Army be more resilient, they help the local communities they are in be more resilient,” she said.

“There’s going to be vaccine, and there’s going to be enough to go around,” Knickerbocker said. “Everybody is going to get their shots.”

Knickerbocker said the H1N1 vaccine will be distributed to Soldiers, families and other beneficiaries mostly through primary care providers.

“They’ll get their seasonal shots, and the H1N1 shot, as soon as they become available,” Knickerbocker said.

Along with the vaccinations, Knickerbocker recommends a number of common-sense measures to prevent the spread of H1N1.

“Just teaching people about how easy it is to prevent disease by washing

our hands, and cough- and sneeze-hygiene and etiquette, it’s pretty simple,” she said. “Part of what we need to do is instill in the culture of the military -- which does not really usually think this way -- to stay home when you are sick. If you go to work sick, you’ll make office mates sick, or squad mates.”

The H1N1 virus has made headlines because it’s a “novel” virus, Knickerbocker said.

“We haven’t seen the virus before. And when we have a virus that people have not been exposed to before, we have no immunity to it,” Knickerbocker said.

Many of the deaths from H1N1 occurred in Mexico, and in those already immuno-compromised, so the virus gained notoriety, Knickerbocker said. But the effects of the virus have not been what was expected -- not even as bad as seasonal flu.

“The message has been sent out there that this particular virus is not as virulent as we had been planning for with the H5N1, not as virulent as the seasonal flu,” she said. “And seasonal influenza kills about 36,000 in this country each year.”

Knickerbocker said that while Soldiers can expect to get vaccinated for both the seasonal flu and the H1N1 flu virus, the Army does not expect the H1N1 to have damaging effects on the Army.

“I don’t think the Army is worried about this particular H1N1 virus. If it stays at the level of severity that it is now, which it is mild, it should have no more effect on operations than the seasonal flu does,” she said. “But we have to take care this flu season to try to prevent getting ill, and staying home if we are ill, to prevent operational impact.”

“Smart Eating:”

Meals high in fat, carbs could boost mental

Army News Service

WASHINGTON – A high-fat diet, at least for a few days, could enhance mental performance, according to a study unveiled Tuesday.

“Nutritional Effects on Cognitive Performance” examined how various diets affected 45 pilots. After four days, pilots on both high-fat and high-carbohydrate diets performed significantly better than those on a high-protein diet.

Results of the study were briefed this week at the Military Health Research Forum in Kansas City, a scientific gathering hosted by the Department of Defense Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs. A number of the 500 researchers in attendance from the military, industry and academia were surprised at the results.

“We were surprised too,” said Dr. Glenda Lindseth, the study’s lead researcher, during an interview Wednesday. “It wasn’t what we anticipated.”

Lindseth admitted that some of her colleagues were even “a little bit troubled” by the findings.

Researchers on her team at the John D. Odegard School of Aerospace Sciences - part of the University of North Dakota at Grand Forks -- at first had trouble believing the results, Lindseth said. “We reran our statistics many times,” she said. “We kept analyzing our data as we went along.”

But there was no mistaking the outcome.

Pilots on the high-fat diet scored about 50 percent better than those on the high-protein diet. They also scored about 20 percent better than pilots on the “control” or well-balanced diet. After four days to a week on a particular diet, pilots were tested on a full-motion flight simulator. Their short-term memory was also tested by the Sternberg Item Recognition Test

and their spatial orientation was evaluated by the Vandenberg Mental Rotation Test.

After the tests, participants were then randomly rotated into one of the other three diets. After four days to a week, they were tested again.

Pilots on the high-carbohydrate diet also scored more than 40 percent higher than those on the high-protein diet. They had better reaction times and improved memory.

In addition, pilots on the high-protein diet experienced irritability and high anxiety levels, Lindseth said. And they were not able to sleep as well as the other pilots.

Lindseth pointed out that all of the diets were actually balanced as far as the minimum daily required amount of nutrients and about the same amount of calories. However, the high-fat diet consisted of about 57 percent fatty foods, including whole milk, mashed potatoes and gravy, roast beef, and extra sausage patties. The high-protein diet was comparable to the Atkins diet, Lindseth said, in that it consisted of more than 50 percent protein. Instead of roast beef and gravy, pilots on the high-protein diet might eat a spinach salad with chicken breast.

The latter kind of dinner has long been intuitively considered by many as healthy, and Lindseth cautioned that the long-term results of fatty or high-carbohydrate diets need to be studied further.

“One of the things you want to do with a study like this is take the results cautiously,” Lindseth said.

She’s not recommending that people take up a high-fat diet for the long run to improve their mental capacity. But she suggests that eating a candy bar or two before a test or a military operation “may not be as bad” as what nutritionists previously thought.

All of the participants in the study were fixed-wing pilots, and a few were military, Lindseth said, including a few pilots from the North Dakota National Guard.

Training with an eye for IEDs

Story by Sgt. Joshua Risner

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – Improvised explosive devices are a deadly part of the landscape in Iraq. It takes sharp eyes and keen knowledge of what to look for in order to stay out of harm’s way.

Soldiers of Company B, 163rd Combined Arms Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, created a counter-IED class designed to give a helping hand to Iraqi Army Soldiers, here, Sept. 6.

According to Staff Sgt. Joseph Barnhart, an instructor assigned to Co. B, the three-day course covered search techniques, IED identification, IED components and reaction to an IED.

A search house challenged the IA’s detection skills with various IED components and contraband hidden throughout the house and in the adjoining yard.

“The facilities here are designed for U.S. forces and any time you can get the Iraqi Army onto this base and utilize the training we use with our Soldiers, it’s much better than what they have in sector,” said the Seattle native. “It betters the IA by giving them realistic scenarios that they can’t get without having to deal with the real thing.”

The most important point that the Soldiers tried to impress upon their IA students was vigilance.

“You may not have the fancy camera systems that we have on our vehicles,” said Sgt. Timothy Wallace, from Laurel, Md., assigned to Co. B. “But 90 percent of the IEDs we’ve found were spotted with something all of you have, the eyes of a Soldier.”

According to Barnhart, another aspect of the training was the effect it would have on IA leaders and the way they would teach their Soldiers in the future.

“That is something they’re going to need to do once American forces leave - they’re going to have to fall back on their leaders to train the Soldiers,” he said. “And if we can show them the proper way to teach a class and spread the knowledge throughout their lower enlisted, it will help in developing the IA in the future.”

The IA leaders now have a foundation of teaching upon which they can build. With the knowledge imparted to them, the Iraqis have new techniques while still using tried and true equipment: their own eyes and awareness.



photo by Sgt. Joshua Risner, MND-B PAO

(ABOVE) An Iraqi Army Soldier inspects a bag of wires and other components as Staff Sgt. Joseph Barnhart, assigned to Company B, 163rd Combined Arms Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, looks on during a counter-improvised explosive device class, here, Sept. 6.

(RIGHT) During a counter-improvised explosive device class at Camp Slayer, here, Sept. 6, Staff Sgt. Timothy Wallace (center), an instructor from Laurel, Md., assigned to Company B, 163rd Combined Arms Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, explains the need to be constantly on the lookout.



photo by Sgt. Joshua Risner, MND-B PAO

Seattle native, Staff Sgt. Joseph Barnhart, inspects a cache site at a search house during a counter-improvised explosive device class on Camp Slayer, here, Sept. 6. The search house portion of the training is designed to refine the Iraqi Army’s skills to search for, spot and react to IEDs and weapons caches, according to Barnhart, an instructor assigned to Company B, 163rd Combined Arms Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division.



photo by Sgt. Joshua Risner, MND-B PAO

OLD HICKORY

Medics put skills to the test

Story by Spc. Ruth McClary

30th HBCT PAO, MND-B



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

Soldiers competing in the Best Medic competition held by Company C, 230th Brigade Support Battalion, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, road march with 35-pound packs from station one to station two at Forward Operating Base Falcon, Aug. 28.

BAGHDAD - Soldiers of Company C, 230th Brigade Support Battalion, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, hosted a Best Medic competition at Forward Operating Base Falcon, Aug. 28-30.

Medics throughout the brigade were invited to the competition that doubled as their annual requirements for medical sustainment.

Participants included Soldiers of the 230th BSB, 150th Armored Reconnaissance Squadron, 252nd Combined Arms Battalion, and a Soldier from the Federal Police Transition Team, with Multinational Corps-Iraq.

The course started with an Army Physical Fitness Test early in the morning. The participants’ medical skills were tested at six stations, a written test and a night tactical scenario. The medics had 20 minutes at each station to focus on extracting a casualty from a vehicle, dealing with an advanced cardiac patient, and evacuating a casualty.

Medics pushed themselves, mentally and physically; road marching between stations carrying a 35-pound pack, completing six miles by the end of the day.

Sgt. Elise Heroux, of C Co., 230th BSB said time management and maintaining her endurance level were the hardest parts of the competition.

During event’s first day some of the medics quickly transitioned from the competition to a real world situation after an improvised explosive device went off on a 230th BSB convoy near the FOB. All the medics involved quickly switched roles taking care of Soldiers being brought into the aid station.

“We transitioned from walking a road march to seeing patients at out trauma station and vehicle station...and all of the sudden, they had to transition to real people coming in with injuries,” said Company C Commander, Maj. James McCann. “It put everything on hold and then when they were done they still continued with the road march and the rest of the stations that day”

Every medic who finished the competition received a certificate, and of the six Soldiers who placed, five of them were from Company C, 230th BSB.

“I’m pretty excited that out entire company finished,” said Heroux. “It says a lot about our medics and what they’re able to endure.”

ON THE TRAIL WITH THE



Fort Myers, Fla. native, Spc. Matthew Medvecky, a medic from Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 1st Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, is seen in his sector after hearing small arms fire in the distance in northern Baghdad Aug. 23. "We were prepared and began to take cover," said Crestview, Fla. native, Staff Sgt. R. [Name], sergeant for Btry. B. "Once we took cover, we started scanning our sectors."



(Right) Lt. Col. Majid Hentan (left), commander of the al-Wenda Battalion, 6th Brigade, 22nd Federal Police Division, and Capt. Alex Aquino (center), from Little Rock, Ark., listen closely as Maj. Thamir Jabbar Abid (right), the commander of Hamamiat Iraqi Police Station explains the circumstances surrounding a blast in northern Baghdad Aug. 23. Aquino, the Battery B commander assigned to 1st Bn., 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, and his troopers were the first to respond to the incident and assist the Iraqi Security Forces in securing the area.



THE IRONHORSE BRIGADE



photo by Pfc. Bailey A. Jester, 1BCT PAO, 1st Cav. Div., MND-B

Team, 1st Cavalry Division, scans
 Coree Anderson, a platoon ser-



Pfc. Adam Halleck, PAO, 1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div., MND-B

Copperas Cove, Texas native Pfc. Kenneth Curt singer (left) and Killeen, Texas native Pfc. Timothy Dobelbower (right), both artillery cannon crewmembers, assigned to Battery A, 1st Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, remove a bag of gear from the truck here, Aug. 22 as another member of the unit, Houston native Sgt. Everson Lofton (center), looks on. "Making supply runs down to our guys at Joint Security Station Sheik Amir makes their lives easier," expressed Curt singer.



Houston native, Sgt. Everson Lofton, a non-commissioned officer in charge of supply assigned to Battery A, 1st Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, grabs a tool from a truck as he works hand-in-hand with other "Dragon" troops, here Aug. 22.

Pfc. Adam Halleck, PAO, 1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div., MND-B

Army says new earplugs will save your hearing

Story by Gina Cavallaro

Army Times

A next-generation earplug designed to make it easier for troops to protect their eardrums will soon hit the war zone.

The challenge for leaders is getting every soldier to wear the plugs.

The new Combat Arms Earplug is made of the same washable plastic as the current earplug and has the same "triple flange" construction to keep it in place.

But instead of removing the plug to operate a dial that regulates the amount of sound entering the ear canal, the new earplug uses a rocker switch that is operated without removing the earplug.

Soldiers can adjust the rocker with a quick "click" depending on the amount of protection they need. When it's in the open or "weapons fire" position, sound can travel through the sound channel filter into the ear.

For noisy environments that don't require an acute listening capability, such as around helicopters, troop carriers or generators, the rocker can be switched to the closed or "constant protection" position.

Hearing protection has been standard issue for combat forces since 2002, but even so, one in four soldiers returning home report hearing loss, dizziness or ringing in the ears, according to Army audiologists.

The conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan are the first in which soldiers have gone to war with hearing protection.

The current model of the flanged earplug, fielded in 2002, has been modified three times based on feedback from soldiers. Other options, such as Peltor communications headsets, have been introduced for vehicle and other specialty use to minimize hearing loss.

Hearing tests for redeploying soldiers became mandatory in January as part of an effort to collect detailed data on the problem.

Blown eardrums — usually small tears

that can eventually heal on their own — are the most common hearing injury in the war zone, according to Army audiologists. Larger tears can require surgery, in which a skin graft or a patch is used to cover the perforation.

The effect of a roadside blast on the eardrum is "like taking a mallet to a snare drum and putting a giant hole in it," Maj. John Merkley, Army Hearing Program Manager for U.S. Army Europe said. "That eardrum is going to work as well as that snare drum would."

There are 13 hearing test clinics in

Most of the soldiers he treated, he said, had been injured while dismounted and had taken their communications headsets off before getting out of their vehicles, without placing earplugs in their ears.

Loud noises such as those from improvised explosive devices — the top cause for hearing loss in Iraq and Afghanistan — can cause conductive hearing loss, sensory neuro hearing loss or tinnitus, Merkley said.

Damaged eardrums top the list of complaints at the ear, nose and throat walk-in clinics at Bagram Airfield in Afghanistan,

scared they're going to miss that cue that would lead them to the enemy, that soft sound that would let them know where the enemy is," said Capt. Jillyen Curry-Mathis, who heads the Army's hearing program at Fort Jackson, S.C.

During the wars, the Army has kept up an effort to improve ear protection options, looking for ones that soldiers will want to use.

The Army's chief audiologist said more soldiers will wear the CAE if they understand its capability, and that will require an adjustment in mindset.

"The key to success is training," said Col. Kathy Gates, audiology consultant to the Army surgeon general. "They need an opportunity to train with the CAE prior to going into combat so they can feel confident using it. They don't go into battle without training on their [weapons] and we shouldn't expect them to go to battle without ear pro."

The ear protection could be used in pre-deployment training at home stations or at the Army's combat training centers at Fort Irwin, Calif.; Fort Polk, La.; and Grafenwoehr, Germany, where the major collective training events take place.

Soldiers who wear the CAE properly, Gates said, don't show any hearing loss or injury.

The fourth generation earplug is entering the Army distribution system, she said, and is not yet available through the Rapid Fielding Initiative but will be available for future deployments.

Until then, soldiers can still get the "dial" version of the CAE through RFI.

Gates said she is working with the Army Training and Doctrine Command on a program to issue the CAE to all basic trainees so they can start getting used to wearing ear protection on a regular basis.

"All basic training sites provide hearing education and hearing protection fitting classes, where they are fitted with triple flange hearing protection, and we are in the process of changing the standard issue to Combat Arms Earplug," Gates said.



The new Combat Arms Earplug is made of the same washable plastic as the current earplug and has the same "triple flange" construction to keep it in place.

Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait and Qatar, said Merkley, who was in charge of the Iraq clinics for 15 months in 2006 and 2007.

"Near the end of my tour, I was seeing eight to 10 soldiers a day," he said. "A couple of guys who had been in blasts, their only injuries were blown eardrums. I know of two leaders who were taken out of the fight because of blown eardrums."

according to medical officials, who said troops in the combat zone often prefer not to use ear protection.

Hearing protection is mandatory in Iraq and Afghanistan, but soldiers don't always follow that instruction, the audiologists said, they're concerned about losing situational awareness on the battlefield.

"The most common reason is they're

Gates to explore adding stateside DOD schools

Story by Karen Jowers

Army Times

Secretary of Defense Robert Gates said he will explore the question of whether the Defense Department could operate schools on more military installations in the U.S.

Gates spoke to 14 military parents representing nine families at Fort Belvoir, Va., on Tuesday as part of a back-to-school event to get input from military parents. The parents expressed a variety of concerns about the education of their children, including the varying quality of public schools.

About 44 percent of service members have children, totaling 1.2 million kids across the active-duty force. But only about 85,000 children go to school at Defense Department schools — 25,000 in the stateside schools and 60,000 overseas. The vast major-

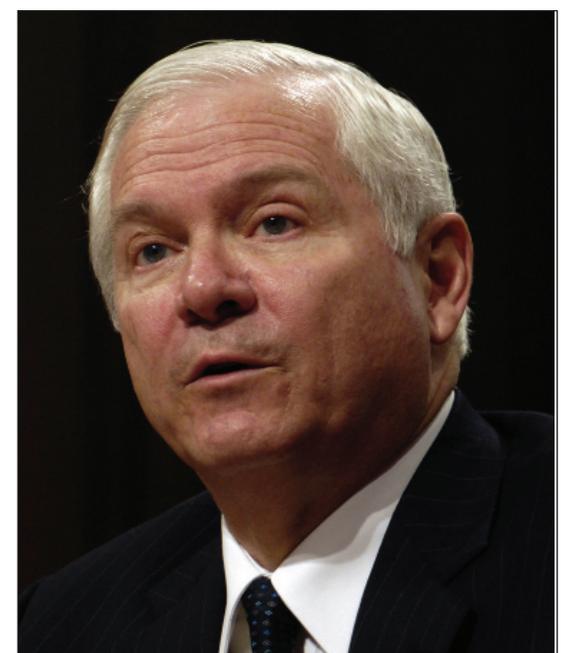
ity of stateside-based military children go to public schools.

"These parents would love to have [Defense Department] schools on post, and re-expand the DoD education program," Gates said.

Not only would the parents like to see teachers and counselors who have an understanding of the challenges that military children face, but they'd be "surrounded with peers who are going through the same thing," he said.

"One question I'll ask is at least at the big posts where we have a lot of repeated rotations, such as Fort Bliss, Fort Drum, Fort Hood, Fort Lewis ... could we at least do elementary schools?" Gates said. "I'm sure there were good reasons for reducing the number of DoD schools years ago, but that's something we can at least look into."

Gates noted that he doesn't know whether the idea would be politically or financially possible.



Courtesy Photo

Remote Iraqi residents get clean water

Story By Pvt. Jared Gehmann

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

BAGHDAD –U.S. Paratroopers put their time and energy into learning how to set up and operate a solar-powered water filtration system at Forward Operating Base Hammer, Iraq, Sept 5.

In an effort to provide a better quality of life for the citizens of Iraq’s Ma’dain region, Paratroopers assigned to 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, Multi-National Division- Baghdad implemented a self-powered, energy efficient water filtration system to provide the area’s residents clean, adequate drinking water. However, for this system to be effective, regional leaders need to be shown how it works.

That is where Phoenix native, Spc. Rachael Potts, a water treatment specialist assigned to Company A, 82nd Brigade Support Battalion, came in and put her knowledge to work to show some of the region’s engineers how to put the system to use.

“I got involved with this filtration system a few days ago while working on a reverse osmosis system,” said Potts. “But once I heard about this system, I wanted to see what it could do in order to help our Iraqi partners,” said Potts.

The solar-powered system uses a series of hoses and filters to purify brackish or dirty water in areas where clean water is limited. The Ma’dain region, located on the outskirts of eastern Baghdad, is a vast, mostly desolate area where most water sources consist of dirty, mineral-filled wells.

The system can treat about 6,000 gallons of water a day. Despite its size, the system is also transportable in order to provide clean drinking water to even the most remote villages in the region.

“So far we have 25 of these systems to place all over the Ma’dain region in areas such as the towns of Narwan and Salman Pak,” she said.

During a demonstration of the solar-powered filtration systems’ capabilities to local Iraqi engineers, Potts

partnered with Mr. Abbas Hassan, the chief engineer of al-Nahyan Water Treatment facility, to demonstrate to Hassan’s fellow engineers how the system functions.

“The water filtration system is impressive because it solves both of the main problems we have right now, which is having access to clean water while also having a reliable power source to make the machine work and clean the water,” said Hassan.

Along with Potts, several combat medics assigned to the battalion’s Company C, came out for the demonstration in order to receive hands-on experience with the system and witness the results of the water-cleaning process. To ensure the water was to the drinkable standard, the medics performed a series of quality assurance tests.

“It was amazing how much cleaner this water was after it ran through the machine,” said Spc. Wayne Terry, of Cartersville, Ga. “Clean water is a necessity for good health; bad water can be a leading cause of many health problems.”

U.S. and Iraqi leaders discussed their hopes of putting this system to use in the much-needed areas across in region in the near future. The system is also seen as a step in the right direction for the nation.

“We appreciate all the help the U.S. Army has given us in making our country a better place,” said Hassan. “As long as we keep pushing technology such as this solar-powered filtration system, I believe we will continue to accomplish our goals in rebuilding Iraq.”



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

(Above) Spc. Wayne Terry, of Cartersville, Ga., adjusts the solar panels on the solar powered water filtration system during a demonstration event on the capabilities of the machine, Sept. 5, at Forward Operating Base Hammer. Terry is a combat medic assigned to Company C, 82nd Brigade Support Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, Multi-National Division-Baghdad.



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

(Left) Spc. Rachael Potts, of Phoenix, Az., and an Iraqi engineer prepare a water hose that will run dirty water through a solar-powered water filtration system during a demonstration event on the capabilities of the machine to several Ma’dain region engineers, Sept. 5, a. Potts is a water treatment specialist, assigned to Company A, 82nd Brigade Support Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

MNC-I three star honors Cav Paratroopers

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



Lt. Gen. Charles Jacoby (far right), the commanding general of Multi-National Corps – Iraq, addresses Paratroopers assigned to 5th Squadron, 73rd Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, after awarding four Paratroopers with the Purple Heart medal, Sept. 1, at Combat Outpost Cashe South, Iraq, located in the Ma’dain region in the outskirts of east Baghdad. The three-star general emphasized the importance of the medal during his remarks.



Lt. Gen. Charles Jacoby (left), the commanding general of Multi-National Corps – Iraq, pins the Purple Heart medal on 1st Lt. Luis Reyes, of Puerto Rico, during an award ceremony, Sept. 1, here, in the Ma’dain region outside eastern Baghdad. Reyes sustained an injury when an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle during a combat operation on May 17. Reyes is an infantry platoon leader assigned to Troop B, 5th Squadron, 73rd Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad. Jacoby pinned four Paratroopers with the Purple Heart medal during the ceremony.

Post 9-11 GI Bill improves educational benefits package

Story by Sgt. Joshua Risner

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – Pfc. Christopher Lee, of Headquarters Support Company, Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, has a plan. He wants to attend college after he gets out of the Army to pursue a bachelor's degree in nursing. This will in turn get the Alexander, La. native on the right path to becoming an anesthetist, which is the career he has his hopes set on.

But the cost of obtaining a college degree is an obstacle he will have trouble overcoming on his own.

Higher education is a valuable but costly resource. The Army supports Soldiers wanting to further their education through the Montgomery GI Bill, which provides some compensation for the ever-rising cost of college. In many

cases however, it doesn't cover the full amount, leaving Soldiers dependent upon financial aid, scholarships and their own money to cover the difference.

The Post 9-11 GI Bill is a new, comprehensive program designed to improve the old GI Bill, according to the Department of Veterans Affairs. Payment processing for the new benefits began Aug. 1.

The new bill is especially beneficial to Soldiers wishing to go to school full time, providing three separate payments covering tuition, books and living expenses.

Tuition payments are based on the highest tuition rate for a public institution in the Soldier's chosen state. These payments are made directly to the school.

Soldiers will also receive a monthly housing allowance. The monthly payments are equal to basic housing allowance for an E-5 with dependents.

Soldiers will also receive a yearly stipend of up to

\$1,000.00 for book fees.

To qualify for the minimum amount of benefits at 40 percent, Soldiers need to have completed at least 90 days of active duty after Sept. 10, 2001. Soldiers who have served 36 months or more since that time will receive 100 percent.

Soldiers who qualify for the old GI Bill can transfer their benefits to the new bill but the choice is final.

Another aspect of the Post 9-11 GI Bill is the ability to transfer benefits to a dependent. This includes a Soldier's spouse or children.

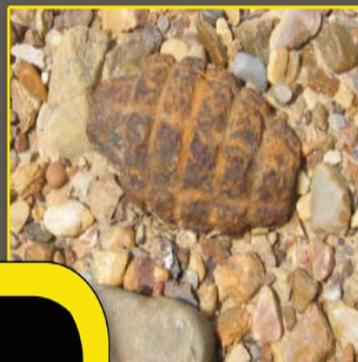
The Soldier and their dependents remain eligible to use benefits under the Post 9-11 GI Bill for up to 15 years after the Soldier leaves active duty. Children are eligible to receive the benefits until they are 26 years old.

For more information about the Post 9-11 GI Bill, visit the VA website at www.gibill.va.gov/.

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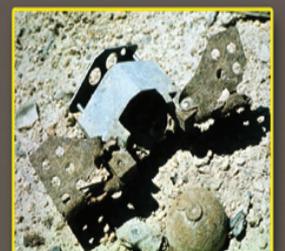


Learn and Follow the **3Rs**

RECOGNIZE: The danger that a souvenir munition poses to yourself, your family and your neighbors

RETREAT: Do not disturb, touch or move it
Do not give or throw it away

REPORT: Call 911



“Nation’s Oldest” relieves “Steel Spike”

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

BAGHDAD — Mark this date; history was made. On Aug. 30, the 46th Engineer Combat Battalion (Heavy), 225th Engineer Brigade and 101st Engineer Battalion swapped places in a symbolic transfer of authority ceremony at Camp Liberty, Baghdad.

As the “Steel Spike” engineers of the 46th stepped down, the “Nation’s Oldest” of the 101st rose to fill their place in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The 101st Eng. Bn. has a distinguished record of service to the nation that dates back over 373 years. The unit participated in numerous conflicts ranging from the colonial wars all the way to the present day Global War on Terror. Answering the call yet again, the 101st Eng. Bn. began its journey to Iraq in mid-June. The only organic units come in the form of Headquarters Support Company and Forward Support Company, both hailing from Massachusetts. The other units to join are the 1434th Engineer Company (Vertical) from Michigan, the 1192nd Engineer Company (Horizontal) from Ohio, and the 621st Survey and Design Team from North

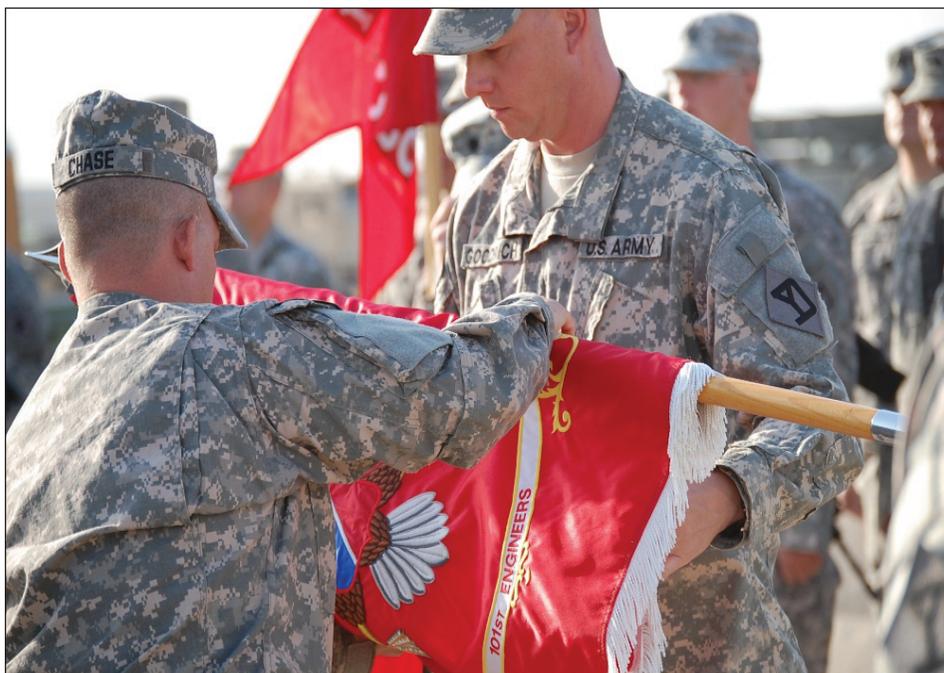


Photo by Pvt. Jared Gehmann, 3rd BCT PAO, 82nd Abn. Div., MND-B

Maj. Joshua Goodrich (right), of Webster, Mass. and Command Sgt. Maj. Peter Chase, of Derry, N.H., unfurl the 101st Engineer Battalion colors during the transition-of-authority ceremony at Camp Liberty, Baghdad, Aug 30.

Carolina. Though each unit left their home stations as separate units, they all came together to form one unified battalion at Fort McCoy, Wisconsin.

From June until the beginning of August, the 101st Eng. Bn. worked long and

hard to validate on necessary mobilization tasks that included construction effects, convoy operations, and base defense. Once August rolled around, the 101st Eng. Bn. was deemed ready and flew off to Camp Beuhring, Kuwait.

In Kuwait, the “Nation’s Oldest” acclimated to the harsh desert environment while focusing on improvised explosive device defeat training, convoy operations, counter-insurgency briefings, and weapons familiarization. Following a two week stay at Camp Beuhring, the Soldiers of the 101st Eng. Bn. packed up for Baghdad.

Arriving in mid-August to Iraq, the 101st Eng. Bn. conducted relief in place operations under the guidance of the 46th ECB (H). The intent of this transition is to familiarize an incoming unit with the current battlefield environment and to offer advice on how to conduct in-theater operations.

Command Sgt. Maj. Chase, 101st Eng. Bn., praised leaders on both sides for putting the 101st on the right track.

“The RIP/TOA [relief in place/transition of authority] had been smooth because of our leaders in the 101st and of the 46th who prepared us for success,” said Chase.

In a symbolic transfer of authority ceremony, Maj. Gen. Daniel Bolger praised the 46th for a job well done and welcomed the 101st to the fight.

“Every combat engineer battalion that comes to Iraq comes to fight and to work,” said Bolger. He said the 101st is “tough, smart...ready to fight, ready to work.”

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MRAP ROLLOVER PREVENTION IS ALL ABOUT CONTROL:

- Crew Coordination** Driver, senior occupant, gunner and passengers know their responsibilities; remain vigilant; identify and communicate potential hazards.
- Observe your surroundings** Be aware of bridge limitations, low hanging power lines, soft-shouldered roads, and the presence of culverts, canals, and ditches.
- Never drive the vehicle beyond its limitations** Avoid abrupt steering, excessive acceleration, and panic braking.
- Training** Conduct mission briefings, rollover drills, and crew coordination refreshers prior to every mission.
- Reduce speed** in turns and on wet or unimproved surfaces.
- Organize all equipment** Ensure everything is securely stored and tied-down to avoid projectile hazards in the event of an accident or rollover.
- Leaders** ensure only properly trained, qualified, and licensed personnel operate vehicles and equipment! Insist that all personnel wear seatbelts / gunner restraints.

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Staff Sgt. Nathaniel Landis (red belt), from Graham, Wash., the battalion motor pool sergeant for 615th Aviation Support Battalion, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, escapes a submission attempt by his opponent and goes on to win the match during a combatives tournament, Aug. 29, Camp Taji, Iraq. Although Landis did not go on to win his weight class, he felt his team performed well. "I think they really came out of their shell and showed what they can actually do – nobody clamed up or tensed up," he said.



The referee watches closely as Spc. De Andre Jackson (being held inside), from San Francisco, a generator mechanic for Headquarters Support Company, 615th Aviation Support Battalion, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, tries to get out of the grasp of his opponent during a combatives tournament, Aug. 29, Camp Taji, Iraq. Jackson lost this fight to the judges' decision and placed fourth in his weight class.

*Air Cav
Soldiers
hit the
mat!*

*photos by Sgt. Travis Zielinski,
1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs*

Standing together, learning the Air Cav way

Story by Sgt. Alun Thomas

1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – For troops of the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, deployed since April, there has been ample time to adjust to the rigors and firm guidelines during a deployment.

However, not all 1st ACB Soldiers have been involved with the mission since it began over four months ago, and their late arrival means they have to catch up on what is expected of them while deployed – especially those in combat for the first time.

To help these late deployers achieve a level of understanding about the rules of deployment and hardships that may be felt, Col. Douglas Gabram, from Cleveland, Ohio, commander, 1st ACB, led a newcomer's brief at the Taji Ministry Center, Sept. 3.

"I'm going to be upfront and tell you about some of the ground rules we have here," Gabram said. "These are things we believe in and find rewarding."

Gabram explained his command philosophy and said

one of the most important points was to "stay positive, stay alert and take care of each other."

"It's hard to stay positive, especially when you think about your family," Gabram said. "We all go through problems, regardless of the rank you wear, and in a year a lot of things happen at home. So if we take care of each other, we can stay positive."

Staying alert means keeping your head up, Gabram reminded his troopers.

"For all the first time deployers who think [Camp Taji] is a safe place; there are bad people out here," he said. "Whether you're in the cockpit or outside the wire, keep your head up."

Gabram instructed the audience about General Order violations regarding various topics such as alcohol, drugs and gambling.

"We want everyone to come back wearing the same rank or a higher one, so that means doing the right thing," Gabram said. "We have high standards and we are not going to turn our back to any of these things."

Learning these procedures was first time deployer, Spc. Jennifer Sybert, from Morrisville, Vt., a medic with

Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st ACB, who said she has been in Iraq a month and found the brief informative.

"It covered a lot of stuff and was a good introduction considering I came here late," Sybert said. "It's good that the command sergeant major and the colonel came out here to talk to us. That was a plus."

Despite the reduced levels of activity, Sybert said she is still happy to be deployed.

"I'm a medic and I had to load two people on Black-hawks which was exciting," Sybert said. "I'm happy here and enjoying myself nonetheless."

"That's why we're doing this brief, so you know where we're coming from and why we've replaced the things we have," said Command Sgt. Maj. Glen Vela, from Dallas, command sergeant major, 1st ACB. "Sometimes the follow on guys have a hard time catching up."

Some Soldiers new to the 1st ACB may have a tendency to revert back to their last unit's policies, which are not applicable in their new environment, he said.

"You have to be familiar with our procedures because we're going to do things the Air Cav way."

Sunburn: Not your typical rock band

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

BAGHDAD - Sunburn, like many other rock bands, had a packed schedule for their current tour, playing six shows in four days. The crowd at their show on Aug. 24 made sure to let them know.

In many ways, Sunburn is your typical rock band, catering to college-aged, modern rock listeners; practicing anytime work does not get in their way, and loving every minute of it.

However, they're not touring in the United States, they're in Iraq. They rocked a small stage set up on the basketball court at Forward Operating Base Falcon in Baghdad, not a bar.

Sunburn, part of the Multi-National Corps—Iraq

Band, is serving like other Soldiers, only carrying both instruments and weapons.

"This is exactly what we came [to Iraq] to do," said vocalist Sgt. Jennifer Champagne, of Houston. "We wanted to be able to get out and spread our music to all the places that don't have an opportunity to hear live music."

The band is currently hopping from FOB to FOB," and "seeing who's out there," said keyboardist Staff Sgt. Michael Johnson of Ellensburg, W.Va.

This is the first time we've actually scaled down our rig to a small sound system, hopped in the MRAPs [mine resistant ambush protected vehicle] and convoyed around the country," said Johnson. "It's been an awesome trip."

Staff Sgt. Sheila Sawyer, with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, was one of many Soldiers who enjoyed the concert.

"They're great," said Sawyer, "It's a good change from the usual (routine)."

Soldiers have always found it easy to connect with others who share the experience of a deployment. Guitarist and lead vocalist Spc. Michael Nelson thinks this gives Sunburn an edge over other bands that play for military audiences in Iraq.

"This is a unique opportunity," said Nelson of Scarborough, Maine. "We have this brotherhood and sisterhood because we're all over here together. I think even though Soldiers get taken aback a little bit when they see a band in uniform playing, and in their head they're thinking 'Wow, this is cool, these guys are playing some music but they know what we do, because they are what we are.'"

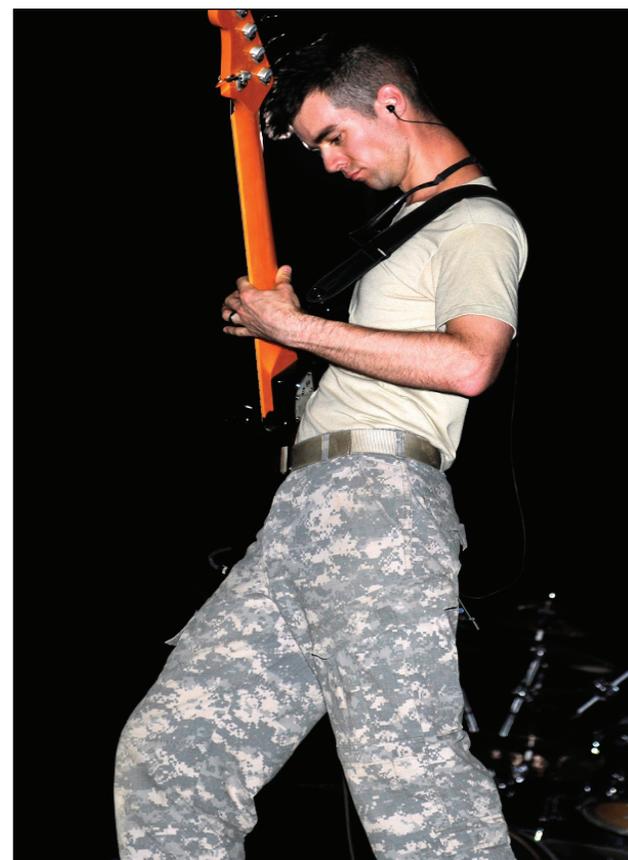


photo by Sgt. Mary Phillips, 30th HBCT PAO, MND-B

(Above) Houston native Sgt. Jennifer Champagne sings for the band Sunburn at Forward Operating Base Falcon, Aug. 24. Sunburn is the Multi-National Corps—Iraq Band and tours Iraq, playing for fellow Soldiers.



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

(Left) Houston native and drummer, Sgt. David Champagne, with the band Sunburn, plays during a concert at Forward Operating Base Falcon, Aug. 24. Champagne, and the other members of Sunburn are part of the Multi-National Corps—Iraq Band, and travel throughout Iraq performing for fellow Soldiers.

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Photo by photo by Capt. Brian Grey, 30th HBCT PAO, MND-B

A Soldier of Battery B, 113th Field Artillery Battalion, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, escorts members of the Japan International Cooperation Agency to a water treatment facility south of Baghdad, near Hawr Jabour, Aug. 22. The Monroe, N.C.-based Soldiers provided transportation and security for the meeting, which discussed the possible renovation of the facility.

Dagger commander looks back at mission, forward to redeployment

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

BAGHDAD – The leaders of the 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team “Dagger,” 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad gave local media from the Fort Riley, Kan. area the opportunity to hear the accomplishments of the Dagger Brigade in their year-long support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and preparations for redeployment to Fort Riley next month.

Col. Joseph Martin, commander, 2nd HBCT and Command Sgt. Maj. Battle, the brigade’s top enlisted leader, welcomed the media and their questions.

“It has been a year of change for this brigade and I’m going to tell you why. Since we arrived last October we witnessed 14 separate changes in operations this year, changes in our operational environment. Imagine living in Manhattan and experiencing 14 changes to your neighborhood to you and the city,” he said.

“If you recall, the 1st of January was a landmark moment in Iraqi history as the UN Security Resolution expired and the new internationally recognized security agreement was implemented to the United States and our partners in Iraq. Our Iraqi Security partners took the lead firmly at that point.

“We began to obtain warrants in order to detain insurgents and prevent violence. It was a critical time for the roles of the Iraqi Security Forces as they transitioned to the lead. After an amazing election at the end of January we found ourselves under the leadership of a new command here in the 1st Cavalry Division from Fort Hood, Texas.

“We began to add two new battalions- one from Fort Hood, the 2-8 Cavalry Regiment, and one from the Pennsylvania National Guard, the 2-112 Infantry Regiment. We expanded our [area of operations] into Abu Ghraib, which is a rural area to our west. It’s been known to have harbored insurgent activity, specifically al-Qaeda.

“On the 1st of July, the combat forces of this team began to move outside of the city bases that the surge had necessitated and created. We’re now fully partnered in commanding control centers with our city-bound Iraqi partners. We continue to target and capture insurgents in the countryside out in Abu Ghraib and support our partners within the city of Baghdad.

“Overall, our combined team has prevailed. The Dagger noncommissioned officers and junior leaders matured into confident and dependable teams that can tackle any mission anywhere, anytime day or night. We’ve now seen young, energetic Americans become battle-hardened veterans in one of America’s greatest traditions in war fighting: the Big Red One. You can justifiably be proud of them just as we are right now. I implore each and every one of you to meet them, Command Sgt. Maj. Battle and me on the 22nd of October this year. That’s when we’ll proudly uncase our colors for this great brigade and continue our history that reaches back to 1917 in the muddy trenches of WWI, where the brigade was born. I can clearly tell you I am the proudest commander in Iraq right now because I am in command of an amazing organization made up of amazing people, who put together an incredible team.

“We can’t forget our families who have waited so patiently at Fort Riley, Kan., nor can we forget the team back there of the local community and all of the institutions that make up the 1st Infantry Division and the Garrison at Fort Riley that have supported us throughout the duration of this conflict.”

Martin was asked what was the biggest accomplishment of the Dagger Mission. He responded by saying the brigade adapted to the ever-changing mission.

“This required changes to the environment that necessitated leadership from the brigade all the way down to the unit that was affected,” Martin said. “Our partners had changed, the security agreement was implemented, we went through an election period and the brigade adaptively adjusted to that environment.”

Battle responded by saying the greatest accomplishment was getting to know the Iraqi Soldiers and the

civilian population.

“We worked side by side with our Iraqi counterparts,” he said. “That has been a great accomplishment.”

Martin was also asked about what the Dagger Brigade was going to upon return to Fort Riley.

“The way we look at this campaign is that it doesn’t end when we come home; it goes beyond that,” Martin said. “We have the last phase that is equally important to this phase of the campaign, and that is the reset phase.”

Martin said the Soldiers will go through reintegration training and health screens before going on a well-deserved leave period.

“They will be reoriented into the environment back home,” he said. “This is something they haven’t experienced over a long period of time.”

Battle said there will also be a big turnover of Soldiers going to a new duty station, separating from the Army or retiring from service.

“We will ensure that these Soldiers, as well as the Soldiers not going anywhere, are taken care of,” he said. “There will be a lot of things that we have to accomplish and I think the first 60 days of this reset period will be the most important.”

What also will be important to the Soldiers is the redeployment ceremony when they return, according to Martin.

“When the Soldiers’ flight lands in Kansas, a crowd is going to form; people who have been waiting for a whole year to see their Soldier. These Soldiers are going to be called forward to the top of the hill and they are going to walk into a forum of screaming family members with music and celebration akin to what you would see in a Super Bowl,” he said.

Martin concluded with a statement that wrapped-up what redeployment will be like for the Soldiers and their families.

“The Soldiers will think they are rock stars and the families will think they are at a rock star concert. They’re going to join together and embrace; then they are going to go home and will be released on a 96 hour pass.”

Dagger Dash brings camaraderie, competition to Soldiers

Story Sgt. Dustin Roberts

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

BAGHDAD – Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers from across Victory Base Complex participated in the “Dagger Dash” at Camp Liberty, Aug 30.

Leadership from 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team “Dagger,” 1st Infantry Division, MND-B sponsored the run to allow Soldiers to get together for a little fun and competition.

“Events like the ‘Dagger Dash’ provide an outlet for socializing, competition and recreation outside of the offices or vehicles that we are all spending 16 hours a day in,” said Capt. Kenneth “Trip” Johnson, a native of Fort Riley Kan. “It is important because it reminds us there is more to life than PowerPoint slides, pre-combat checks, pre-combat inspections and convoy preps.”

Soldiers spent time preparing for the dash of their choice: a 10 kilometer run, a 5 kilometer run, or a 2.1 kilometer sprint. The first three in their gender and age group to cross the line in each respected event earned a medal, while everyone who participated in the event received a custom “Dagger Dash” tee-shirt.

“This event created a venue for friendly competition,” said Capt. Christopher Renoll, a native of Manchester, Md., winner of the 2.1 kilometer sprint for males ages 18-28. “This helped take away the stress of what’s going on every day.”

Renoll said that organized runs such as the “Dagger Dash” help measure Soldiers’ levels of physical fitness.

“If you’re trying to improve physically here, running regular five or ten kilometer runs is something that can give a basis to measure your progress,” he said.

Running in a sponsored race may be as easy as moving one’s legs and arms for participants, but the Soldiers who sponsored the run had to think about the different components that make races successful.

“A lot of people put work into planning the event, which was a sizeable amount of effort,” said Renoll. “Getting all the volunteers for tables, getting the routes marked, coordination with two separate mayor cells, coordination to get the [1st Cavalry Division] Band there, getting a public address system, refreshments, tee-shirts, race numbers, all the people who worked the registration point, all these people deserve a big ‘thank you.’”

As the Dagger Brigade continues to prepare for redeployment to Fort Riley, Kan. next month, the “Dagger Dash” was a way for Soldiers to come together with other MND-B Soldiers one last time.

“This is the last hurrah for the Daggers before we redeploy,” said Johnson. “It was a lot of fun to get out with our colleagues, work mates and fellow Soldiers whom we’ve worked so hard with this year.”



photo by Sgt. Dustin Roberts, 2nd HBCT PAO, 1st

Greenville, N.C. native, Command Sgt. Maj. Donald Battle, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, finishes the “Dagger Dash” at Camp Liberty Aug. 30. The run brought MND-B Soldiers together to participate in competitive and friendly exercise as the Dagger Brigade prepares to redeploy to Fort Riley, Kan. next month.

Cleaning up before heading home

Photots By Staff Sgt. Mark Burrell MND-B PAO



(LEFT) We're leaving Iraq in a few days and we have to clean all our guns so U.S. Customs officials can inspect them," said Mountaintop, Penn. native, Staff Sgt. Robert Franks, a howitzer section chief assigned to Battery B, 1st Battalion, 109th Field Artillery Regiment, 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, as he hoses down the M777A2 Howitzer here, Aug. 23. The Arrowhead Soldiers are completing their tour in Iraq and preparing to head back to the



"Top down cleaning is probably the easiest way to go," said Spc. Eric Noss, a cannon crewmember from Shickshinny, Penn., assigned to Battery B, 1st Battalion, 109th Field Artillery Regiment, 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, as he sprays down a M777A2 howitzer gun, Aug. 23.



(LEFT) Spc. Stephen Houck, a cannon crewmember from Nanticoke, Penn., assigned to Battery B, 1st Battalion, 109th Field Artillery Regiment, 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, uses a high-pressure hose here, Aug.23, to scrub the M777A2 Howitzer gun before returning home. The Pennsylvania National Guard Soldiers stationed at Joint Security Station Istaqlal were essential in providing artillery support to Multi-National Division – Baghdad Sol-



(LEFT) "We're looking for build up and dirt," explained Sgt. 1st Class Mike "Smoke" Hughes. "We don't want to take any unwanted particles of Iraq back home with us." Hughes, a platoon sergeant from Danville, Penn., assigned to Battery B, 1st Battalion, 109th Field Artillery Regiment, 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, uses cleaning solution to clean the M777A2 Howitzer gun at Camp Taji, Iraq, Aug. 23, before U.S. Customs officials inspect the weapon.



Danville, Penn. native, Sgt. 1st Class Mike "Smoke" Hughes, a platoon sergeant assigned to Battery B, 1st Battalion, 109th Field Artillery Regiment, 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, scrubs the barrel of an M777A2 Howitzer gun at Camp Taji, here, Aug. 23, as the Pennsylvania National Guard Soldiers prepare to leave Iraq after a successful tour at Joint Security Station

Louisiana engineers train Federal Police

Story by Spc. Ruth McClary

30th HBCT PAO, MND-B

BAGHDAD – "I consider training with you very important," exclaimed one of the top commanders of the Iraqi Federal Police, Sept. 8, as he described how much his officers have benefited after receiving route clearance classes from Louisiana-based Soldiers.

An enthusiastic Col. Ahmed, commander of the 1st Mechanized Brigade, 2nd FP Division, welcomed leaders of the 225th Engineer Brigade leader's to talk about continued partnership opportunities through training at the 225th Task Force Iron Claw Academy.

"I could see a difference in their jobs and they are doing very well," Ahmed told Brig. Gen. Owen Monconduit, commander of the 225th Eng. Bde. "We need this training now more than ever because the enemy is changing tactics and finding different ways to attack us."

The 2nd FP mans checkpoints and handles some route clearance aghdad. At the leadership session, Ahmed mentioned the need for more route clearance and route sanita-

tion training for his police officers to help safely clean up heavily traveled roadways filled with debris that could be used to disguise improvised explosive devices.

"I can see more people walking out and about, more activity, so there's a feeling of security," said Monconduit. "So there's more that we can do to provide security training in that area. It gives Soldiers more confidence and capability."

Ahmed is so pleased with the training at the engineer academy; he wants to send even more of his police officers, who are not engineers by trade, to learn route clearance tactics.

"Everybody faces IEDs on the roads," said Ahmed. "They need to learn more about identifying security threats and spotting IEDs to prevent them from harming people."

225th Eng. Bde. instructors will train Iraqi police and Army Soldiers on the latest techniques of IED detection and destruction in the months to come. In fact, they are even planning "train the trainer" programs at their headquarters.

"I welcome you at any time. This is an open invitation for you and your crew to return. Treat this as your home," said Ahmed.



photo by Lt. Col. Pat Simon, 225th Eng. Bde. PAO, MND-B

– 225th Engineer Brigade Command Sgt. Maj. Joe Major (left), of Ventress, La., greets Col. Ahmed, 1st Mechanized Brigade, 2nd Federal Police Division on Sep. 8 at Palm Grove during a meeting of leaders from the two units. Ahmed spoke highly of the training provided by the 225th's Task Force Iron Claw Academy to his police officers who patrol the inner city of Baghdad. "I could see a difference in their jobs and they are doing very well."

STALLION BATTALION SPORTS DAY

Photos by Staff Sgt. Mark Burrell MND-B PAO



BAGHDAD – Soldiers from 2nd “Stallion” Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, jump for the ball during the Stallion Battalion Sports Day at Joint Security Station Nassir Wa Salaam, here, Sept. 5. The competition pitted different companies against each other in a series of athletic events throughout the day. The Soldiers from Company B won the volleyball tournament.

(LEFT) BAGHDAD – Staff Sgt. Selesese Sokimi (right), a security section chief from Tacoma, Wash., assigned to Forward Support Company, 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, tries to use his moves to get around Sgt. 1st Class Taylor Derrick (left), a platoon sergeant from Longview, Texas, assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Bn., 8th Cav. Regt., 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div. during the Stallion Battalion Sports Day at Joint Security Station Nassir Wa Salaam, here, Sept. 5. The winners of the basketball portion of the competition were the Soldiers from HHC.

During the tug-of-war competition, 2nd Lt. Joel Mougey (right), an intelligence officer, Spc. Joseph Engle (middle), a dismount and Sgt. 1st Class Eddie Jones (left), a platoon sergeant, pull in unison at the final event of the day for the Stallion Battalion Sports Day at Joint Security Station Nassir Wa Salaam, here, Sept. 5. All Soldiers are assigned to C Company, 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Division, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division. There was no clear winner in this event because the rope snapped during the competition.



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Sunshine State showdown saved a little face for ACC

By Tony Barnhart
Special to CBSSports.com

Quick question: Who was the happiest man in America late Monday night?

Glad you asked.

That would be John Swofford, the commissioner of the Atlantic Coast Conference.

Because he had the ACC presidents meetings the next day in Boston, Swofford watched Monday night's Florida State-Miami game from his home in Greensboro, N.C. It was a thriller in the old Florida State-Miami tradition as the Hurricanes turned away a late Seminoles drive to win 38-34.

Man, did the ACC really need a game like that.

Why? Because until Monday night the first weekend of the 2009 season, to be charitable, was one the ACC and Swofford would not choose to write home about, and definitely not read about.

"It certainly was not the kind of opening weekend we all would have liked," said Swofford, himself a former quarterback at North Carolina.

No kidding.

How tough a start was it for the ACC? Let us count the ways:

- N.C. State lost 7-3 to South Carolina on Thursday night at home. Russell Wilson, the All-ACC quarterback in 2008, never sniffed the end zone.
- Virginia Tech, considered to be the ACC's best shot at being a national championship contender, was No. 7 when it played No. 5 Alabama in Atlanta. 'Bama dominated the fourth quarter to win 34-24.
- The ACC had not one loss but two to the Colonial Athletic Association. William & Mary stunned Virginia and Richmond beat what was thought to be an improved Duke team.
- Wake Forest was at home when it lost 24-21 to Baylor and Robert Griffin.
- Maryland, which thought it was headed for a bounce-back year, went to the West Coast and got drilled by California, 52-13.
- During the weekend the ACC had one win against a Division I-A (FBS) opponent, Middle Tennessee State. The rest of the ACC's wins were against Division I-AA teams Northeastern, The Citadel and Jacksonville State.

That's why the ACC needed something good to happen Monday night.

"You have to remember that the same thing [a slow start] happened to us a year ago," Swofford said. "But things turned out pretty well for our league."

The ACC certainly did stumble out of the gate in 2008. Clemson, a consensus top 10 team in the preseason, opened before a national television audience at the Chick-fil-A Kickoff Game in Atlanta. Alabama didn't just beat Clemson. The Crimson Tide embarrassed the Tigers for all the world to see, 34-10.

Virginia Tech, which would go on to win the league, lost its opener to East Carolina 27-22 on a blocked punt that was returned for a touchdown. Maryland lost 24-14 at Middle Tennessee State in the second week of the season. North Carolina barely got by McNeese State, 35-27. Virginia was at home but got drilled by USC, 52-7.

But from that rough start the ACC went on to send a record 10 teams to bowl games.

"We might not have had a team near the top of the BCS standings, but top to bottom I thought we were the most balanced league in football last season," said Wake Forest coach Jim Grobe, who has a chance to take the Deacons to an unprecedented fourth straight bowl game this season. "The difference between the top team and the bottom team in our league is very small."

"I knew the ACC was going to be tough when we joined [in 2004]," said Virginia Tech coach Frank Beamer, who has won three championships since coming on board. "But it's better from top to bottom than I thought it was going to be."

The ACC can point to its bowl success. It can point to nine of the top 45 choices in the last NFL Draft and 33 total players chosen, which was second only to the SEC (37). Over the past four years the ACC has had 158 players drafted, one behind the SEC. It can point to a lot of things. All are impressive.

But the fact of the matter is that the ACC added Miami, Boston College and Virginia Tech in order to accomplish several things. It wanted to get two teams into the BCS bowls, not only for the money, but for the prestige. It wanted to put on a big-time conference championship game, just like the SEC and Big 12. And most of all, it wanted to get back into the national championship discussion on a regular basis.

The ACC has yet to get two teams in the BCS and the one they do send has usually struggled. The ACC was 1-9 in BCS bowls with eight straight losses until Virginia Tech broke the drought by beating Cincinnati in the Orange Bowl last January.

The conference championship game has really been a mixed bag. There was a sellout for the first one between Florida State and Virginia Tech in Jacksonville in 2005. But after that it has been a tough sell and the game has moved to Tampa for a couple of years. In 2010 it will move to Charlotte, a more central location for the confer-

ence footprint and, if the weather is kind, the game should do well there.

But Swofford and all the coaches I talked to concede that the ACC will not be where it wants to be until Florida State and Miami return to prominence (Monday night was a good sign) and the ACC puts itself back into the national championship discussion in late November.

It has been a while. Florida State beat Virginia Tech in the Sugar Bowl to win the 1999 national championship. The following year, Florida State lost to Oklahoma in the BCS title game at the Orange Bowl. Since then the national championship discussion late in the season has been non-existent because the ACC has gotten knocked out early.

There are a number of programs on the rise: Butch Davis built a powerhouse at Miami and many feel he can do it at North Carolina. Paul Johnson shook things up at Georgia Tech by going 9-4 and beating Georgia in his first year. Dabo Swinney has brought new energy to Clemson and believes the Tigers can again be a national program. Despite the loss to South Carolina, Tom O'Brien is a proven coach and will get N.C. State in the mix.

"These things go in cycles and if you look at the coaches in this league and the commitment to football, I don't think there is any doubt that the ACC is going to get there," Davis said.

Would the ACC have been better off staying at nine teams? Swofford had an emphatic no.

"There is simply no question that expansion has been a plus for us," Swofford said. "We were in a competitive marketplace where we had to look down the road and see where the sport was heading. It has been the right thing for us."

When the SEC is getting \$3 billion from CBS and ESPN over the next 15 years and the Big Ten is rolling in cash because of its own network, the ACC simply couldn't stand pat and hope to keep its seat at the table with the big boys. So it expanded. The schools have committed hundreds of millions of dollars to upgrade facilities. The coaches have much bigger recruiting budgets to go out and get the best players.

The league has done everything it is supposed to do but the most important thing: Win a national championship and prove it can go toe-to-toe with the SEC, Big Ten, Big 12 and Pac-10.

"This league has come so far since we first got in," said Florida State coach Bobby Bowden, whose program joined in 1992. "There was a pretty good gap between us and everybody else for a little while. But now it has closed. Now we've got to get back to the top. I think we'll get there, but it's tough. There is no doubt about that."

WEEK 4 KEY MATCH-UPS *Thursday Sept. 17 - Saturday Sept. 19*



Hutchison quitting Senate to run for governor

By **TODD J. GILLMAN**
The Dallas Morning News

WASHINGTON – As Congress returns today from summer recess, Kay Bailey Hutchison opens a final chapter in the Senate, assuming she sticks with her vow to quit soon to focus on her bid for Texas governor.

Kay Bailey Hutchison, who recently spoke to the San Antonio Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, is a lame duck but wields influence on the Appropriations Committee. Congress will be focused almost single-mindedly on health care. But Hutchison will be coping with the reality that she is a self-proclaimed lame duck as she tries to complete unfinished business and score a few political points before stepping down.

“It’s not as if she’s a swing vote,” said Rutgers University political scientist Ross Baker, a leading congressional scholar. He said that once a politician declares an intention to leave, that person doesn’t have a lot of clout. “The assumption is that you’re a short-timer, so there’s not a particular value attached to working with you.”

Hutchison says she’ll take at least another month before setting a departure date. Aides say she’s committed to staying productive in the Senate even as she works to oust Gov. Rick Perry in the March Republican primary.

Aide Lisette Mondello repeated Hutchison’s pledge to fight Democratic health care and environmental legislation, but she offered few details.

Giving up her seat too soon – before Congress finalizes next year’s federal

spending – could put at risk hundreds of millions of dollars in spending destined for Texas. As a senior Republican on the Senate Appropriations Committee, she has influence in such matters.

Hutchison has not been especially involved in the health care debate. On Friday, a half-dozen key senators from both parties met by phone as part of an effort to forge a bipartisan health care plan; Hutchison wasn’t one of them.

“She’s not one of the players. She’s a vote, but she’s a definite vote against almost anything. I can’t imagine Kay Bailey departing from the vast majority of Republican senators,” Baker said.

It’s possible, though, that Hutchison plans to come out swinging in coming weeks, using her remaining Senate time to court conservative primary voters.

Mondello said that Hutchison also will push a proposal to let prisons jam cell-phone transmissions. A tough-on-crime stance can only help when Election Day arrives.

Upcoming tussles

Although health care will be the main focus, the Senate will address many matters in coming weeks, from a proposal – maligned by Republicans – to bolster U.S. marketing to overseas tourists to the nomination of Cass Sunstein, a controversial legal scholar that President Barack Obama wants as his regulatory czar.

There’s also Obama’s desire to close the Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, detention center by January. He’ll need Congress to vote for funding and a plan for relocating enemy combatants. Hutchison, like other Texas lawmakers, has insisted they go elsewhere and would likely kick up a

storm if the administration tries to send them to a Texas facility.

Immigration is one contentious issue on hold. But there will be tussles over strategy and troop strength in Iraq and Afghanistan, for instance. Hutchison has long been a top GOP voice on foreign affairs, although she has de-emphasized that since focusing on her run for governor.

As for cap and trade, an environmental protection measure that is eyed with great suspicion in Texas’ energy sector, the Senate probably won’t take it up before the end of 2009. That may rob Hutchison of a chance to score points as a champion of Texas interests.

Hutchison is not obliged to quit to run for governor. But she has declared that she will do so, in part to assure supporters that she won’t back out.

Republican strategists unaffiliated with either her campaign or Perry’s see a trade-off in staying in the Senate much longer.

With Congress back at work, she’s no longer free to campaign full time in Texas. And one of Perry’s central lines of attack is that she is a Washington insider; the longer she stays, the easier it is for him to cement that image.

On the other hand, she could use the Senate spotlight to her advantage. There’s no way to undo the fact that she has served for 16 years, this line of reasoning goes. So she might as well stay on the job and hammer the Obama health care plan day and night. If Republicans defeat it, she can return to Texas in triumph.

What little her aides say about her plans supports the idea, she’s preparing a freshly combative approach.

Mondello said Hutchison will work

on health care with Sen. Jim DeMint, the South Carolina Republican who ratcheted up the resistance this summer by declaring that “if we’re able to stop Obama on this, it will be his Waterloo.”

Federal dollars

But Hutchison’s post on the Appropriations Committee may be most relevant to her decision to stay as long as possible.

Congress hasn’t finalized any of the dozen bills required to keep the government running next year.

The House approved all 12 before the summer recess. The Senate has approved four.

Among the eight still pending is the one that covers military construction and veterans. Hutchison is the senior Republican on the subcommittee that wrote it, so she’ll be key in the floor debate, and when the House and Senate hammer out differences.

Beyond that, her post as an appropriator gives her far more clout, even as a lame duck, than ordinary mortals in Congress. Even minority party appropriators have a huge say in how billions of dollars are spent.

If Hutchison quits before the appropriations process is complete, it would be painful for colleagues in other states to strip funding for Texas projects to make room in the budget for priorities. Texas’ other senator, Republican John Cornyn, is not on the Appropriations Committee.

That makes it important for her to defend Texas interests, and her own, a bit longer.

“She would look pretty feeble when her big claim to fame is helping Texas,” said one longtime Senate GOP strategist. “She absolutely still matters on that.”

Trading places: Fort Hood becomes reserve training center

By **Amanda Kim Stairrett**
Fort Hood Herald

Fort Hood became the largest reserve component training center in the Army Tuesday morning as First Army Division West uncased its colors and settled into Central Texas.

The division, led by Maj. Gen. Thomas Robinson, occupies the headquarters vacated by the 4th Infantry Division after it departed for Fort Carson, Colo., last month. Division West comes to Fort Hood from Fort Carson. Division West cased its colors there last month.

Lt. Gen. Rick Lynch, III Corps and Fort Hood commander, said in early June that the 4th Infantry and Division West move was a “one-for-one swap.”

Division West’s move was officially announced April 3 and according to information from U.S. Sen. John Cornyn’s office released then, the relocation would bring 535 soldiers and 66 civilian employees to Central Texas.

Division West is one of two divisions under First Army. Its soldiers train and validate mobilized Reserve and National Guard units, according to information from First Army. The division also trains active-duty soldiers and those in the Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and Coalition Forces.

First Army began training reserve components in 1973 after a storied history that began in 1918. It quickly established itself as the Army of firsts with its soldiers being the first on the beaches of Normandy, first out of the

Normandy beachhead, first into Paris, first to break the Siegfried Line, first to cross the Rhine and first to meet the Russians, according to information from the division.

Division West and Division East were activated Oct. 1, 2006, as part of First Army’s effort to transform with the rest of the Army.

Division West is responsible for training troops in 49 battalions in 21 states west of the Mississippi River, Robinson said Tuesday morning. Since October 2007, Division West soldiers have mobilized and trained more than 1,500 units and 85,000 soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines, according to information from the division.

Seven subordinate brigades fall under Division West, including the 120th Infantry and 166th Aviation Brigades, which are already at Fort Hood.

Other brigades include the 181st Infantry Brigade at Fort McCoy, Wis., the 191st Infantry Brigade at Fort Lewis, Wash., the 402d Field Artillery Brigade at Travis Air Force Base, Calif., the 479th Field Artillery Brigade at Fort Sill, Okla., and the 5th Armored Brigade at Fort Bliss, according to information from the division.

The 479th Field Artillery Brigade is expected to relocate next year to Fort Hood.

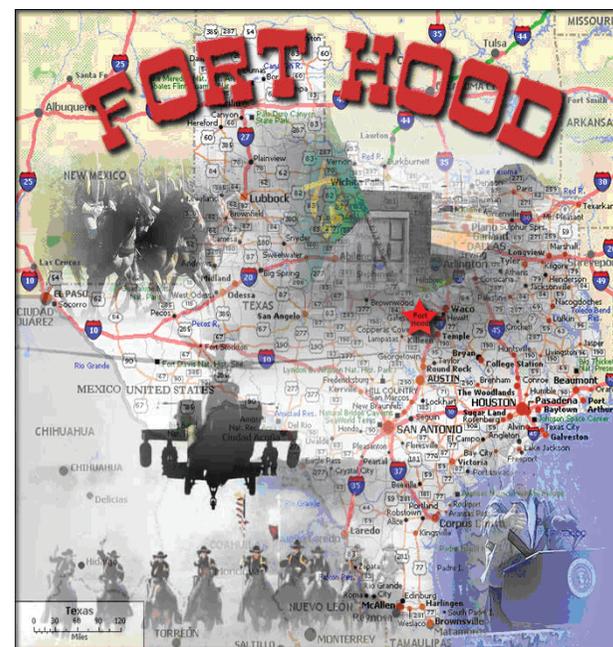
Robinson said he was excited to start the division’s new journey at Fort Hood. He has been in Central Texas for a month and said he’s never been in an area that shows so much support to the Army.

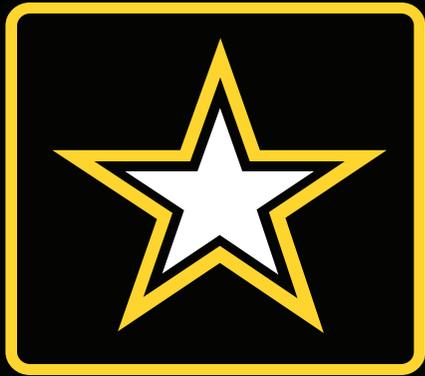
“Division West is honored to fly her colors here and join in the mission of preparing soldiers for combat and caring for their families,” Robinson said during the cer-

emony.

Units will soon begin integrating into the local communities, like the 120th already has done, and make their presence known with Adopt-a-Unit and Adopt-a-School partnerships, Robinson said.

Contact Amanda Kim Stairrett at astair@kdhnews.com or (254) 501-7547. Master Sgt. Dennis Beebe of First Army Division West public affairs contributed to this report.



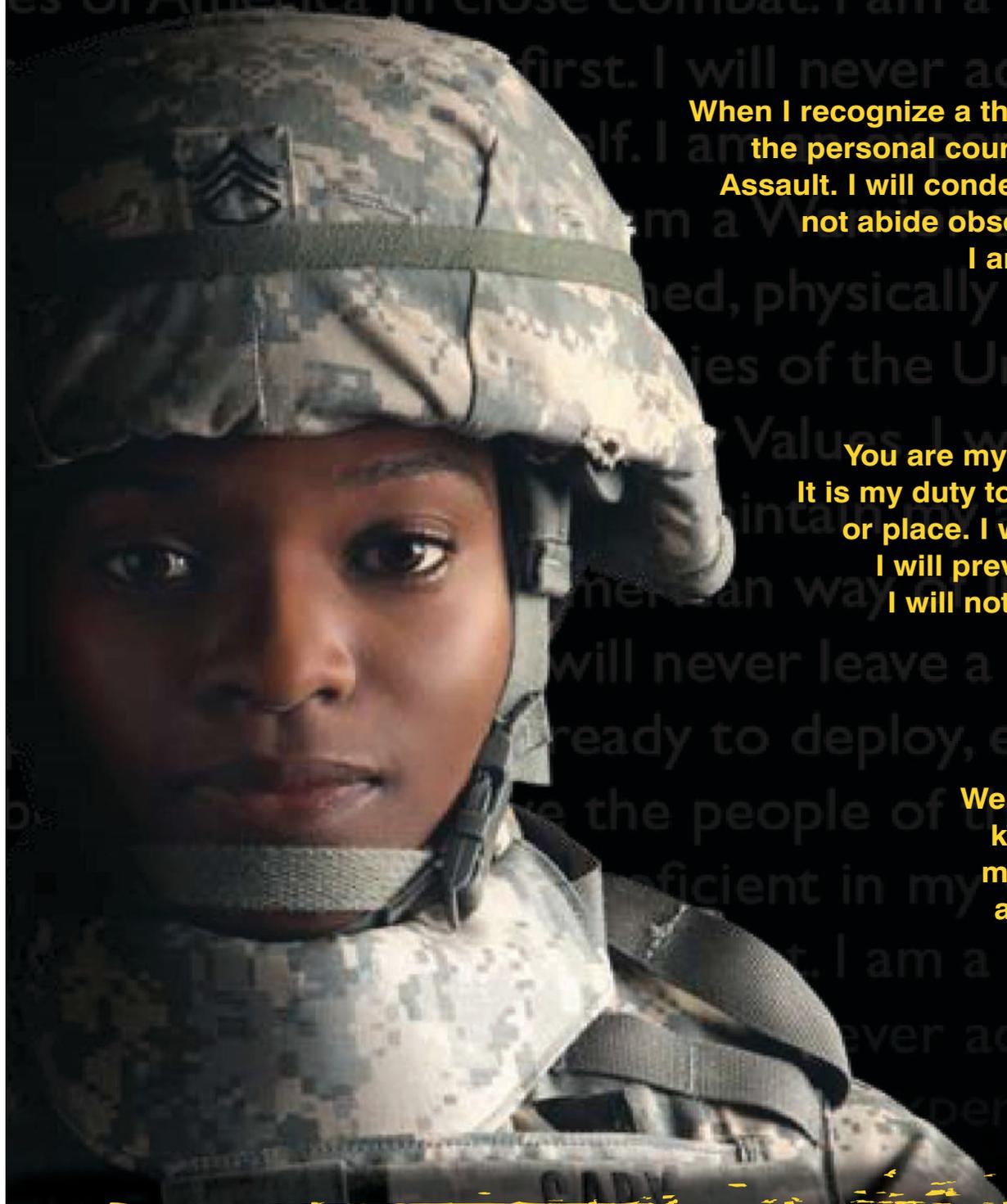


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