

THE DAGGER EDGE



May 2009: Volume 2, Issue 4



Continued Partnership

Leaders Come Together at HQ

Veteran Heros Visit Troops

Dagger Says Goodbye to Top Advisor



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◀ *On the cover: Pfc. John Houk, 2nd HBCT, speaks with an Iraq policeman about security in Kadamiyah. (Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Robert Whelan, attached to the 2nd HBCT PAO)*



▶ *On the back: Wash. native Jeffery Howell, serving with a Personal Security Detachment, 2nd HBCT, says hello to an Iraq girl in Abu Ghraib. (Photo by Sgt. Dustin Roberts, 2nd HBCT PAO)*

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

May 2009: Vol. 2, Issue 4

2HBCT Commander
Col. Joseph M. Martin

2HBCT Command Sergeant Major
Donald L. Battle

2HBCT Public Affairs Officer
Maj. Koné C. Faulkner

2HBCT PAO NCOIC
Sgt. Brian Tierce

The Dagger Edge Staff

Editor
Sgt. Dustin Roberts

Lead Designer
Spc. Jamie Mannion

To contact us, email suggestions to:
Email: brian.d.tierce@mnd-b.army.mil
Website: www.1id.us.army.mil/unitpage.aspx?unit=2bct

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DAGGER SIX

2HBCT COMMANDER
COLONEL JOSEPH M. MARTIN



Daggers leading the pack



▲ Col. Joseph Martin, commander, 2nd HBCT, speaks with local Iraqi media during the Media Round Table II at the Freedom Rest Center in the International Zone April 26.

Soldiers, Leaders, and Civilians of the DAGGER Brigade Team,

My congratulations to each and every one of you on the tremendous work and commitment that I witness each and every day! We've past our 6th month in theater, as of 6 April 2009, so we're entering a critical time of the deployment and it's time to "Check your 6".

As we crest over the "6 month-milestone" for the Riley-based

units, we begin to see plans for Redeployment, Reception, Reintegration, and Retraining ("R4") at Fort Riley emerge on the calendars. I'm approving plans for retrograde of non-essential equipment. I'm watching carefully to ensure families have time in Fall '09 for reunions and leave, and am working very closely to protect a 30-day leave period in November 09. Six months in theater means that you can expect to see guidance on the redeployment to Riley! Until that day comes, there is much work remaining to be done.

For commands in the Brigade Combat Team who are not redeploying to Riley, "check your 6" should mean that you'll be part of a RIP/TOA when the Dagger Brigade Command departs, so begin to dust-off transition plans and RIP/TOA standards. Your experience will carry forward to guarantee the success of our incoming replacements. They will depend on YOU—so, it's not too early to review what your key contributions will be to that organi-

zation.

"Check your 6" means to stop, reflect as a command, and capture what significant milestones, accomplishments, and most importantly, tactical lessons learned you can extract from your last 180 days of operations here in the Iraqi Theater of Operations. It's not just a good idea—it's a duty that you have to retain that knowledge in a safe location for the end-of-tour briefings and passing of information to our incoming replacements. Also, the Army and Joint communities need to gather this information into the CALL and other databases, so it's never too early to "Check your 6" on whether information archiving is organized, cataloged, makes sense, or even being done!

Most importantly, "Check your 6" means to look back and review Safety training and certifications. Familiarity, complacency and a lack of adherence to standards can lead to catastrophic outcomes if you lose focus. The crushing heat of an Iraqi summer is right around the corner—an environment that can be very distracting. Our Soldiers deserve and our duty demands that we prepare them for one of the most extreme operating environments that a Soldier can face. "Check your 6" on discipline, standards and safety. Furthermore, continue to assess the ever changing environment that surrounds you. Our vigilance in these areas will save lives.

Finally, "Check your 6" for the led means to sit down with your Commander—your "6" element—and make sure that you're on azimuth, that you get some great, professional input on your performance, and that you continue to build the bonds of one of the greatest brigade combat teams in history.

I'm continually proud to serve alongside you as Dagger "6"! Polite, Professional, Prepared to Kill. 

COL. JOSEPH MARTIN

Dagger 6
"Ready Now!"



DAGGER SEVEN

2HBCT COMMAND SERGEANT MAJOR
DONALD L. BATTLE



Preparing for continued success

Daggers, As we continue past the midway point in our deployment, I want you to think about what you want your legacy to be. How do you want the people of Iraq to remember you? Do you want them to remember you for making a difference by showing the uppermost dignity and respect? Continue to be a steward of our Army's Values and remember the epitome of being a U.S. Soldier can be summed up to always doing the right thing.

Up to this point we have made a great difference in the lives of others. We are one of the most talked about brigades since the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom. That is a reflection of the leadership we have in the Dagger Brigade's ranks. Officers, Noncommissioned Officers and Soldiers are making a difference on a daily basis. The continued humanitarian efforts you complete every day remind us of how important this mission truly is.

A few days ago I listened to the 1st Infantry Division Commanding General talk about the storied history of the this Division. Our Division's rich history is just one more reason why you should be proud of the legacy and tradition before you and the continuing legacy that you have instilled upon this Brigade and the Division.

It is great to see Soldiers coming from small units such as Human Terrain Teams, Provincial Reconstruction Teams and even Combat Stress Teams that ask the question, "how can they be a part of the Big Red One?" Others have witnessed your part in the history-making efforts that add to the legacy of the Dagger Brigade and The Big Red One. Be proud of that.

We are the standard bearers for professionalism and lead by example.

Our Iraqi Security Force counterparts will continue to look upon us for assistance and continued partnership.



▲ Command Sgt. Maj. Donald Battle, senior enlisted advisor, 2nd HBCT, with Command Sgt. Maj. Frank Grippe, senior enlisted advisor, Multi-National Corps -- Iraq at the Dagger Headquarters April 10.

Well-trained Soldiers are a product of great leaders. We must continue to mentor our partners and fulfill our mission of securing and providing a better life for the citizens in our operational environment.

There is still more Dagger history to be made and more legacy to add to the oldest Division in the Army. Keep up the great work. 

COMMAND SGT. MAJ. DONALD BATTLE

Dagger 7
"Nothing Further"



Rip Fuel for the Soul

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

At the Smithsonian Institute there is a small exhibit that contains the personal effects found on Abraham Lincoln the night he was shot.

The personal effects are profoundly simple for such an extraordinary man: a small handkerchief embroidered "A. Lincoln," a country boy's penknife, a spectacle case repaired with a small piece of cotton string, a Confederate five-dollar bill, and a wrinkled, worn-out newspaper clipping praising his accomplishments as president. The newspaper clipping begins, "Abe Lincoln is one of the greatest statesmen of all time..."

Today, Abraham Lincoln is remembered as one of our nation's greatest leaders. His legacy has been studied and emulated by almost every leader in politics, the military, and business. What we tend to forget today is that President Lincoln was often severely criticized by his contemporaries for being anything but the "greatest statesmen of all time."

So what does all of this have to do with the personal effects Lincoln kept with him? None of the items he had with him had any special value. A simple pocket knife was a useful item and convenient to have on hand.

A worn spectacle case protected more valuable eye glasses and a Confederate five-dollar bill was probably an item of novelty. But what was the value of this worn, wrinkled newspaper clipping? This piece of paper had no value for Lincoln other than the words written on it, "Abe Lincoln is one of the greatest statesmen of all time..."

I imagine that this worn newspaper clipping had been with him for sometime, until it wrinkled, and worn ragged from being unfolded, read, refolded and placed back in his pocket a thousand times. For Lincoln the words on this simple piece of paper were not to feed his ego; they were a source of strength to continue the fight. They were confirmation that he was trusted, that he was making a difference. They were validation that the course he charted was correct after all, despite all the criticism. And most important, it was something he needed to hear, needed to know, to keep him at his peak performance.

Sincere encouragement can never be overestimated. It was the fuel that drove men to the top of Mt. Everest, it was survival for those on the Bataan Death March,

it is the force behind every victory on field of battle or sport, and it will always remain the timeless, mysterious force that propels men and women to accomplish the impossible.

Daggers, we still have many challenges and trials ahead of us, and I am confident that we will meet them and defeat them with excellence. As we march forward to mission completion let us not forget the importance and the power that genuine and sincere encouragement unleashes

Encouragement was vital to a president wrought with the difficulties of leading a nation beyond civil war and it is vital to every Soldier within the Dagger Brigade. It is "Rip Fuel" for the soul. Let's open a can and pour one out for the Soldiers that work for us.



▲ *Chaplain (Maj.) Peter Johnson*



Stitches:

Preventative medicine advice

NO ONE LIKES A QUITTER

By Capt. Kenneth Johnson. **DISCLAIMER: This article is satire. Smoking causes serious health risks.**

Nicotine addicts of the Dagger Brigade, it's time to fight back. The numbers are dwindling. Everyday more and more Soldiers are falling off the wagon. They can't stand the smell of their own breath. They can't afford to put any more money into the pockets of tobacco compa-

nies and they can't take the risk that one out of two smokers will develop a smoking related disease. Face with these daunting obstacles, they just give up; they stop using tobacco. In an effort to stem the tide of this crowd of quitters, this month's Stitches article will lay out a strategy to help

tobacco users stick with it. With these helpful tips you can turn back the nay-sayers and keep that habit going strong. Remember, only you can make this decision for your life. Only you can fight this fight. You can do it! Stay sharp Daggers!

Step #1: Stay loose. Planning is for losers. Successful people get that way because they don't make plans and opportunity just falls into their lap. Setting a date to quit smoking is the first sign of a smoker who's about to fall off the wagon.

Step #2: Hang out with smokers while their smoking. Separating yourself from the "smokers club" is a sure recipe for disaster. Other smokers can help you maintain the ritual of smoking, plus, they've clearly been able to keep up the habit and they're sure to be full of winning tips for your success

Step #3: Do NOT exercise. Exercising will remind you of how much smoking has cost you in terms of fitness. That's a downer. Plus, studies have shown that regular exercise releases dopamine and other neurotransmitters giving you more energy and improving your mood. That's what you've got cigarettes for. Don't let the habit of exercising distract you from valuable smoking time.

"To quit smoking is one of the easiest things in the world; I must have done it over a dozen times."
-Mark Twain



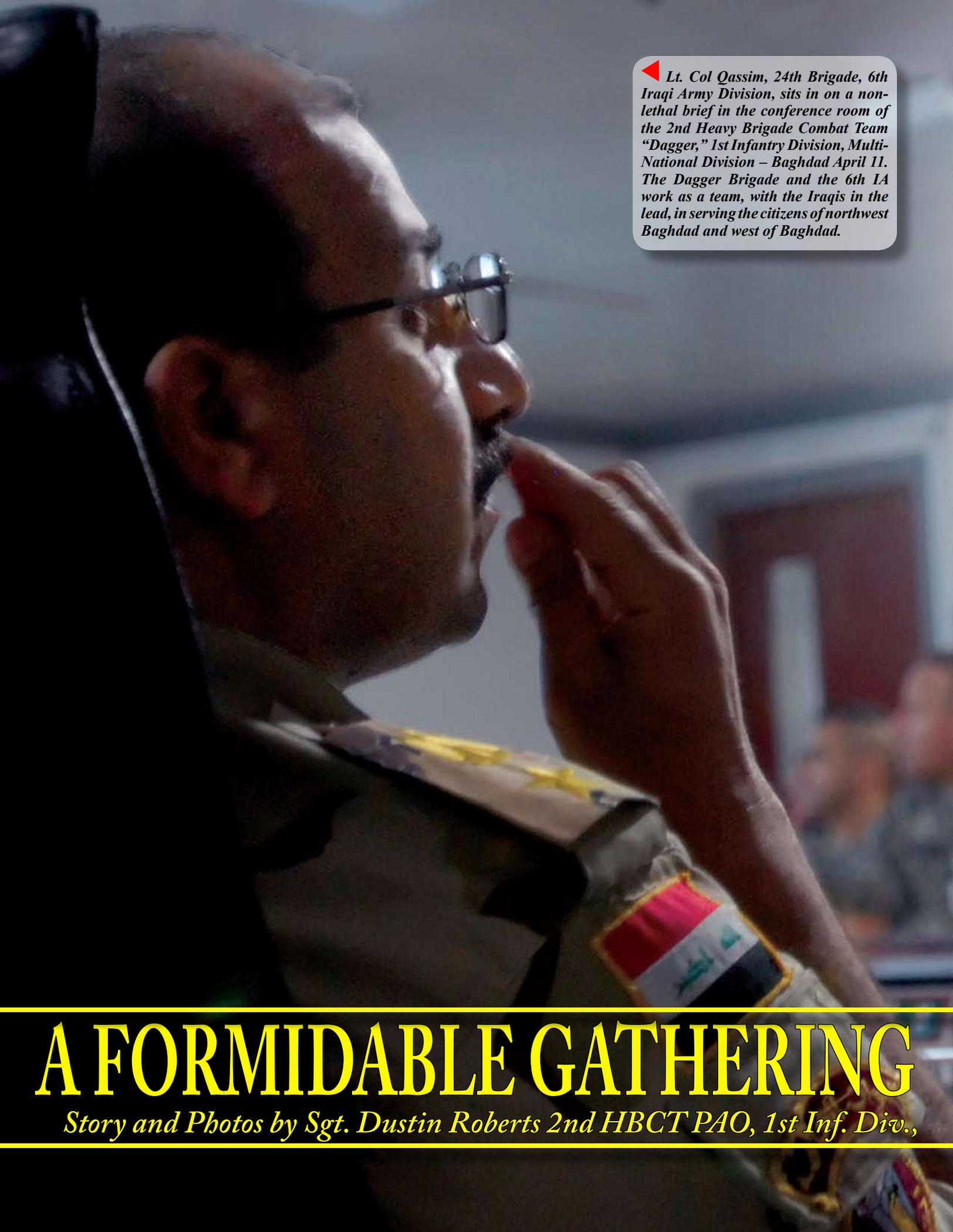
▲ *Smoker actively works to build a tolerance to health risks by exercising his lungs with a relaxing full flavored cigarette.*

Step #4: Do NOT talk to your doctor. Doctors are cocky know-it-alls. They're going to feed you all kinds of bull about how more than 400,000 deaths in the U.S. each year are from smoking-related illnesses. They'll tell you that you're more likely to be killed by Phillip-Morris than by al-Qaeda and they'll remind you that your second-hand smoke brings that risk home to your family.

Step #5: Try not to think about how much money this is costing you. Lots of people spend \$5 a day on fancy coffee drinks at Starbucks. Look to them for inspiration.

Step #6: Remember that when things get really stressful in life, cigarettes can solve the problem. Reading a book, watching TV, or just talking to a friend never helps in times of stress

Step #7: Don't have "control" issues. The fact that a multi-million dollar company is manipulating you with one of the most addictive substances on earth shouldn't bother you. Taking control of your own body and mind isn't all it's cracked up to be.



◀ *Lt. Col Qassim, 24th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, sits in on a non-lethal brief in the conference room of the 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team "Dagger," 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad April 11. The Dagger Brigade and the 6th IA work as a team, with the Iraqis in the lead, in serving the citizens of northwest Baghdad and west of Baghdad.*

A FORMIDABLE GATHERING

Story and Photos by Sgt. Dustin Roberts 2nd HBCT PAO, 1st Inf. Div.,

In their first engagement on Camp Liberty, leaders serving with the 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team “Dagger,” 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad met with staff in the 24th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division April 11.

The leaders, who help secure the population west of Baghdad, ate dinner together at the 2nd HBCT’s dining facility before heading to the brigade’s conference room for a joint meeting focused on non-lethal efforts.

“I appreciate all of the hard work the brigade has made for the people in the Dagger brigade’s area of operations,” said Lt. Col. Qassim of the 24th Brigade. “These projects are great for the security effort and for humanitarian services.”

Since the Dagger Brigade arrived in October 2008, numerous projects in essential services have been completed throughout the brigade’s operational environment and plans for projects are scheduled to continue for the remainder of the

brigade’s time in Iraq.

As they sat around the conference room table the group discussed how they are going to communicate more often when it comes to building projects.

“From my point of view, the IA lacks information for projects the Dagger Brigade is doing in our area,” said Qassim. “If we can work on these projects together, then we will be able to provide more security for the projects.”

Qassim went on to say that they would ensure contractors present their identification and credentials to the Iraqi Soldiers, ensuring the contractors do not contribute to terrorism in any way.

The security partners shared the same goals with each other, agreeing that the Iraqi citizens need to know how the IA and Coalition Forces are working together to rid Baghdad of criminal activity and make their lives easier through rebuilding projects.

The assembly talked about accomplished projects, to include

various school refurbishments and humanitarian aid drops.

“Americans have donated 20 to 40 tons of school supplies, soccer balls and toys to give to the citizens here,” said Col. Joseph Martin, a native of Dearborn, Mich., commander, 2nd HBCT. “This shows that humanitarianism is far more persuading than the dwindling insurgents in Iraq.”

As the meeting came to a close and the respective leaders saluted one another, Martin wrapped up by saying there was still work to be done.

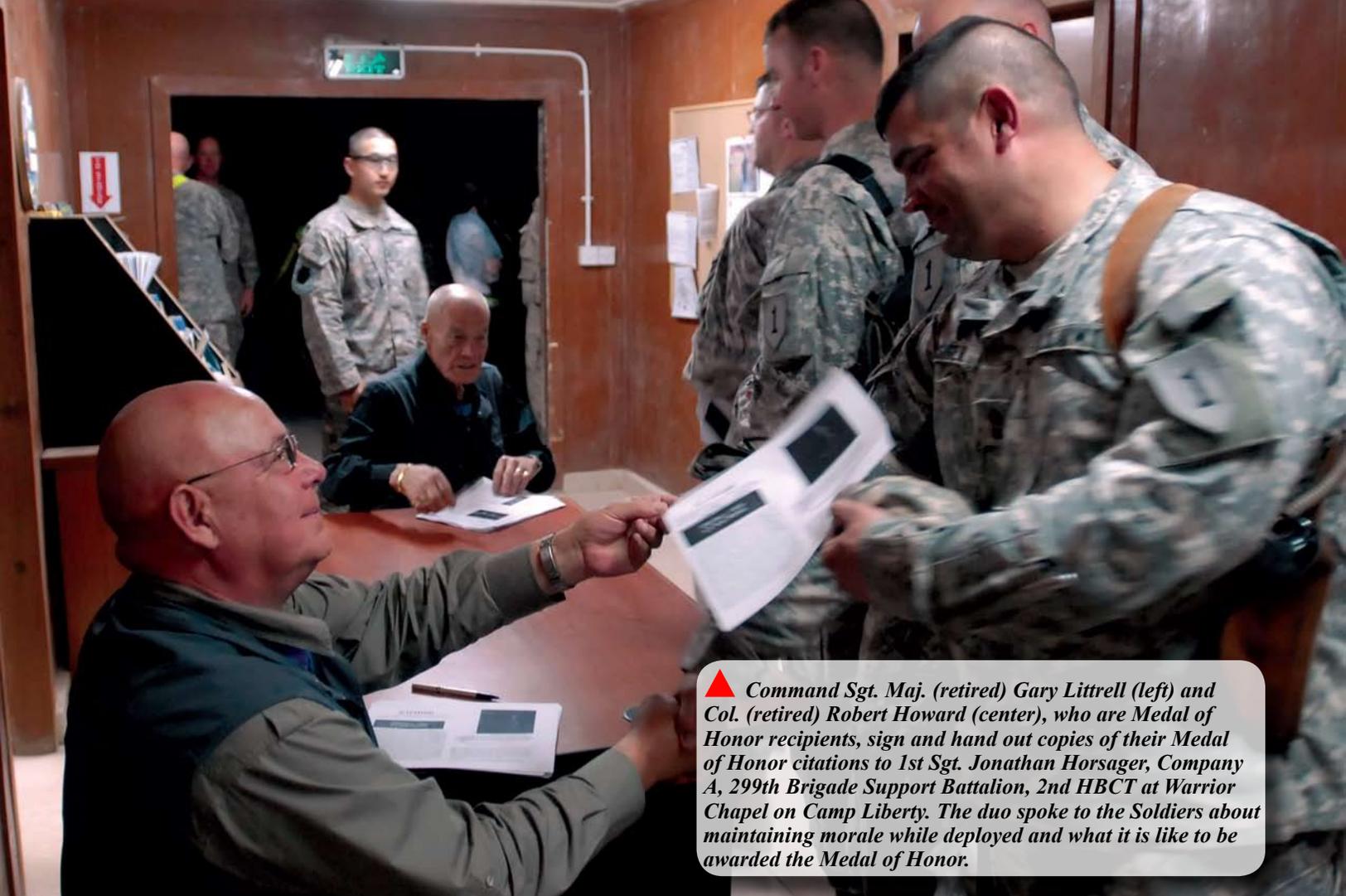
“We will continue to work together in this effort,” he said. “We are one team and we are here to help the people.”

Lt. Col. Yasser, also with the 24th Brigade, was very appreciative for the opportunity to visit the Dagger Brigade.

“Every time I ask you a question I always get an answer,” Yasser said to Martin. “I appreciate the invitation to your headquarters and for us to be able to share information.”

▶ Col. Joseph Martin (center, with glasses), a native of Dearborn, Mich., 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team “Dagger,” 1st Infantry Division, Multi National Division – Baghdad, and Lt. Col. Yasser, 24th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, sit in on a non-lethal brief in the Dagger Brigade’s conference room April 11. The leaders planned essential services projects that help the quality of life for the citizens west of Baghdad.





▲ *Command Sgt. Maj. (retired) Gary Littrell (left) and Col. (retired) Robert Howard (center), who are Medal of Honor recipients, sign and hand out copies of their Medal of Honor citations to 1st Sgt. Jonathan Horsager, Company A, 299th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd HBCT at Warrior Chapel on Camp Liberty. The duo spoke to the Soldiers about maintaining morale while deployed and what it is like to be awarded the Medal of Honor.*

A HERO'S WELCOME

Story and Photos by Sgt. Dustin Roberts 2nd HBCT PAO, 1st Inf. Div.

Presented by the President of the United States, the Medal of Honor is the highest and most distinguished award given to U.S. servicemembers for “conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty.”

Because of the level of criteria in a Medal of Honor citation, the award is often presented to servicemembers posthumously.

Two Vietnam War veterans who survived combat and were awarded Medals of Honor visited Soldiers serving with the 2nd Heavy “Dagger” Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad at

Warrior Chapel on Camp Liberty.

The two veterans spoke to the Dagger Soldiers about keeping morale high, maintaining a sense of urgency and took the opportunity to answer questions from the Soldiers.

“We try to visit Soldiers here and in Afghanistan every April,” said Command Sgt. Maj. (retired) Gary Littrell, who spent four days on a hill in Vietnam fighting enemy mortar and small arms fire. “It’s very important that we visit the men and women who are preserving the same freedom we preserved many years ago.”

Littrell and Col. (retired) Robert Howard, who also earned the Distinguished Service Cross, Silver Star

and eight Purple Hearts for his actions in Vietnam, gave words of encouragement and advice during their visit.

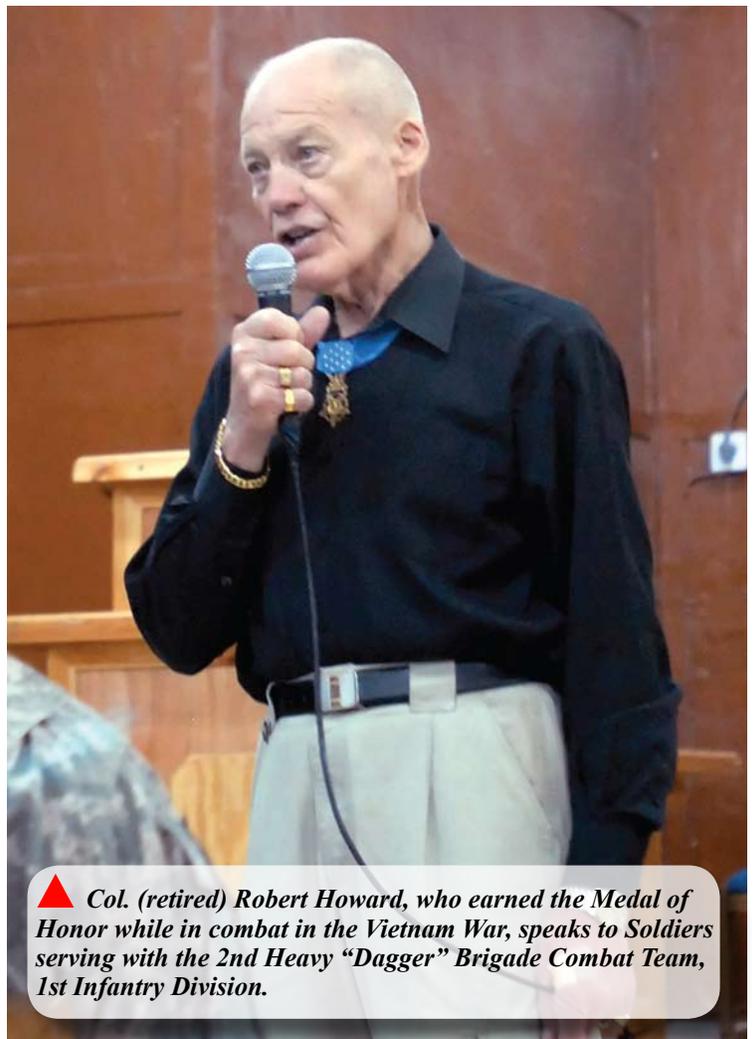
“Many of you have family at home and because of the technology today, keep them informed and tell them how are doing,” said Howard. “This is good for everyone’s morale and it will help you focus on the mission.”

The two took turns speaking to the troops, adding that accomplishment of the mission is what motivates leaders to get the job done.

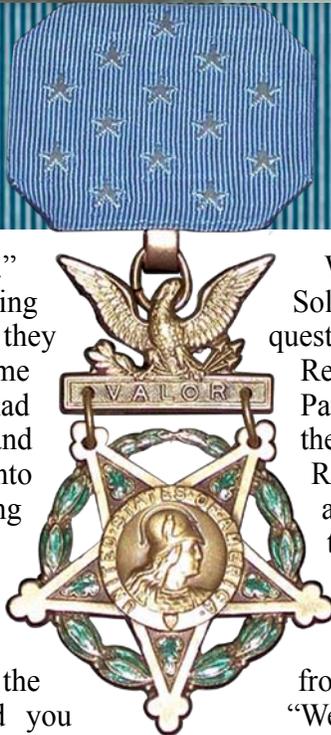
“After reading my citation, I felt that I did deserve the Medal of Honor,” said Littrell. “At the time, all I was thinking was I was a noncommissioned officer in the United States Army with a job to do



▲ *Command Sgt. Maj. (retired) Gary Littrell, who earned the Medal of Honor while in combat in the Vietnam War, speaks to Soldiers serving with the 2nd Heavy “Dagger” Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division.*



▲ *Col. (retired) Robert Howard, who earned the Medal of Honor while in combat in the Vietnam War, speaks to Soldiers serving with the 2nd Heavy “Dagger” Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division.*



and Soldiers to take care of.”

Littrell continued by saying to the Soldiers that if they were placed in the same predicament, that they had the same level of integrity and courage to put total effort into the fight, no matter how long it took.

“You are fine young men and women who have outstanding tools and leadership,” he said to the Soldiers. “We are behind you all the way and as long as we are able to make the trip, we will continue to visit the servicemembers in Iraq and Afghanistan.”

When the time came for Soldiers to ask the veterans questions, Staff Sgt. Andres Redondo, a native of Overland Park, Kan., who serves with the 5th Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd HBCT, asked the gentlemen how they stayed motivated and motivated their Soldiers during the time they spent thousands of miles away from their families.

“We had no choice but to stay motivated as leaders,” said Howard. “As for our Soldiers, we reminded them that God and country came before our needs.”

Littrell added that today’s Army has a lot more recourses in quality of life, weapons systems and medical care to reach the needs of Soldiers.

Greenville, N.C. native Command Sgt. Maj. Donald Battle, the brigade’s senior enlisted advisor, who introduced the Soldiers’ honorable guests, said he was thankful for them to share their knowledge and support with the Dagger Soldiers.

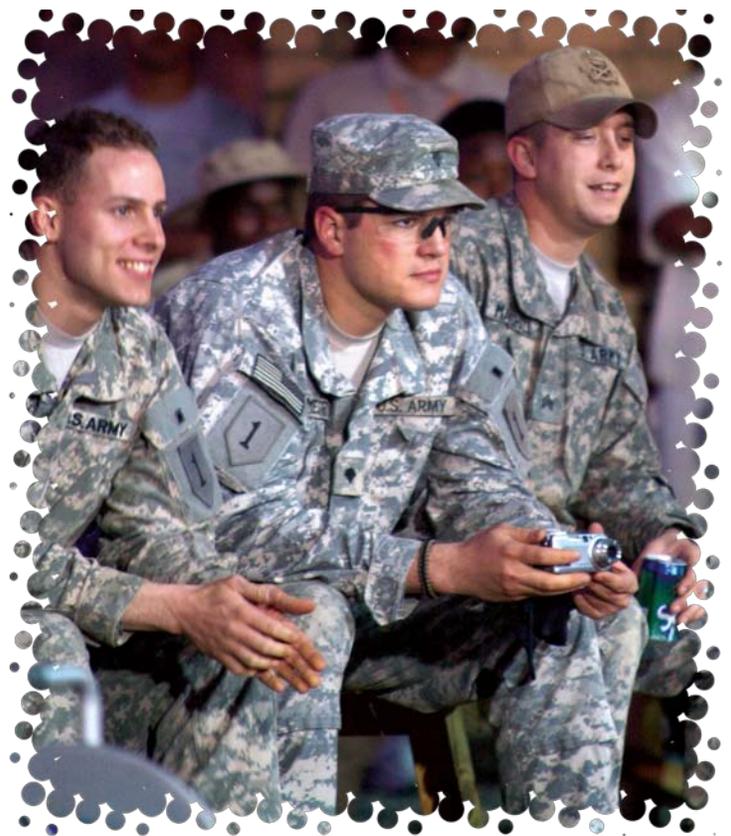
“It’s because of Americans like Col. Howard and Command Sgt. Maj. Littrell that we can still serve in America’s Army,” said Battle. “They are heroes and we owe them great respect and thanks for coming to visit us.”



▲ *Army Rock Band plays a set for Vanguard soldiers at FOB Justice an event sponsored by MWR.*

▼ *Capt. Clint T. Olearnick, Commander, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, of Warrenton, Mo., sings “Wanted Dead or Alive” with the Army “Rock Band” at FOB Justice.*

▼ *1-18 Inf. Regt. Soldiers Spc. Kyle Housand, of Big Rapids, Mich., Spc. Andrew Mestre, of Fort Wainwright, Ark., and Sgt. Christopher Marshall, of Pawtucket, R.I., sing with the Army Rock Band.*



FOB Justice

Presents

THE ARMY ROCK BAND

**STORY AND PHOTOS BY
1LT MATTHEW LENART
HHC/1-18 IN EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

The Army Rock Band visited FOB Justice in Kadamiyah, Iraq on the 9th of April, 2009 to entertain Vanguard Soldiers. It was a great way for tenant units to kick back, relax, and enjoy a concert that included modern and classic rock favorites. The Army Rock Band is a tribute to the immensely popular video game "Rock Band" incorporating many of the hit songs off the gaming system into their performance. The Army Rock Band arrived at FOB Justice at 1100hrs with the intent of conducting their concert at 1300 as lunch time chow ended. Due to the high operations tempo during that day, the members of the Rock Band realized that if they postponed their concert until 1800 that more soldiers would be able to enjoy and participate in the performance. As a result, the Army Band kicked off its concert at 1800hrs in front of an audience of approximately 100 soldiers. During their two 45 minute sets, the Army Rock Band captivated Vanguard Soldiers with Bon Jovi's "Wanted Dead or Alive", Kansas' classic "Carry On My Wayward Son", and an encore performance of Metallica's "Fade to Black." "It was a great way for all of us to relax and have a good time," PFC Shawn Wilcox of Headquarters Company, 1-18th Infantry, from Clayton, New Jersey, said, "I thought it was pretty cool how the band could fly-in, set-up, perform a concert, and fly-out in such a short amount of time." CPT Chad Hauge of Forest City, Iowa, the Vanguard Adjutant, added, "As part of the Personnel field realignment the US Army bands have transformed into a more versatile and functionally supportive element. They now provide more modern music, are easier to move about the battlefield, and can provide a moral boost to more forward based American Soldiers."

Vanguard Soldiers that attended the Army Rock Band concert enjoyed a variety of popular music from today as well as an experience that allowed them to decompress from the stresses of deployment. The Army Rock Band's willingness to play a selection of modern favorites in an austere environment that would otherwise preclude a concert is greatly appreciated by the Vanguard Nation.

VANGUARD 6



Lt. Col. John Vermeesch

Greetings to the Friends and Families of all Vanguards, we hope this finds you well wherever you may be! The Vanguards continue to excel as we provide security for the people of Northwest Baghdad. Along with our Iraqi partners, we continue to see amazing changes in our area of operations that are creating a standard of living for the Iraqi people that they have not experienced in years. The Vanguards continue to appear in various news sources. All you have to do to see some of the excellent coverage of our Soldiers in action is google 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 18th Infantry, and many of the recent stories will pop up. This is a historic time for Baghdad and Iraq, and the Vanguards are proud to be part of its future.

Since the last publication we have completed our key leader transitions and begun to settle back into rhythm under the realigned leadership. In mid March, CPT Aaron Lummer relinquished command of Headquarters and Headquarters Company to CPT Clint Olearnick. Though the Headquarters and Headquarters Company will miss CPT Lummer, we also look forward to continuing the outstanding service under the leadership of CPT Olearnick. All of the Vanguards continue our partnerships with the Iraqi Security Forces and continue to see improvements in their professionalism and competence. As we pass over the half way point of this deployment I want you to know that each of us remains focused on the mission at hand but also may be missing home a bit more these days. I believe that is part of the natural cycle of a deployment and we appreciate your continuous support. As always, I want to thank our Soldiers and Families for the tremendous sacrifice that each of you makes every day. Without your effort and support, the Vanguards could not do what we do. You all are making a difference in the lives of the people of the Kadamiya and Karkh Districts. History will hold a special place for this pivotal time in the transformation of Iraq. God Bless you all, God bless the fruits of freedom, and God Bless America!

Vanguard 6

"First to Battle!"

1ST COMBINED ARMS BATTALION, 18TH INFANTRY REGIMENT

From car salesman to Soldier:

Dragon Soldier wanted 'different life'

Story and photos by By 1st Lt. Christopher Gregg, 2nd BCT PAO, 1st Armd. Div., MND-B

SOLDIER

IN FOCUS

Pfc. Paul Henry, 42 years old, was once a car salesman in Marion, Ill., and was looking for something different in his life. The divorced father of two children decided to enlist in the U.S. Army.

"It's (enlisting) always something I've wanted to do," said Henry. "When I quit selling cars, I wanted to give back to society."

In his adult life, Henry worked as a district manager for a restaurant chain, and then switched careers and became a car salesman.

Henry's military career began in January 2008 when he visited the local recruiter in his hometown of Marion, Ill., and enlisted for three years with a military occupational specialty as a motor transport operator.

Henry was determined to be in the Army from the first day he arrived at the Military Entrance Processing Station. He was one of the oldest recruits at the station, and had to prove himself through tests that were 30 percent more physical than those designated for the younger Soldiers. Henry was the only

▲ *Pfc. Paul Henry, 42, joined the Army in January 2008. He serves with Company E, 299th Brigade Support Battalion, attached to the 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 63rd Armor Regiment, 2nd HBCT.*

one of 12 men to pass all the tests administered.

"Everyone was giving me high fives and congratulating me. That's when I knew I could make it," Henry said.

After basic training, in June 2008, Henry was assigned to Fort Riley, Kan., with the general supply section of the Distribution Platoon, Company E, 299th Brigade Support Battalion, 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 63rd Armored Regiment, 1st Infantry Division.

The unit has a mission that, at times, can be monoto-

nous. However, work doesn't get boring for many with Henry around, according to Pfc. Heinrich Felgar, who hails from Moline, Ill.

Henry's contagious smile, sense of humor, and a shout of "Hey, great to see you!" always keep people laughing, said Felgar.

"He's more motivated than a lot of people, although he's sometimes twice their age. No matter what you ask of him, he's always positive," added Felgar, who at age 23, is one of the youngest Soldiers in the platoon.

However, what strikes his fellow Soldiers about Henry is his positive attitude and his excitement about the Army, though he had some initial nervousness to shake out at first.

"I'm 42 years old, and will be 43 in August. I had no idea what the Army was about. I went to the recruiter's office and had no idea what to expect," Henry said.

"Yeah, I was absolutely nervous, but it is great to know we have great people who are more than willing to help."

Henry joined the Army

to be a motor transport operator, but he assists in running the ammunition yard at Forward Operating Base Mahmudiyah, south of Baghdad, where he has been deployed since October 2008.

Driving a truck is never out of the question though, as he has supported Echo Company during Combat Logistic Patrols by driving a Mine Resistant Ambush Protected or MRAP and other Army vehicles.

“I help transport food, supplies, and ammo,” Henry said. “We make things go from point A to point B. We make things happen.”

Henry may not be the youngest Soldier on the battlefield, but that doesn't mean that he decided to join the Army as a transitional job before looking for another profession.

Henry has taken so well to the Army he plans on reenlisting and would like to remain in the Army for 20 years.



▲ Pfc. Paul Henry, Company E, 299th BSB, attached to the 1-63 AR, was a car salesman before he joined the Army in 2008.

here.”

The hard work of Henry and the distribution platoon ensure thousands of Soldiers are able to continue their daily missions. His hard work sometimes is unseen, but the results are vital to the success of Co. E, 299th BSB, 1-63 CAB, which is currently attached to the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division.

“Pfc. Henry is the uplift of the company. His enthusiasm, motivation, and positive attitude are unparalleled,” said Capt. Hector Vazquez, who hails from Bronx, N.Y., commander, Co. E., 1st bn.,

Henry's unit remains deployed in Iraq partnered with the 17th Iraqi Army Division. The unit's mission is to train the Iraqi Army for self-reliance and to protect the Iraqi people.

“Every day I feel honored to be here. It's great,” said Henry.



Lt. Col. Jim Bradford

I hope this note finds you and your Family and Friends safe and well. March has been a busy month and as of 6 April we will be 180-days into this operation and our deployment. I cannot express my gratitude enough. I am honored to be part of such a great unit. Everyone in this organization both in Iraq and back at Ft. Riley has done so much, and I appreciate the hard-work to make things better and safer in Iraq and keeps our families supported back home.

We celebrated our 163rd day of our deployment on ST Patrick's Day. 17 March was meant as an opportunity to stand down the battalion for a day to recognize not only the numbered day of our battalion but highlight the many accomplishments of this battalion over the last 163 days and there have been many. My congratulation goes to Alpha Company as the overall battalion winner but Echo and Delta as well in the individual sport categories. There were a couple of mean games in whiffle ball and football to say the least.

Our next recognition day will be 3 May. The 3rd of May was when the 1-63rd Armor Regiment was formed in 1945. Originally, we were the 745th Tank Battalion later designated 1-63 AR. Much like 1-63 DAY we will take the opportunity to recognize some deserving soldiers and spend some time with our friends and comrades remembering those that came before us.

As we move toward April our focus remains ISF development and improving the essential services in the area. You all have done some tremendous work in this area and the citizens of Mahmudiyah appreciate it. From school renovation to improving agriculture capability these small accomplishments add up to huge improvements in the Qada. These endeavors along with improving the proficiency of the ISF have led to more independent operations and the IA better able to provide security to the cities and rural areas in the Qada.

I cannot thank our families and Rear Detachment enough. I appreciate everything you are doing to support your Soldier and our Units. I thank you so much.

Dragon 6.

“Dragons!”



Teaching the way of The Demon

Story and Photos by Sgt. Joshua Risner MND-B PAO

The M1A1 Abrams tank is one of the newest additions to the Iraqi Army's arsenal. U.S. Army armor Soldiers and contracted civilians are assisting the 9th IA Division with getting their armored crewmen trained on the new equipment at Forward Operating Base Hammer.

Soldiers with Company D "Demons," 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, facilitated the training, according to 1st Lt. Michael Pesano, a platoon leader with Co. D. "We're here basically to help with mentoring the Iraqis, with maintenance and with understanding of how a tank platoon is supposed to run on a day-to-day basis," he said.

While it is the contracted civilians' job to teach the Iraqis how the Abrams works, it fell on Demon Company to teach them how an Abrams crew operates, Pesano explained. "We start with the Iraqi leadership: the lieutenants; the captains... we try to get them to understand the American style of tanking, as opposed to the old Soviet style of tanking," the native of Springfield, Va. said. "It's not just one individual commanding everything, it's a team effort. We're trying to instill that in them. Everyone has to work together."

Basic operations in an Abrams tank contain a few major differences from the Soviet T-72 battle tank that the Iraqis are used to, according to Sgt. 1st Class John Hise, from Tishomingo, Okla., master gunner, 3rd Bn., 16th Cav. Regt. "In a T-72, you have a three-man crew: a driver, a gunner,

and a tank commander," he said. "An Abrams has a four-man crew, the addition being a physical loader, while the T-72 has an automatic loader. It takes them a little while to get used to that."

In addition to a four-man crew, a major hurdle for Iraqi tankers is abandoning previous concepts of how a tank crew operates. "In the days of the old Iraqi Army, if you were a driver, you could spend 20 years as a driver and never do anything else," said Hise. "We're teaching them how to be a tank crewman: you know every job in the tank and you can do every job if need be."

At first, the Iraqis were resistant to these new ways of training and the Abrams itself, but they changed their way of thinking as the training progressed, Hise added. "They thought the T-72 was a manly tank and the Abrams, not so much," he quipped. "But once they got in it, started working with it and saw the accuracy of the Abrams, they loved it."

Maintenance of the tanks used for training is a task that 2-8 Cav. Soldiers take on every day. They are required to move the tanks to and from the training site, provide any repairs needed and assist the Iraqis with their understanding of the maintenance process, Pesano said. "The Iraqis do have a maintenance class and we're working with them to show them how to actually do these tasks but this course is so condensed that they don't have very much time to get into all the details and aspects of it," he explained. "That's why we're

◀ *Staff Sgt. Norbert Ferrell, Company D, 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, explains the finer aspects of an M1A1 Abrams tank to Iraqi Army Soldiers with the 9th IA Division at Forward Operating Base Hammer.*

▼ *Colorado Springs, Colo. native Spc. Enrico Arroyo, Company D, 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, demonstrates the use of handheld lights for nighttime hand and arm signals to Iraqi Soldiers at Forward Operating Base Hammer.*



out here every day so they can ask questions and we can provide those answers.”

So far, one class of Iraqi tankers has graduated the course, with another class underway. The first set of graduates are now going through the training again, this time learning to be instructors so they can eventually teach the class themselves without the aid of U.S. troops and contractors, Pesano said. “Since they’re taking the M1A1 battle tank, it’s important that they take a new doctrine with it,” he said.

The M1A1 tank is a valuable asset in the Iraqi Army’s battle against insurgency and in its security operations. With proper training and a little help from Demon 2-8, the IA will have troops that can effectively use the Abrams to the full extent of its capabilities, as well as instructors who can teach future Iraqi Army tankers.

STALLION 6



Lt. Col. Mark Solomons

Congratulations, troopers of the 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment on your successful transition to a new mission and a new home. We have assumed a highly visible and a vital mission in Iraq; a mission that will set conditions for the enduring success of the Iraqi Government. The Stallion Battalion is the right unit for this mission and I have the utmost confidence we will succeed. Our new mission is diverse, dynamic, and challenging. We will succeed because of the high standards to which you hold yourselves; because of the pride you take in the performance of your duties, and because of the loyalty you have to your unit. You are outstanding Soldiers, Non-Commissioned Officers, and Officers that make up the Stallion Team!

As your commander, I want to make sure you know that although the enemy is disrupted, they are still present and evolving. We, along with our Iraqi Security Forces Partners, will take nothing for granted when it comes to the security of Iraq and its people. The lives of the Iraqi people are improving every day because of you. You are living history in Iraq right now. Each of us was here when the Security Agreement between the United States and Iraq was implemented. This was a major step on our road to a final victory in Operation Iraqi Freedom and the Global War on Terrorism. With this transition comes the need to change our mindset and TTPs. We are now guests of the Iraqi people, here to help the Iraqi Security Forces provide security to the Iraqi population. I told you when we deployed; we were embarking on a mission of historic measure. Live the legend and continue to be the professional, disciplined soldiers that I am proud of. Well done.

Stallion 6

Honor and Courage

2ND SQUADRON, 8TH CAVALRY REGIMENT



▲ *Spc. George Lemay of Bamberg, S.C. welding joints on a special mount to use for a Mine Resistant Ambushed Protected Vehicles (MRAP). He is a member of Golf Company, 1st Battalion, 7th Field Artillery.*

HEAVY METAL IDEAS

Golf Company vehicle maintainers of the 1st Battalion, 7th Field Artillery Regiment, may hold such job titles as wheeled vehicle mechanic, track mechanic, or welder, but inside the maintenance bays at Forward Operating Base Prosperity, Baghdad, it's their unrestrained creativity that would be the envy of automotive corporate boardrooms striving to better support their customers.

While the Soldiers don't carry laptops to a meeting on a daily basis, they do huddle around a workbench, tools in hand, to come up with solutions to improve the functionality and operational life of equipment inside a war zone. When they aren't wrenching on HUMVEES or on the massive Mine

Resistant Ambushed Protected Vehicles (MRAP) to keep them on the road, it's their vehicle customizations that keep these maintenance Soldiers busy.

Sgt. 1st Class Samuel Homier, a native of Enia, Ok., and the noncommissioned officer in charge (NCOIC) of quality control and assurance, said the baseline of creativity in the shop begins with adhering to proper safety guidelines. From there the creativity boils down to reliability and usability for any product manufactured at a location affectionately called "The Factory."

"What we do is encourage all the Soldiers to take part in giving their input into an idea. For example if a customer has

a need and my Soldier has an idea, we will all discuss them with the customer. Then draw it up with pencil and paper. We'll talk about it to see if anyone else has a better idea. Then we all make recommendations how to make it better by making it stronger or even simpler," Homier said.

"From there we will take the drawings and mock one up and continue to improve on that. From idea to implementation, there maybe 20 different changes before we get it where it needs to be. But everybody comes up with a little bit of something to make it work," he added

Not only do the Soldiers support Task Force First Lightning, they also support a Marine element and National Police Training Teams operating from FOB Prosperity. One unique project the shop took on earlier this year was the development of an ammo storage container for a Marine Corps MRAP. When the team surveyed the MRAP, they spotted empty space inside the vehicle that was perfect for the ammo container that holds six ammo cans.

Spc. George Lemay, of Bamberg, S.C., and who was part of that development team, welded together each of the 57 pieces of metal to make that idea work. "Right now somewhere in Iraq is an MRAPs with a one of a kind unit, that no longer requires ammo to be lashed down, but stored with easy access," he said.

A program now underway at the shop as a result of new requirements for MRAPs is the installation of wire guides on MRAPs. Again from idea to production using a variation of welding metal to build mounting plates, PVC pipes and radiator hose clamps, a system was developed that has a two-fold purpose. First, protect the gunner from low hanging power lines so prevalent in Iraq and second to prevent those same lines from being cut by the vehicles as patrols maneuver through the various neighborhoods of Iraq.

"It's a system that works and a win-win situation for us and the Iraqis since the gunner is safer and the locals will not lose their electrical power. It also pushes aside most tree branches too," Lemay said.

So far more than 50 vehicles have received the bolt on components for the wire guide system. Homier said instead of just installing wire guides to the vehicle's hull and jeopardize structural integrity; the team looked for areas to bolt on the system.

Since Golf Company Soldiers arrival at the FOB, they have also built a hazardous material storage shed that is in compliance with U.S. Environmental Protection Agency hazardous material storage standards. At the same time, the area known as the Shed, allows for easy access for moving 55-gallon drums in and out of the structure.

Homier said while the Soldiers have various military occupational specialties, they are all encouraged to watch and learn each other's jobs, as time permits. Spc. Marc Kornhader, a mechanic originally from Jersey City, N.J., uses his time to take instruction from Lemay on the finer art of welding. As a result of the training, Kornhader assists Lemay on the wire guide installation program – a program that has other vehicle maintainers in the theater coming to see first-hand how the Golf Company Soldiers build the system.

"This is an incredible skill to learn while I'm here. I know if I get good at this here, there is an incredible need for welders in the Army and in the civilian world," Kornhader said.

Homier said the Soldiers have much to offer. "Everybody comes up with a little bit with their ideas, but together we shine and polish the idea to success."

LIGHTNING 6



Lt. Col. Robert Bailes

FIRST LIGHTNING!

Task Force First Lightning Soldiers continue to be "in the Zone" keeping the Green Zone safe and secure. Along with our Iraqi Army partners we are protecting this vital hub of Iraqi Government which is allowing improved security across the country. None of this would be happening without the incredible effort that each of you puts forth every day.

Securing the GZ is just one of the numerous tasks this task force is accomplishing on a daily basis. Our Soldiers patrol the streets of Baghdad, escort convoys through the city and provide indirect fire and radar coverage for MNB-B. The incredible diversity of our mission is sometimes hard to grasp or appreciate. But the Command Sergeant Major and I want you to know how much we do appreciate what you are doing to make us successful. We are accomplishing the mission and looking out for one another and those are keys to a successful deployment.

We've surpassed the mid-way point of our deployment. CSM Hunt and I could not be prouder of the work this task force has done, but we know we have much more to do -- and we have to do it in the heat of an Iraqi summer! It's imperative we all remain mission focused and ensure we hydrate, eat right and maintain our personal hygiene as the temperatures rise. Keep up the great work and continue your commitment to excellence.

First Lightning!

Lightning 6

"Never Broken by Hardship or Battle."

1ST BATTALION, 7TH FIELD ARTILLERY REGIMENT



IMPROVING

* FUNDED BY THE

Story by Sta

◀ *Medical staff, patients and Iraqi Security Forces members traverse through the Yarmouk Hospital in northwest Baghdad. Iraqi medical experts and doctors met with medical staff with the 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division Photo by Sgt. Dustin Roberts, 2nd HBCT PAO, 1st Inf. Div.*

▶ *Capt. Kenneth Johnson, from Fort Riley, Kan., a brigade surgeon assigned to the Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, shows a portable ultrasound machine during an interview with members of the Iraq media April 2 at the Yarmouk Hospital in northwest Baghdad. Johnson said that the machine is the future of medical world during a conference with Iraqi doctors and medical experts at the Yarmouk Hospital. Photo by Sgt. Dustin Roberts, 2nd HBCT PAO, 1st Inf. Div.*



◀ *Capt. Kenneth Johnson, from Fort Riley, Kan., a brigade surgeon assigned to the Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, explains to students and physicians at Yarmouk Hospital, the second largest hospital in Iraq how an ultrasound can be used with trauma patients. According to Johnson, medical conferences like the one held here April 2, will continue. Photo by Staff Sgt. Peter Ford, MND-B PAO*

ING HEALTHCARE

IRAQI MINISTRY OF HEALTH

Staff Sgt. Peter Ford MND-B PAO

Yarmouk Hospital, Iraq's second largest hospital, has made many new upgrades to its facility within the last few years according to two local doctors. The burn center was reconstructed, a new emergency center was built and a new three-story burn center will be built within the next few years.

"The good thing about all this new construction is, it is being done without U.S. tax dollars," said Capt. Kenneth Johnson, from Fort Riley, Kan., a brigade surgeon, assigned to the Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division. "Stimulated by the Coalition force, the ministry of health has organized, made a budget and developed a strategy to make these changes in its facilities," he added.

Because the conditions in Iraq are improving and the ministry of health is beginning to take on more of a financial burden, the CF can assist the country in other ways such as helping to train the physicians of Iraq.

"One way to help the Iraq Ministry of Health make a better transition is with academic conferences," Johnson said.

"Today is the first of many academic conferences that will be held in Iraq and it is a great honor for me to be a part of the re-development of the health system here," said Johnson. "These conferences will assist the physicians to regain one of the most important elements of academic sciences that have been missing in Iraqi medicine over the past decade under Saddam's regime."

The academic conference at the Yarmouk Hospital, April 2, is one way to continue to help educate medical students and enhance the medical treatment of the Iraqi people, Johnson added.

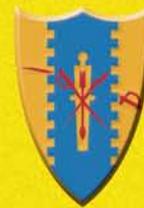
"The conference gives physicians a forum to talk about the most recent advances in medicine, scientific research and studies," Johnson continued. "It also provides an opportunity for local health care providers and small clinics to come to the hospital and connect with [their] hospital counterparts in a centralized conference."

According to an Iraqi doctor who works at the hospital, the conferences will greatly benefit the Iraqi people. Doctors can come from small communities all over Iraq and take the knowledge gained and new technology obtained during the conferences to improve the treatment for their patients.

A colleague of the Iraqi doctor added that the conferences can enhance preventive medicine measures. This week the ministry of health will provide immunizations to many of the poor people of Iraq.

Inspired by the CF, the Iraqi Ministry of Health has taken great strides toward becoming more independent by taking over the financial burden of improving its health system. This is a huge step for the ministry of health helping Iraq to become more self-sufficient.

LONG KNIFE 6



Lt. Col. John B. Richardson IV

Long Knife Troopers, we recently passed the halfway mark of our deployment. I cannot be more proud of how you have performed. The CSM and I are confident in your abilities to adapt and win in an ever changing combat environment. You are adapting faster than the enemy and as a result you have achieved a decisive advantage on him...you are inside his decision making cycle. He is reacting to you and no longer has the initiative.

In doctrinal terms we have transitioned to a pursuit. We have penetrated the enemy lines and exploiting the success of that penetration by pursuing him relentlessly. And when I say "we" I mean us and our ISF partners. You have been great mentors to the ISF and they are now running with the ball full speed ahead. Continue to be good advisors to your Iraqi brethren; at this point in the battle final destruction of the remnants can only be achieved by the indigenous forces who know the terrain, both physical and human, better than we can and in a way that only they can understand. Continue to train and enable them to stay on the pursuit.

Despite the enemy's ever evolving TTP of RKG-3 attacks, you have changed your own TTPs to confront him. The RKG-3 cells fear you, they see you hunting them and they dare not confront you on the battlefield for fear of their personal destruction. That being said, the enemy will recruit new fighters unaware of the dangers of challenging the Long Knife patrols and will soon re-emerge and try to ambush you. I urge you to continue your vigilance.

Your discipline and attention to detail in even the most monotonous of tasks has been the cornerstone of your continued safety and you are winning the war against complacency. Hold yourself and others to the STANDARDS that allow you to remain safe, that help you in maintaining yourself and your equipment, and ensures the reputation of your Troop and the Squadron is maintained as one that is known for its discipline and professionalism.

Lastly, I encourage you to keep up the good fight. Don't let your guard down. We have come far and we've got the enemy on the run. Continue to be the hunter and not the hunted. Prepared and Loyal.

LongKnife 6.

"Prepared and Loyal!"

5TH SQUADRON, 4TH CAVALRY REGIMENT



▲ *Spc Ronald Taylor, a Chicago, Il, an X-ray technician and 1LT Dwain Settles, San Antonio, TX., Executive Officer, who both serve with Company C, 299th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, carry a casualty from a field ambulance into the trauma room. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Milasent Jacobs, 299th BSB)*

Riva Ridge Ready

Lifeline trauma teams prepare for wounded

Story by Sgt. John McAdoo, 299th BSB, 2HBCT

Medical Soldiers assigned to Riva Ridge Troop Medical Clinic on Camp Liberty provide 24-hour trauma team coverage. Medics who are assigned to the 299th Brigade Support Battalion, 2HBCT, 1st Infantry Div. and 56th HBCT of the Pennsylvania National Guard work alongside each other to ensure that all trauma patients are given the highest quality of care.

The trauma teams are used whenever a ground CASEVAC of a battle casualty or a non-battle injury happens on the FOB and involves the potential loss of life, limb, or eyesight. Typically composed of two to four medics and one Army Doctor or Physician's Assistant, the trauma team will change depending on the number of

patients that arrive at once. When a Mass Casualty Event occurs; a call for all medics and combat lifesavers goes out to the surrounding units. Within seven minutes, there can be over 60 medical personnel ready to receive patients.

The teams are then augmented by the specialty medical Soldiers with x-ray, laboratory, pharmacy and patient administration capabilities. Each providing a life-saving service, they work alongside the trauma teams to give the medical providers the best possible chance to stabilize and evacuate the patient to a higher level of medical care. From the time a patient enters the door, Riva Ridge averages 15 minutes to assess, stabilize, and evacuate its trauma patients.

Each medic is assigned a role before they start their TMC shift; Airway, Wound care, IV/Circulation, and Vital Signs. When a trauma enters the TMC, the trauma team automatically moves into their assigned roles.

“Once the adrenaline kicks in, your assigned role just seems natural,” said Spc. Marycherylyn McNulty of Fort Riley, Kan. “You stay in your lane, so you don’t get overwhelmed.” No individual can claim they are more vital than another; a trauma team will only be successful if all the members are working together.

McNulty explained that the TMC trains whenever they are not busy.

“From MASCAL exercises and IV drills, to continuing educational classes taught by the providers, we are always doing something to increase our medical readiness.”

McNulty and the other Soldiers that work at Riva Ridge are enthusiastic about their work.

“Saving someone’s life is pretty rewarding,” said McNulty. “Riva Ridge has a long standing of medical excellence, and the current Soldiers assigned there are ready for any challenge that might come.”



▲ Sgt Jason Lucas, a Bronx, NY, native who serves as a medic with Company C, 299th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, works to stop bleeding and dress wounds of a casualty at Riva Ridge Troop Medical Clinic. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Milasent Jacobs, 299th BSB)

Life Line 6



Lt. Col. Brian Tempest

Last month I talked about the great things the Soldiers of the LifeLine Battalion have accomplished in supporting the Dagger Brigade. This month I would like to talk about another mission the battalion is accomplishing here in Baghdad, the partnership with the 6th Iraqi Army (IA) Division logistical elements. This is a mission that all eight companies of the battalion, the four core company's and the four Forward Support Company's, are involved in.

The battalion has established two Logistical Training and Advisory Team (LTAT) cells and embedded them with the IA. This cell is my direct link in tracking the maintenance statuses of the IA Division and scheduling meetings with senior Iraqi officers. A second LTAT cell was formed with the 6th Motorized Transportation Regiment (MTR), which is tasked with providing transportation for the supplies requisitioned by the 6th IA Division. Both cells quickly built friendships with their Iraqi counterparts that have been vital in the success of the partnership.

To support these cells the companies have formed mobile training teams to conduct specific training for the Iraqi's. The battalion has conducted fuel, ammunition, drivers, maintenance and medical training. With every training session the knowledge is passed and the IA becomes better equipped to support their maneuver units. Soon a third LTAT cell will be established with the 6th IA Division level II maintenance facility to assist in the training of the direct support maintenance personnel.

The battalion's success with this partnership with the 6th IA has set the conditions for increasing the 6th IA in achieving their goal of becoming logistically self-sufficient. I am very proud of the Soldiers of 299th BSB with their professionalism in training the logisticians of the 6th IA.

Lifeline 6
“On Call to Serve.”

299TH BRIGADE SUPPORT BATTALION



COMMUNICATION EXPERTS

DUAL PARTNERSHIP KEEPS BRIGADE CONNECTED

Story and Photos by 1st Lt. Selina Tolonen BSTB, 2nd HBCT, 1ID

Communications Soldiers in Iraq have to constantly work closely with their counterparts to maintain the communication needs of their fellow Soldiers.

The Joint Network Node 7768 “Knights” Platoon of Company B, Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Heavy “Dagger” Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad is no different.

The “Knights” work hand in hand with the communications Soldiers serving with the 1st Combined Arms “Vanguards” Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, 2nd HBCT, headquartered at Forward Operating Base Justice, Iraq.

“The JNN [Platoon] provides the backbone for our network,” explained Baltimore, Md. native 1st Lt. William Lee, communications officer-in-charge, Vanguard Battalion. “The high capacity line of site and satellite channel a signal through the JNN to all the digital voice, data, and internet subscribers in the ‘Vanguard Nation.’”

Some of the duties the Vanguard communications section takes on include ensuring the re-imaging of computers, installation of software and external devices, functionality of e-mail accounts, and radio operations.

The JNN Platoon programs phones, allocates users and troubleshoots and maintains the network.

“All in all, we have our responsibilities and they have theirs,” said Spc. Jeremy Carroll, a native of Reno, Nev., the Local Area Network manager, for the Vanguards. “There are some things, such as conducting battalion and brigade radio checks and running and testing cable, which we do together.”

He said since a signal Soldier’s job never truly ends, it helps to work together with the fellow “Signaliers” in the JNN platoon to accomplish the communication mission on FOB Justice.

“They are an endless asset and help me exceed in my job to provide for our users in the best way possible.”

The reason the Vanguards has a JNN on site in the first place is for continuity purposes.

The 502nd Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), who was relieved by the Vanguards, “had installed a JNN at FOB Justice in order to have the proper amount of resources and bandwidth in place to provide communication support to the users,” said Maj. Patrick Wells, a native of Winston-Salem, N.C., communications officer-in-charge, 2HBCT. “We fell in on the same-size mission with 1-18.”

Wells said he enjoys a sense of confidence and reliability

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▲ *Soldiers from the 2nd Platoon “Knights” work as a team to troubleshoot one of the switches that enable the pathway for users to receive military phone and internet services at Forward Operating Base Justice*

◀ *Franklin, Ga. native, Pfc. Jason Huff, a signal support systems specialist, performs a radio check to Camp Liberty at Forward Operating Base Justice. The Soldiers constantly ensure communications equipment works properly throughout the brigade.*

in the teamwork executed by the JNN Platoon and the Vanguard communications shop that he would not have if one of the two elements were missing from the equation.

“Their professional and mission-oriented relationship makes my life easier at the brigade-level and ensures that I don’t have to worry about the communication mission in the ‘Vanguard Nation,’” he said. “I am very proud of their combined effort and teamwork.”

With six months of the deployment complete, the JNN Platoon and the Vanguard communications section continue to focus on executing a successful maintenance program, understanding the environment and system limitations, and keeping a pulse on the ever-evolving communication needs of users.

“Complacency kills; we must constantly work together and remind ourselves of the scope and end-state of our mission because what we do affects the war fighters outside the wire,” said Sgt. Michael Cannon, a native of Garland, Texas, high capacity line of sight team chief.

The Vanguard communications section and the JNN Platoon will continue to push forward one day at a time with their assigned communications mission until redeployment to Fort Riley, Kan. in the fall of this year.

GRIFFIN 6



Col. David Imhof

Griffins, as we hit the halfway point in our deployment, I want to say how extremely proud I am to be a part of this terrific team of Soldiers in the Griffin battalion. Every day, you continue to build on the historic legacy of the great Big Red One Soldiers that preceded you in combat as far back as World War I.

Halfway does not mean halftime! Halfway is a time to build upon the momentum of all the great accomplishments to date. We will continue this momentum by building upon our terrific partnership with the 6th IA Engineer Regiment and doing the right thing every day which includes kicking complacency in the 4th point of contact.

Every Soldier makes adjustments to individual and team TTPs on a daily basis. As we hit the halfway mark, I would ask every Soldier and “Griffin” team to take a focused look back on what worked well and areas where we can improve on how we conduct combat operations. Everyone is an important member of the team and has insights on how to make the team better. Leaders need to listen and apply the necessary adjustments to their individual and team TTPs.

With that said, there is one thing that needs no adjustment--disciplined Griffin Soldiers adhering to the Cav Big 8, which parallel the basics of blocking and tackling in football that, when done well, will make a unit successful. Griffin Soldiers are doing a fantastic job of following the guiding principles contained in the Cav Big 8 which allows them to continue setting the standard and makes them successful in their daily missions.

I know every Family is making tremendous sacrifices in support of their Soldier. To every Griffin Soldier and Family Member, Thank You for your outstanding efforts and continued support—every member of the Griffin Team makes this battalion a great unit.

Griffin 6

“Griffins! Point of the Dagger!”

2-1 BRIGADE SPECIAL TROOPS BATTALION

POWERING UP IRAQ

Story by Sgt. Brian Tierce 2nd HBCT-112 PAO. Photos by Sgt. Philip Schratwieser, 2nd Bn., 112 Inf. Regt

Not long after arriving in Iraq and settling into their battle space, the Soldiers of the 2nd “Paxton” Battalion, 112th Infantry Regiment, attached to the 2nd Heavy “Dagger” Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division Multi National Division – Baghdad picked up where their predecessors left off with numerous projects aimed at improving the quality of life for the citizens of the Abu Ghraib district west of Baghdad.

One such project aimed at improving the dependability of electricity for the residents of the Agurquf area was recently completed, giving Iraqi and Dagger Brigade leaders the chance to celebrate the event at the Abu Ghraib Power Station on March 8.

“Today is the culmination of months of work to improve the electrical grid here in Abu Ghraib,” said Lt. Col. Samuel Hayes, commander, 2-112 Inf. Regt. “This was made possible by the partnership between Iraqi and Coalition forces working to improve the power across the Qada.”

The ability to provide better basic services has been heightened by the increased security in the region. With a greater focus on providing for the people of Abu Ghraib

a number of parties got involved in the power project and brought the line back to life.

“Under the leadership of Ghalib Bakir Mohammed, director general, Iraqi Ministry of Electricity, the people of Abu Ghraib Qada have a new 33 volt feeder line, which connects new and refurbished sub stations in Vabon and Agurquf,” said Capt. Jackie Manton, 225th Engineer Brigade, MND-B. “This project will provide better, more reliable power to the people of Abu Ghraib.”

The 225th Eng. Brigade works as project managers in direct support of Dagger Brigade initiatives aimed at improving the infrastructure in the Dagger operational area.

The improvements to the power grid are one of many projects under way west of Baghdad as the Dagger Brigade and its subordinate units in the west aim to improve all aspects of life in their recently acquired battle space.

For the Soldiers of the Paxton Battalion the opportunity to help improve the lives of Iraqis is not going unnoticed.

“Any time you can improve the quality of life through improvements in electricity, water, sewage and other essential services, everyday life improves for the local citizens,” said

Capt. Jackie Manton, 225th Engineer Brigade, speaks to members of the crowd gathered to celebrate the opening of a new feeder line, which provides power to the Agurquf area in the Abu Ghraib district.



Hayes. "When you have something like this happen it is a big day; electricity is something we all come to depend on."

Over the course of the next month the Abu Ghraib district will see the opening of more than three schools along with a playground and improvements to the area market.

The improvements highlight the increased ability of the Iraqi Security Forces in the area and give the Soldiers of 2-112 Inf. Regt., a tangible view of the quality of life improvements they are a part of.

"We have facilitated an improvement in the daily life of the average Iraqi," said Hayes. "To me that is a big deal and I know my Soldiers share that same sense of accomplishment and pride."



▲ *Iraqi Leaders from the Ministry of Electricity cut the ceremonial ribbon to signify the opening of a new 33-volt feeder line providing power to the citizens of Agurquf in the Abu Ghraib district. The joint project will provide more reliable power with greater redundancy in reducing the chance of power failure from overloading to the people of Agurquf.*

▼ *Lt. Col. Christopher Beckert (left), deputy commanding officer, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, speaks with Lt. Col. Yasser of the 24th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division prior to the ribbon cutting ceremony.*



Lt. Col. Samuel Hayes

PAXTON RANGERS, our work here in greater Abu Ghraib is characterized by our raw determination, selfless service, and tireless devotion to duty. We are enablers of democracy at home and here in Iraq. With each passing day, STRYKER TASK FORCE PAXTON facilitates increased security finding large numbers of enemy caches, IED's, and conducting the gathering of intelligence on the criminals and terrorists that want to bring harm to the people of Iraq. Our team makes a difference every day bringing the people of Abu Ghraib, Nasir Wa Salam and outlying areas closer to the end state that everyone wants, normalcy. Children can go to school without fear of violence, parents can go provide for their families without having to worry about an IED along their way to work, and the leadership of the qada is not stifled by the dark cloud of intimidation.

Our efforts today will have an enduring effect on generations of Iraqis. Our legacy in Abu Ghraib will be effective security, improved quality of life, and the strong sense of community among the people of Abu Ghraib. While our legacy promises to be significant, it will have been accomplished without ceremony or fanfare. Quietly we have helped facilitate better schools, more reliable power, improved drinking water, economic opportunity, modernized healthcare, and more responsive government.

Now that we are through the beginning stages of our deployment and have made some great achievements, we all have to remember to uphold our standards and stay focused on the task. We cannot become complacent, and we cannot let our guard down. This battalion will continue to be successful as long as we continue to take care of each other, whether that is outside the wire, or back on the FOB. Our mission to provide security for the Iraqi people will not change and we will continue to be vigilant against those who want to bring harm against the Iraqi people. Every PAXTON RANGER motivates me as I am impressed daily by your positive attitudes, commitment to excellence, and CAN DO spirit. Keep up the hard work and thanks again to you and your families for everything you do for our great country.

Paxton 6

"Quick, Silent, Deadly."

2ND BATTALION, 112TH INFANTRY REGIMENT

44 Years of Service

Top Dagger advisor retires

Story and photo by Sgt. Dustin Roberts, 2nd HBCT PAO

Before joining the U.S. Army in 1965, Ambassador John Bennett knew he wanted to serve his country.

After leaving the Army in 1969 he realized he wanted to serve the world.

Bennett, who lives with his wife of 43 years, Nickie, in Springfield, Va. and Belfair, Wash. when he is not living in a foreign country, retired at the end of April.

Bennett served the people of northwest Baghdad for a little over two years with three brigade combat teams.

Since October 2008 Bennett served as the leader of the embedded Provisional Reconstruction Team and top political advisor of the 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team “Dagger,” 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, which operates in partnership with Iraqi Security Forces in northwest Baghdad.

Since April 2007 Bennett has helped plan and oversee numerous essential service projects, which have provided and continue to provide a higher quality of living for the people.

“[Iraq is heading toward] the front of essential services, where services were at a virtual stand-still,” said Bennett. “With security came essential services and the continuation of public education.”

Bennett said the ISF and Coalition Forces in northwest Baghdad have helped the area immensely, as not one year ago that part of the city was active with insurgent violence.

On June 17, 2007 a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device killed over 60 people in the Hurriyah neighborhood of the Kadamiyah district; Bennett recalled a sight he will remember for the rest of his life.

“One woman was frantic; obviously searching for relatives. She would run from person to person pleading for her family,” he said. “The next day we were also there and the woman was still shell-shocked as she walked across the devastating neighborhood;



▲ Ambassador John Bennett (right), a native of Belfair, Wash., embedded Provisional Reconstruction Team leader, 2nd HBCT, speaks with Brig. Gen. Frederick Rudesheim, Deputy Commanding General (Support) during a walk-through in the Shulla neighborhood of northwest Baghdad March 2. Bennett, who joined the U.S. State Department in 1971, over watched several essential service projects in northwest Baghdad since 2007.

that was heart rendering.”

He said a couple of weeks later they revisited the blast site and on one of the nearby balconies he saw a female doctor hanging up a sign reading she was back open for the business.

“That sign was a sign of renewal,” he said. “That same neighborhood today is an area where you can walk around and enjoy. It is very difficult to see the devastation you saw almost a year ago.”

After 44 years of serving people across the world, even as the U.S. Ambassador at Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, Bennett said he is going to travel and do what he likes to do best.

“I’m going to be a big-game oyster hunter,” he said. “I’ll capture oysters early in the morning and have them for breakfast.”

May is...

Asian-Pacific Heritage Month



Come join the Fun!

Fun Run: 16 MAY 09
N. side Z-Lake 0700 Start

LUAU: 22 MAY 09
MWR Field House 1900-2100

Movie Night: Every Friday Night at
Pegasus Oasis DFAC

•Luau will include a Polynesian Dance put on by MND-B's very own Soldiers and the Filipinos Dance Group; food sampling will also be available.

Preventing heat injuries

By Thomas McMurray, 2nd HBCT Safety officer

As the temperature begins to climb, so does the need for Heat Prevention training. Heat injuries are the greatest single medical threat to Soldiers in the Iraqi area of operations during the summer months, however most heat injuries are preventable. Heat injury usually results when the body fluids are lost through sweating faster than they can be replenished by drinking water. Leaders must identify heat injury hazards and take appropriate action to reduce or eliminate them.



There are three variables that interact to cause heat injuries:

1. **Climate** (high temperature, high humidity, and low wind velocity)
2. **Intensity and duration of physical exertion**
3. **Increased individual risk factors**
 - A. **Lack of acclimatization**
 - B. **Salt depletion**
 - C. **Poor hydration**
 - D. **Poor physical fitness**
 - E. **Excessive body fat**
 - F. **Skin disorders that prevent cooling through sweating/convection**
 - G. **Inflammation and fever, gastroenteritis**
 - H. **Age > 40**
 - I. **History of previous heat related injury**



Leaders and Soldiers must be educated and trained to protect themselves from the adverse effects of heat related injuries. Specifically, prevention of heat injury involves education and progressive training.

Leaders, remember these actions

EDUCATE, TRAIN, ENFORCE, MONITOR,
ASSESS, COMMUNICATE!

DoD issues new GI Bill family transfer rules

Defense and service officials have settled on final rules that will allow career service members to share Post-9/11 GI Bill education benefits with their immediate families beginning Aug. 1.

In general, service members — officer, warrant officer or enlisted personnel — must be on active duty Aug. 1 and must have completed a minimum of six years of service, with a commitment to serve four more, in order to share their new Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits.

For most students, the benefits will cover full tuition and fees at any four-year public college or university at in-state tuition rates for undergraduate studies.

Defense officials expect to begin accepting requests to transfer benefits in June. But payments could not begin before Aug. 1, the start date of the new GI bill program. Special rules have been approved for people who are eligible to retire before Aug. 1, 2012, or who have at least 10 years of service and are prevented by high-year tenure, mandatory retirement or other personnel rules or laws from completing the four years of additional service needed to earn transfer rights.

The special rules are needed so that retirement-eligible service members who suddenly find themselves with a new benefit don't clog up the ranks by delaying retirement, and so that service members do not lose transfer rights because of policies outside their immediate control. Technically, the rules are not quite final; discussion is ongoing on a procedural matter about how to release the final regulations. But defense and service officials fully agree on details for what is expected to become one of the most popular military recruiting and retention benefits, said Bob Clark, the Defense Department's assistant accession policy director and the chief official working on the new benefits plan.

Clark said being able to share education benefits "is one of the most requested benefits we have heard about from the field and fleet for the last several years." He predicted that the ability to transfer Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits to a spouse or children will have a "very positive impact" on recruiting and retention.

Benefits can be shared with a spouse, one child or several children, as long as those receiving the benefits are enrolled in the military's Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System at the time a member transfers benefits.

Service members can transfer any or all of their unused benefits, up to the maximum of 36 months of

Story courtesy of Army Times

benefits. Changes in the sharing arrangement among family members can be made only once a month.

Basic eligibility rules require a member to have at least six years of service and make a new commitment for another four to transfer benefits. A spouse can begin using transferred benefits before the additional four years are served, but children may not use benefits until a service member has completed at least 10 years of service.

A service member with 10 years of service who is prevented by defense or service policy or law from serving an additional four years could still share benefits under one of the special rules that would apply to officers twice passed over for promotion and enlisted members facing high-year tenure or other standards.

They could transfer benefits if they agree to serve the maximum additional time they are allowed to remain in the service.



A lot has changed in the G.I. Bill since President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed it in 1944. (Photo from TIME)

end frame...



THE DOGGER EDGE