

# THE DAGGER EDGE

July 2009: Volume 2, Issue 6

## ISF in control

Security Forces take lead in NW Baghdad



**Dagger continues partnered projects  
A better future for Zoba Village  
New clinic for disabled**



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◀ *On the cover: Iraqi Soldiers serving with the 6th Iraqi Army Division stand in formation during the changeover of Joint Security Station Hurriyah II in Kadamiyah June 9. (Photo by Sgt. Dustin Roberts, 2nd HBCT PAO)*



▶ *On the back: Sgt. Jason Powell, a native of Fort Lauderdale, Fla., assigned to a personal security detachment with the 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, helps secure the surrounding area of the Nasir Wa Salam Fire Station in Abu Ghraib June 11. (Photo by Sgt. Dustin Roberts, 2nd HBCT PAO)*

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

**July 2009: Vol. 2, Issue 6**

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# DAGGER SIX

2HBCT COMMANDER  
COLONEL JOSEPH M. MARTIN



## Renewed sense of purpose



▲ Col. Joseph Martin (right), commander, 2nd HBCT, hands a ceremonial key to Samir Haddad of the Iraqi Prime Minister's office at the transfer ceremony of Joint Security Station Hurriyah II June 9. (Photo by Sgt Dustin Roberts, 2nd HBCT PAO)

Fellow DAGGERS, our brigade is present for yet another historic milestone in Iraqi and American Military history! Through your hard work and persistent efforts at being “Polite, Professional, and Prepared to Kill—Ready Now!”, the conditions are set for executing Article 24 of the Security Agreement, “Departure from the Cities and Locales”, by Coalition Forces. In particular, 1-18 IN (Vanguards) and 5-4 CAV (Longknife) are uniquely aware of these transitions, as they re-position and adjust their footprints to fully partner with their respective IA Brigade partners. The Brigade TOC has jumped to Muthana and is forward with our partners, the 6th IA Division. The Daggers are consistently leading change in Baghdad, and it is a point of tremendous pride for me as Dagger 6 to see that true professionals handle change while in contact with the enemy—and this brigade is no exception.

The 6th Iraqi Army Division Commander will set the tone for operations in the Dagger OE. We will conduct missions that directly complement and comply with his intent, and focus on ensuring that we all establish the conditions for successful security of the populations in Northwest Baghdad and the Abu Ghraib Qada. This is a landmark milestone, similar to when the 1st Infantry Division alongside British, Free French, Canadian, Irish,

and other forces in World War II in North Africa, then Sicily, and finally across Normandy's beaches into the heartland of Nazi-occupied Germany. We have unified our efforts yet again with an ally, this time on their own soil, to stand against the oppression of freedom-loving people seeking economic prosperity and tranquility here in Iraq. The Iraqi insurgency and the terrorists that support it will fail—and people will witness that you were there at some of the most historically significant decision points to further implement the national agreement for security in Iraq signed by the Prime Minister of Iraq and the President of the United States.

Like those brave Big Red One Soldiers who passed before us, and in whose footsteps we walk, we are at the last, most critical, and most dangerous time of the deployment. Within 100 days, we cross onto Kuwaiti soil to commence redeployment operations back to Fort Riley. The great Paxton Battalion will depart shortly before that, and the mighty Troopers of Honor and Courage will hold the line with the incoming brigade. Leaders, these are the times where you must fully enforce discipline and standards. It is the time that you most fully earn your extra pay! I expect each leader to gather their squad, section, platoon, or company together and look them in their eyes to explain my Command Messages regarding this historic transition to Iraqi control of the cities. I expect them to know how important this time is in their careers, their lives, and in the histories of their Regiments and the Dagger Brigade Combat Team. We have spent almost 9 months earning our great reputation in the City of Baghdad—but could lose it in one day with a lapse in the vigilance that has served us well to date. Our junior leadership must remain vigilant!

Continue your great efforts daily with the people of Iraq and their outstanding security forces. Be confident in your equipment and in your buddies. We are not just witnessing history—we are part of writing it, and the world is watching while you do it. I'm proud to be Dagger 6, and we are READY NOW!

COL. JOSEPH MARTIN

**Dagger 6**  
**“Ready Now!”**



## Beating the summer heat

Let me start by thanking the family members for their continued support and the great Fort Riley community for consistently taking the time out of their schedules to see what a difference the Soldiers of the Dagger Brigade are making her in Iraq.

Summer in Baghdad is now in full swing. I know we are over the halfway mark in our deployment but just remember our mission is not yet complete and we must continue to stress that to the lowest level.

As you look at the great success and strides our Iraqi partners have made, just reflect back to where this partnership was at about seven months ago. I know the summer months are usually a time for fun and relaxation; however, these are the critical times when all Soldiers must remain safety conscious and vigilant at all times. We will remain a discipline fighting force that remains safety focused and respectful of the people of Iraq. Remember the success of our Iraqi partners is our success as well. They are counting on us just as much as we should be counting on them for the safety and security of the Iraqi people.

I hope every Soldier had a chance or will have a chance to take leave and go home and recharge their batteries, return safely, and continue to make a difference. Everyone needs a break to ensure attitudes stay in check and that we are treating each other with dignity and respect as well. It is easy to get agitated as we continue to perform routine tasks on a daily basis and you are seeing the same people 24/7. In combat, it is particularly important that we know our Soldier's state of mind so we can help them deal with the demands of stress or any situations that may arise. However, let's remember that disrespecting fellow Soldiers or assaulting fellow Soldiers will disrupt any mission and create an unhealthy working environment

NCOs I charge you to take the lead on this in ensuring our Soldiers are taking advantage of R&R leave, returning to theater, getting reintegrated and back in the fight. You must provide purpose, direction and motivation every day. You are indeed the backbone our Army. If we allow our young Soldiers to become complacent, we the professional



▲ Command Sgt. Maj. Donald Battle, senior enlisted advisor, 2nd HBCT, at the transfer ceremony of Joint Security Station Khadra June 10. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Peter Ford, MND-B PAO)

NCO Corps have set our Soldiers up for failure.

July will be a crucial month for the Dagger brigade. The conditions are set for continued success. This will take an effort from every Soldier and I am confident we are up to the task. Maintain that Dagger Edge by doing the right thing when no one is watching. We must all continue to enforce standards and iron discipline. 🇺🇸

COMMAND SGT. MAJ. DONALD BATTLE

**Dagger 7**  
**"Nothing Further"**



## Don't give up the good fight

“But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.” -- Hebrews 10:39

What do you tell a group of people who are tired and facing the gnawing temptation to give up the good fight? You do what the author of Hebrews did to a group of people who had grown weary and lost focus on the final goal.

You tell them the truth! You give it to them straight without overlooking their current struggle, but you also re-clarify the hope in the final goal. You remind them of who they are as a people, because the “who” defines the “what” and “why” of their conduct: “But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith...”

We are not of those who shrink back. Who is the “we” he is referring to? It’s a group of Christians in which he includes himself, and he reminds them that they are not defined by shrinking back and faltering in their faith, but rather, they are defined by strength, perseverance, and steadfastness. This is what defines them as a group and it must then be evident in their conduct

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

– especially when things get difficult. In another part of his letter he addressed this theme when he wrote: “And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of

those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. --Hebrews 6:11,12.

What defines us as Soldiers of the United States Army? Recite any of the Army creeds and the clear definition of who we are, what we do, and how we conduct ourselves quickly rises to the top. This is who we are and it must be evident in our conduct. As the author of Hebrews stated, we must be imitators of those who so nobly served before us, never letting sluggishness hinder a service of excellence.

We are a defined group of Soldiers entering a very defining moment of our deployment – our final 100 days. It may still seem like a lot of time, but remember when we had 360 days left in the deployment? Let us be steadfast, immovable, never shrinking back, but full of faith, hope, and assurance until we are once again united with our families. We are Soldiers – it’s who we are and its what we do! 🇺🇸



▲ *Chaplain (Maj.) Peter Johnson is the senior spiritual leader in the Dagger Brigade.*

# Stitches:

Preventative medicine advice

## Beware of the Swine Flu!

By Capt. Kenneth Johnson, 2nd HBCT surgeon

The media has discovered yet another thing that can kill you. As if you aren't already busy enough worrying about preservatives, cholesterol, identity thieves, and the Illuminati, we're now being encouraged to panic about the dreaded "Swine Flu". Fortunately the threat is not all it's been made out to be. Here are some facts to review before you unpack your MOPP-4 gear.

First off, Swine Flu or "H1N1" is a viral illness. It is very closely related to "Influenza A", otherwise known as the common flu. It is spread like the flu. It has symptoms much like the flu, and it even tests positive on Influenza A laboratory tests. It does not affect pork products, and praise the Lord, we can still eat bacon.

So, what's the big deal? Why is the "Swine Flu" on every major television news network? The H1N1 virus is big news because it's a virus that managed to mutate in such a way that it was able to jump out of the pig population and produce disease in humans. If the flu can make the jump, then doctors and scientists need to be prepared for other infectious diseases to do the same. Nerds in white lab coats all over the world are excited to study how this happened and their research labs will ride the financial windfall of a sensational story.

But didn't a bunch of people

die? Yes and no. As of June 3, 2009 the CDC reports 11,054 cases of Swine Flu and 17 deaths in the United States. Compare this to the 36,000 patients who died from the seasonal flu last year and the scope of the problem begins to take on a new perspective.

That being said, you still don't want to get Swine Flu or any other flu. Rigorous attention to everyday health and hygiene can prevent you and your team from losing combat effectiveness.

Take these everyday steps to protect your team:



▲ Capt. Kenneth Johnson, 2nd HBCT surgeon, at the opening of the Dahkel clinic in Hurriyah June 17.

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze, and before every meal. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- Seek medical attention if you develop flu-like symptoms

The Swine Flu story packs a lot of hype, but don't flush it out of your brain completely. Take this opportunity to reassess your healthy habits, commit to being good about washing your hands, don't spread germs and stay sharp Daggers. 



◀ Solar lights are installed on a street in the Ghazaliyah neighborhood of northwest Baghdad, May 21. The solar-powered lights alleviate Iraqi's national power grid and keep market streets open later in the evening. (Photo by Sgt. Brian Tierce, 2nd HBCT PAO, 1st Inf. Div., MND-B)

## DAGGER CONTINUES PARTNERED PROJECTS

Story by Sgt. Dustin Roberts, 2nd HBCT PAO

When the 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team “Dagger,” 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division—Baghdad arrived in Iraq in October 2008, the brigade brought a vision of peace for the population of northwest Baghdad and Abu Ghraib.

The brigade’s first priority was to work with the Iraqi Security Forces to secure the population and provide safety and confidence to the people.

This enabled the next undertaking of planned and controlled projects intended to stimulate the local economy.

An embedded Provisional Reconstruction Team, a

group of military and civilian experts in governance, political science and economic development, guide the brigade leadership in a close partnership in joint efforts to repair schools, illuminate streets with the newest solar technology, build water treatment facilities and remove trash and sewage from neighborhoods.

“Our main mission here is to help improve the security situation in our assigned area of operations,” said Col. Joseph Martin, a native of Dearborn, Mich., commander, 2nd HBCT. “Along with direct security operations against former special group criminals, we are also working closely with our own ePRT to reduce violence in the area by executing civil capacity

improvement projects with our partners.”

Each project begins with a memorandum of agreement by the government of Iraq, approving of each partnered project. Officials ensure the lights meet GoI specifications and the main components of each light fixture have warranties for five to 20 years.

The projects alleviate the stress on the national power grid and keep markets open later in the evening due to increased security. Brigade officials estimate the lights have increased electricity availability by 57 percent. Civilians in northwest Baghdad now receive 10-14 hours of electricity every day.

“In the areas where the lights are installed there is increased economic growth because the shops stay open later,” said Lt. Col. Todd Auld, civil-military operations officer, 2nd HBCT. “People also feel safer to shop at night when it’s cooler because of well-lit areas.”

The brigade’s Commander Emergency Response Program, which helps fund civil capacity projects, has also relieved pressure from the national power grid.

There are 49 micro-generation projects that have completed or are being working on to provide

power to Baghdad.

The Dagger Brigade and its counterparts are working with the Baghdad Department of Public Works to remove sewage from Baghdad and Abu Ghraib’s streets in 11 projects. Sewer repair is a priority for Baghdad, as the antiqued Iraqi sewer system lacked maintenance in the past.

The brigade also focuses on micro-grants for small business, intended to aid entrepreneurs and establish their business to further benefit the Iraqi people and their economy.

“Applying for a grant is an extensive process, but worth it. The grants average \$2,500 to \$5,000,” said Auld. “The personnel who grant the money are required to thoroughly interview applicants and consistently conduct checks to ensure businesses are legitimate.”

With the security of the population first in mind, the Dagger Brigade continues to assist in Iraqi civil capacity.

“The people of Iraq are very important to us,” said Martin. “As security is maintained in the brigade’s operational environment, we will do our best to work with our Iraqi partners to make the lives of Iraqis better.”



▲ **Staff Sgt. Samuel Lorenz (left), a native of Mercer, Pa., 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, attached to the 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division—Baghdad, pays an Iraqi businessman money from a small business grant at the Zoba Village Reconciliation Day in Abu Ghraib, June 4. The purpose of the grants is to stimulate the local economy in the village. (Photo by Sgt. Dustin Roberts, 2nd HBCT PAO, 1st Inf. Div., MND-B)**



▲ **Maj. Andrew Attar, a native of Bristol, Conn., joint project management officer 2nd HBCT, inspects the newly installed solar panels on the roof of the Dahkel Clinic in the Hurriyah neighborhood of northwest Baghdad June 17. The panels will keep the clinic powered for up to 24 hours per-day. (Photo by Sgt. Dustin Roberts, 2nd HBCT PAO, 1st Inf. Div., MND-B)**

# DAGGER INVESTS IN VILLAGE'S FUTURE

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

**D**agger troopers set a milestone at the Zoba High School, June 4, during a ground breaking ceremony to improve the school for the betterment of the children and community of Zoba.

“The project is an investment in the young people of Zoba and all of Iraq,” said Maj. Jeffrey Schrick, a native of Fredrick, Okla., and commander of 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, which is currently attached to 2nd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division. “The young people here in Zoba and Iraq are the future of this nation,” he added.

The children will one day be the decision makers who will continue to help this nation grow. Because of the improved security and the Iraqi Security Agreement more projects can be made to improve rural areas, according to Schrick.

“The Coalition forces have been focused on the cities so far,” said Staff Sgt. Brian Kaufman, a Marcelous, N.Y. native and civil affairs team sergeant assigned to A Company, 403rd Civil Affairs Battalion. “Since the CF are moving out of the cities, we can spend more time making improvements in agriculture and rural areas like we are now making here in Zoba,” he added.

U.S. forces gave eight micro grants to local contractors to assist them in making improvements in the Zoba community. Micro grants provide assistance for projects that may not otherwise happen.

“A water pump station will be built to bring clean drinking water to the community and an irrigation project is also expected to be completed to help the farming communities, said Schrick. “We are also going to try and have the windows and electricity fixed at the Zoba High School before the next school session starts to give the kids a new beginning in a new school,” he added.

He said that the kids will learn better in a more modern environment and they will have an eagerness to learn in the classroom. When the children grow up, they will become the decision makers in Iraq.

The ground breaking investments ceremony in Zoba is a direct result of the improved security here in Iraq and the Iraqi Security Agreement. The Iraq Security Agreement states that all CF will be out of the cities of Iraq by the end of June, which will allow the CF to focus on the future of Iraq. Children are the best resource to make those investments that will have a lasting effect on the country. 



**▲** Pfc. Ross Zavoyna, an infantryman assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, gives a child a bag of food for his family after the ground breaking ceremony at the Zoba Village High School June 4.



▲ Staff Sgt. Brian Kaufman, a native of Marcelous, N.Y. and civil affairs team sergeant assigned to A Company, 403rd Civil Affairs Battalion gives a little girl a bag of food after the ground breaking ceremony at the Zoba Village High School, June 4. "The people here haven't really seen Coalition forces in over two years," said Kaufman.



▲ Sgt. 1st Class Fredrick Welch, a Montego, N.Y. native assigned to 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, gives a school girl a backpack at the ground breaking ceremony at the Zoba Village High School June 4.



▲ Capt. Jeremy Roy (right), a native of Indianapolis and commander of A Company, 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, gives a gift to the headmaster of the Zoba Village High School, June 4.

# HURRIYAH IN IRAQI CONTROL

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

U.S. forces under Multi-National Division—Baghdad handed over another joint security station to Iraqi Security Forces in a ceremony as the “out of the cities” date of June 30 draws near.

The 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment “Vanguard,” 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, handed over Joint Security Station Hurriyah II to the 1st Battalion, 22nd Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, June 9, in the Kadamiyah district of northwest Baghdad.

“This is yet another step the sovereign state of Iraq has taken to provide for the security of the people of Baghdad and the progress that has been achieved together with the Iraqi Security Forces,” said Col. Joseph Martin, a native of Dearborn, Mich., commander, 2nd HBCT. “Iraq is now enjoying irreversible momentum toward a peaceful and prosperous future.”

Since October, elements of the Vanguard Battalion lived and worked with the Iraqi Soldiers in a joint effort to help secure the population of Kadamiyah’s Hurriyah neighborhood.

As the security in Iraq improved, the two governments decided it was time for the ISF to take more responsibility.

“The Security Agreement set up clear guidelines for the Coalition forces in Iraq and in concert with Iraqi Security Force partners, we will ensure that the future remains stable,” said Martin. “The security situation in Hurriyah is the best that it has been in three years. That is due to the competence, confidence and professionalism of the Iraqi Army and all of the ISF who patrol the neighborhoods.”

Martin added that along with security gains, there are substantial infrastructure improvements and a better standard of living than several years ago.

The transfer of JSS Hurriyah I, a week ago by the Vanguard Soldiers, also demonstrated the U.S. commitment to returning Baghdad to its citizens.

“Right now Hurriyah is living in peace and security,” said Maj. Hussein Adhab Salman al-Qiussey, commander, 1st Bn., 22nd Bde., 6th I.A. Div. “We do have stability even though over the years we have seen some violence.”

Hussein said that they do not want to lose any momentum and his Soldiers will step up to the task ahead of them.

“This represents a huge responsibility and we wanted



to step up to it. I ask all of the local leaders in Hurriyah to assist with the progress of receiving Hurriyah II. This will be a good opportunity for the ISF and the Iraqi Army; The IA will be patrolling the streets.”

With Martin and a representative of the Iraqi Prime Minister’s Office signing the official paperwork, the transfer became legitimate.

“This is a historic time for Hurriyah,” said Martin. “I salute the diligence of local leaders who support continued transition toward a future of safety, security and confidence provided by the ISF to the people of Hurriyah.”

▼ *Iraqi Soldiers serving with the 1st Battalion, 22nd Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division march in formation at Joint Security Station Hurriyah II June 9. The JSS transfers to the Iraqi Army highlight the security agreement signed between the U.S. Government and the Government of Iraq.*



▲ *Col. Joseph Martin (right), commander, 2nd HBCT, and Samir Haddad, a representative of the Office of the Prime Minister of Iraq, sign the official documents transferring Joint Security Station Hurriyah in Kadamiyah June 9.*



**Lt. Col. John Vermeesch**

The Vanguards continue to excel as we stand beside our Iraqi partners to secure the people of Northwest Baghdad. As you continue the transition to summer back home, we continue an amazing period of transition as well.

Internal to the battalion, we have recently transitioned the last of our small Joint Security Stations to our Iraqi Security Force partners. Additionally, we have established Joint Operations Centers with each of our National Police and Iraqi Army partnered headquarters. Together we will continue to take the fight to the insurgent and sectarian violence cells. As we prepare for the transitions associated with the next phase of the implementation of the Security Agreement, we embrace change as a necessary action that heroes undertake in order to attain greater achievement. A major change we have embraced is that the Iraqi Security Forces are firmly entrenched in the lead of all operations. With the establishment of the Joint Operations Centers, we have handed over the lead for area control to the ISF. We will drive through the challenges of this period of transition in order to continue to support our ISF partners, protect the Iraqi people, and win this fight!

On June 14th we remembered the “birth” of the Stars and Stripes as a symbol of the greatest nation. This holiday serves as an example of what individuals and groups can accomplish with focus, determination, and patriotism. In honor of Flag Day it is recommended that we display the American Flag on all government buildings and our homes for the duration of the week, lest ye meet Theodore Roosevelt’s small wooden rod with a whack for making him “riled up with national pride.”

Thank you for the tremendous sacrifices that each of you make every day. We 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 our efforts here in Iraq, and God Bless America!

**Vanguard 6**

*“First to Battle!”*

**1ST COMBINED ARMS BATTALION, 18TH INFANTRY REGIMENT**

# DRAGONS REUNITE WITH DAGGERS

Story by Capt. Jon Boyle, 1st Bn., 63rd Ar. Regt., 2nd HBCT

Every year on June 6th, Americans, and presumably many citizens across Europe and the globe stop to remember one of the most significant events in world history – the American invasion on the beaches of Normandy, France in 1944. 1st Infantry Division Soldiers played a tremendous role in the successful outcome of World War II and 65 years later, America finds itself amidst another conflict attempting to promote freedom and democracy; once again, Soldiers from the 1st Infantry Division are in the thick of the action.

For the past eight months, the 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 63rd Armor Regiment under the command of Lt. Col. Jim Bradford of Lynchburg, Tennessee, has partnered with the 23rd and 25th Brigades of the 17th Iraqi Army Division in the Mahmudiya Qada – about 20 miles South of Baghdad.

The “Dragon” Battalion was separated from their parent brigade, the “Daggers” of 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Inf. Div., and were working for Col. Pat White and the 2nd Brigade, 1st Armored Division. While assigned to 2nd Bde., 1st Ar. Div., the Dragons executed over 2,000 joint combat patrols with their Iraqi partners, unearthed nearly 100 enemy weapons caches, and amassed approximately 1,000 warrants for arrest. 2nd Bde., 1st Ar. Div., was deployed for nearly 15 months, however, and when they were told it was time to go back to Germany, some changes were made.

In late May, 1-63 was replaced by units from the South Carolina and West Virginia National Guard in Mahmudiya. The Dragons were then moved to Abu Ghraib, the region that creates Baghdad’s Western border. Along with the move, the Dragons were finally reunited with their parent unit, the Daggers, and on June 6th, officially started to conduct operations for the 2nd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division.

“The Dragons have achieved remarkable success over the past eight months in Mahmudiyah, and I fully expect [them] to pick up where they left off in Southern Abu Ghraib,” said Col. Joseph Martin, commander of the Dagger Brigade at a recent meeting with 1-63 leaders. “Your transition back into the Dagger Brigade has been as smooth and professional as I expected it to be. I am honestly excited to see what you will accomplish over the final third of our deployment in Abu Ghraib,” Martin concluded. 1-63 CAB is one of many units that will conduct operations outside the perimeter of Baghdad. The widely publicized security agreement that was put into action in January by the GoI mandates that most US and Coalition forces cease operations inside of Baghdad and other major Iraq city limits.

“Our goal is to provide continued security to the people inside of Baghdad by bolstering the security outside the city with our partnered Iraqi Army Battalion,” said Bradford. “With the security agreement in effect, our job is critical to the continued success Iraq has enjoyed recently.”

At a recent leader engagement, Bradford had an opportunity to speak with the 24th Iraqi Army Brigade Executive Officer, Lt. Col. Yaser Aziz Mahmood. Yaser stated through an interpreter, “Abu Ghraib is the Western gate to Baghdad. So many threat groups and terrorists attempt to enter Baghdad through our city. Our job poses some considerable challenges but if done correctly will be very beneficial for the people of Abu Ghraib and Baghdad.”

While the 6th of June marked the 65th anniversary of D-Day, it also signified 1-63 CAB’s reunion with the 2nd Brigade, 1st Infantry division. History may not dictate that the reunion is as significant as the actions on the beaches of Normandy, but it was a fitting day to bring 1st Infantry Division Soldiers together. 



▲ Lt. Col. Jim Bradford, commander, 1st bn., 63rd Ar. Regt., 2nd HBCT, and Command Sgt. Lance Lehr, the battalion's senior enlisted member, case the battalion's colors in the their Transfer of Authority Ceremony at Forward Operating Base Mahmudiyah June 6. (Photo courtesy of 1-63 CAB)

**DRAGON 6**



**Lt. Col. Jim Bradford**

I want to wish a Happy Independence Day to all of our friends, supporters, and families back home and Happy 4th to the incredible soldiers in this battalion. The Dragon Battalion continues to excel and make a difference in Iraq. We have accomplished a lot over the last 30-days and are well on our way to making some great improvements inside of Abu Ghraib and Zaidon.

We are now part of the great Dagger Brigade and assigned to work in the Abu Ghraib Qada working as we did in Mahmudiyah with the Iraqi Army, Police, civic, and tribal leaders in the area improving security, The Soldiers of this battalion have taken a very aggressive approach to this area and have made some huge strides in a very short period of time. We have renovated schools, primary health clinics, and have started several other projects while simultaneously working with our Iraqi counterparts to improve security in an area known to harbor terrorists.

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

As we enter into our last 100-days we must, and we will maintain the standard and professionalism that you all have exhibited over the course of this deployment. Remain vigilant and focused on the mission at hand and keep everyone safe and secure.

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 life better and safer in Iraq.

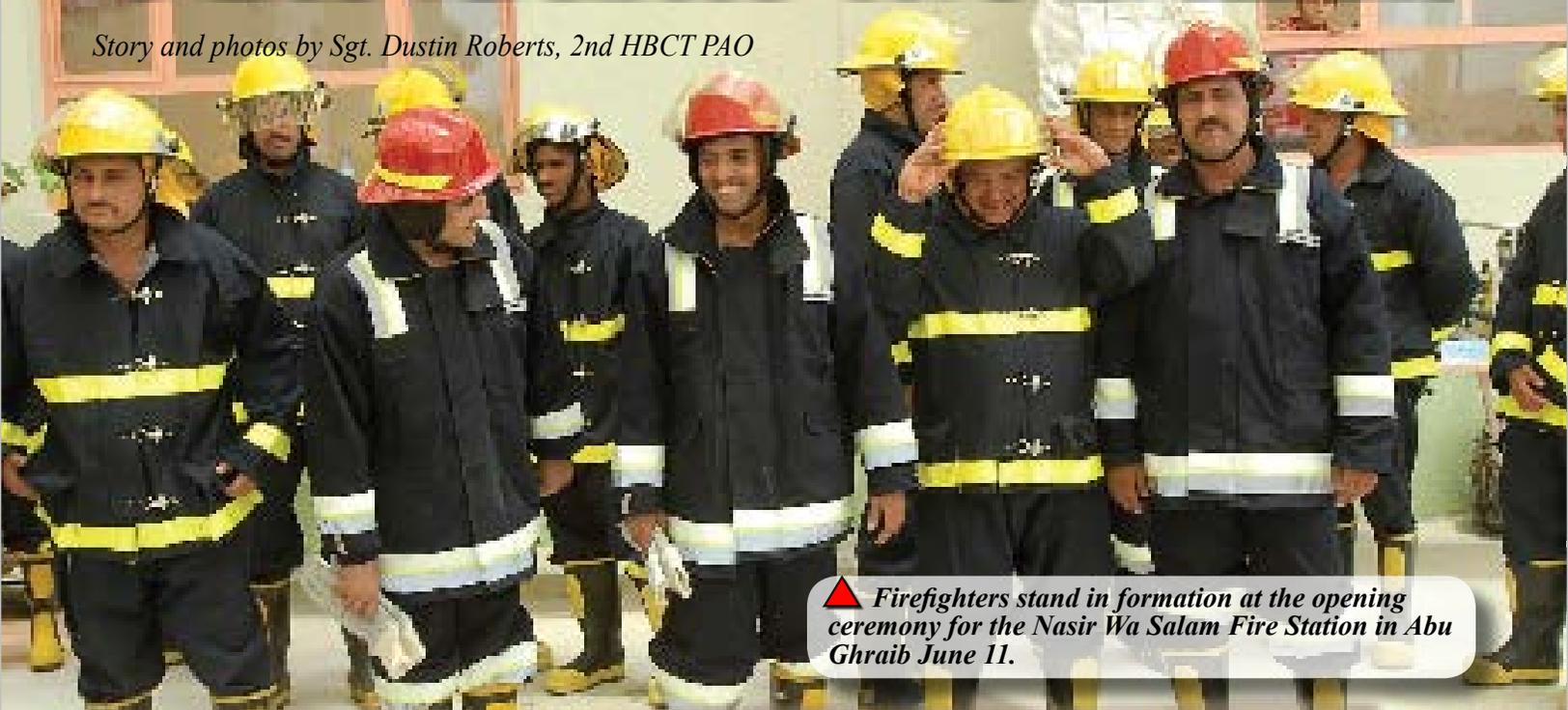
**Dragon 6.**

*"Dragons!"*

**1ST COMBINED ARMS BATTALION, 63RD ARMOR REGIMENT**

# NEW FIRE STATION FOR NASIR WA SALAM

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



▲ Firefighters stand in formation at the opening ceremony for the Nasir Wa Salam Fire Station in Abu Ghraib June 11.

The 2nd “Dagger” Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division-Baghdad unveiled a new two-story fire station, equipped with the proper gear and vehicles to Nasir Wa Salam as part of a continued civil capacity improvement undertaking in the Abu Ghraib Qada June 11.

The planning for the building started in October 2008 as the brigade hired local contractors and engineers to construct it. The brigade also provided the funding for the project.

“This is actually a gift from the people of the United States to the local population of Nasir Wa Salam and to the people of Iraq,” said Maj. Jeffrey Schrick, a native of Frederick, Okla., commander, 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, attached to the 2nd HBCT. “This is a gesture of our support for the continued progress of this wonderful community.”

The 2nd Bn., 8th Cav. Regt. works closely with the Iraqi Security Forces in the area to keep the people of Nasir Wa Salam safe, allowing for more essential

services projects to be planned.

“This place is very peaceful and very secure; we have all the elements supporting this concept of peace,” said Kamil Abbas, the chairman of the Abu Ghraib Council. “The IA and IP are quite ready to handle the security in Abu Ghraib.”

Abbas said the firefighters at the new station are also fully capable to do their job in an emergency situation.

“This fire station will give great services to the people of Nasir Wa Salam and the fire fighters are ready to serve,” he said. “The contractors did the best to build this institution and we will do our best to keep Abu Ghraib prosperous.”

Schrick added that it was another milestone toward a better future in the area and the fire station was a symbol for a new Nasir Wa Salam and a strengthened friendship.

“I am glad we have a good relationship with the Coalition forces,” said Abbas. “This was a gift given to us and we are so thankful.”





▲ *Maj. Jeffrey Schrick, a native of Frederick, Okla., commander, 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd HBCT, speaks with a member of the Arabic media at the grand opening of the Nasir Wa Salam Fire Station in the Abu Ghraib district west of Baghdad June 11.*



▲ *Iraqi firefighters slide down poles at the new Nasir Wa Salam Fire Station after its opening June 11. The fire station was built by local contractors and funded by Coalition forces as a gift from the American people to the citizens of Iraq.*



**Maj. Jeffrey Schrick**

The Stallions continue to bring peace and security to far Western Baghdad allowing the local Iraqi people an opportunity to live a better life.

The Stallions are changing areas of responsibility once again. This is and will truly be a year of transition. I am excited about this current move as it brings the battalion into a contiguous battle space where we can work more closely together to conduct operations. We will be able to apply more assets into a smaller space to control our area of Western Baghdad and deny the enemy an opportunity to use it as a support zone for attacks into Baghdad.

Along with our Iraqi Army partners we will continue to work together to find those individuals causing harm to this area and bring them to justice. We must continue to build the capabilities of our Iraqi Army partners by teaching them critical skills such as marksmanship, combat lifesaver, maintenance, force protection, and patrolling. As we transition toward the Iraqi Army in the lead and us in over watch, It is exciting to see many of you coming and going from your environmental leave. Enjoy sharing the stories of your adventures as you return from a much deserved trip home. I encourage you to go have a great time, but remember to be safe and take time for what really matters most; your families.

I am proud of you all for the heroic efforts you perform on a daily basis. Take a moment to remember our fallen comrades from D Day as we pause appropriately on 6 June. Force protection and safety is the key to a safe return home for us all. Safety and security must be practiced during all missions and operations. Keep up the outstanding work. God Bless you all.

**Stallion 5**

*“Honor and Courage!”*

**2ND SQUADRON, 8TH CAVALRY REGIMENT**

# U.S. CITIZENSHIP GRANTED IN COMBAT

Story and photos by Sgt. Anthony Franklin, 1st Bn., 7th F.A. Regt., 2nd HBCT



▲ *Spc. Jesus Moran-Alvarez, a gunner and mechanic for his platoon in Company G, 299th Brigade Support Battalion, currently assigned to the 1st Battalion, 7th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division-Baghdad, is studying to become a U.S. citizen.*

**S**pc. Jesus Moran-Alvarez, is studying to become a United States citizen during the 14th Naturalization Ceremony to be held July 4 at Al Faw Palace. He is a Soldier in Company G, 1st Battalion, 7th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd HBCT and currently serves as a gunner and mechanic for his team, who help secure the International Zone in Baghdad.

“The process took me about a year” he said. “I couldn’t have done it without the help of 1st Sergeant [Robert] Herfel. It’s amazing what he can do; I am

forever in his debt.”

Moran-Alvarez was born August 14, 1978 in Teocaltiche, Mexico. His parents moved to San Maria, Calif. before he was born and just happened to be visiting their home town in Mexico at the time of his birth. His mother was not a U.S. citizen, so she stayed behind until all of the paperwork was in order.

He then moved back to the United States when he was three years old. Both of his parents are now U. S. citizens as well as all of his siblings. He traveled back and forth from the U.S and Mexico during his life and



▲ *Spc. Jesus Moran-Alvarez, a gunner and mechanic for his platoon in Company G, 299th Brigade Support Battalion, currently assigned to the 1st Battalion, 7th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division-Baghdad, conducts maintenance on his vehicle before a mission June 7. His platoon conducts combat escort patrols throughout Baghdad in support of the U.S. Department of State, United Nations and other civilian agencies as part of civil assistance missions.*

spent equal time in each country.

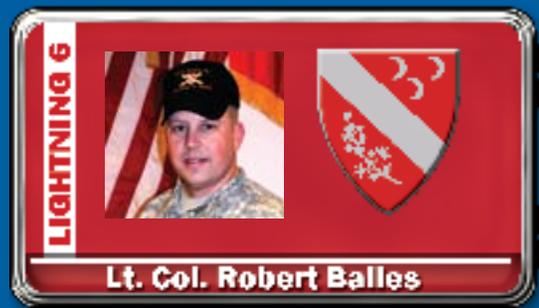
He speaks and writes both English and Spanish. He has two daughters: Lilia, who is eight and Ivelise, who is three years old.

Moran-Alvarez is currently studying for his naturalization test, an upcoming promotion board and trying to finish his Associates Degree in Criminal Justice.

After he is done with his duties in the Army he hopes to go home to Calif. to be near his daughters and will begin a career in law enforcement.

His goal is to work with the Sheriff's Department.

"I wouldn't turn down an offer from the FBI or something like that," he said. 



**T**ask Force First Lightning Soldiers thanks for your continued commitment to excellence in all that you do. Your efforts are providing security and assistance to the Government of Iraq (GOI) as well as keeping thousands of U.S. Soldiers safe and secure. The diverse mission set of our Task Force now includes support to MNF-I, MND-B, GOI, JASG-C and the Dagger Brigade. And you, the great First Lightning Soldiers, are accomplishing all of these missions with the utmost professionalism and excellence in action.

We have entered the last quarter of this deployment. When we deployed we studied the dangers of the "first 100 days", but there are an equal amount of hazards that will confront us during the "last 100 days". We have sustained very high standards thus far, and the CSM and I ask you to continue performing at that level throughout our remaining time in theater and our transition back home.

Our focus must remain on the mission until we are officially relieved of duties. The mantra is "finish strong, return with honor". Our enemy doesn't care that we are nearing the end, he is postured to strike at any time and we must remain vigilant to combat him. We must also make sure individual Soldier conduct continues to meet our high standards. Don't allow an act of indiscipline to tarnish the great work we've accomplished to this point. Keep up the effort, continue taking care of yourselves and your battle buddies and always remain Never Broken by Hardship or Battle!

**Lightning 6**  
*"Never Broken by Hardship or Battle!"*

**1ST BATTALION, 7TH FIELD ARTILLERY REGIMENT**

# TEAMWORK DRIVES JSS KHADRA TOA

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



Iraqi Soldiers of the 3rd Battalion, 54th Army Brigade, 6th Infantry Division, held a ceremony at Joint Security Station Kahdra, June 10 to celebrate the transfer of authority from C Troop, 5th Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division which was a direct result of the Iraqi Security Agreement and the teamwork of the Iraqi Security Forces, Coalition force and the Iraqi people.

“The transfer of JSS Kahdra is another way of validating the work Iraqi Security Forces have done with the aid of Coalition force for so long,” said Capt. Maxwell Scott, a native of Fairfax, Va., who is an intelligence officer assigned to C Troop. “This ceremony not only represents the advent of a modern, more unified Iraq but it also signifies the strength of the CF to work with the citizens of Iraq to develop a brighter future.”

CF have conducted several joint operations with the Iraqi Army and the Iraqi Police over the years to advise them on how to increase security and improve the area. The CF mentored ISF during joint patrols and taught them how to interact with the local people while gathering intelligence which, in turn, estab-

lished a strong bond between the ISF, CF and the people of Iraq.

“The teamwork of the ISF, CF and the Iraqi people have been the driving force of progress in Iraq,” said Capt. Dustin Navarro, a Dallas native and commander of C Troop. “It will continue to be the driving force for the return to normalcy because of the sacrifices made.”

The ISF have sacrificed their lives for their nation and the people have been doing the same, according to Navarro. “Local Iraqis have allowed the CF and the ISF to use their homes as bases and at risk of their own lives, come forth with intelligence to help the ISF and the CF defeat insurgents” Navarro continued.

Not so long ago the area was a center of insurgent activity, but due to the courage of the Iraqi people speaking out against the insurgents and the determination of the ISF with the aid of the CF, the attacks have dwindled significantly, Navarro continued. Now hearing of an attack in the area is more of a surprise than a common occurrence.

“Due to the Iraqi Security Agreement and the improved security created by the joint efforts of the ISF, CF and the Iraqi people the CF will be transfer-

ring JSS Khadra to the Iraqi Army and moving out of the city,” said Navarro. “Just because the CF are leaving, doesn’t mean we are gone; we will continue to conduct combined operations with the IA and the IP with approval by the Government of Iraq.”

Teamwork and selfless-service by the troops at JSS Khadra have greatly improved the security here in Baghdad and made it possible for the ISF to meet the terms of the Iraq Security Agreement and take full control of the security in Khadra. 

▼ *Iraqi Soldiers of 3rd Battalion, 54th Army Brigade, 6th Infantry Division and Soldiers from C Troop, 5th Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, stand in formation during the transfer of authority ceremony at Joint Security Station Khadra, June 10.*



▲ *Capt. Dustin Navarro (right), a native of Dallas and commander of C Troop, 5th Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, and a member of the Government of Iraq sign the official paperwork transferring Joint Security Station Khadra to the GoI June 10.*

LONG KNIFE 6



**Lt. Col. John B. Richardson IV**

Sixty-five years ago American Soldiers, like you, landed on the beaches of Normandy on D-Day. The Soldiers of that generation were no different than you, young Americans willing to serve for something greater than themselves, making a difference in the world by crushing tyranny and promoting liberty and freedom for all.

They marked the beaches and signaled forward the assault of VII Corps. 4th Cavalry landed first with the mission to break through the German beach defenses and link up with the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions’ paratroopers who had jumped in behind the enemy lines. Subsequently, the 4th Cavalry would fight across Western Europe in their efforts to defeat Nazi Germany and liberate Europe, earning five campaign streamers for the Colors and the Presidential Unit Citation at the Battle of Bogheim.

Like your forefathers, you all are carrying the torch of freedom and liberty for our generation. You have come to Iraq to help the people of Iraq realize freedom and make Iraq a safe and secure environment for future generations of Iraqi children to grow and prosper. Every day you leave the gates you move into harm’s way and you do it with the utmost professionalism and bravery. I continue to be amazed at your stamina and resiliency and I remain proud and humbled to be your commander. You make all Americans proud to be American citizens. You are a role model for the Iraqi Army, what right looks like in a professional Armed Force. You are a beacon of hope for a better life for all Iraqis who see you.

As you go about your missions today, reflect on those 4th Cavalry Troopers who have gone before you. 65 years from now, your grandchildren and great-grandchildren will think of you and how you changed the world with your sacrifices in the heat, dust, and danger of Iraq.

**LongKnife 6.**

**“Prepared and Loyal!”**

**5TH SQUADRON, 4TH CAVALRY REGIMENT**

It is a tough task to balance the stress of a deployed environment and the work load that never seems to end with recreational time. A Soldier must find ways to unwind and escape from the stress and their daily tasks.

Soldiers of the 299th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd HBCT have found several ways during the deployment to enjoy their off time and escape from their work. Morale, Welfare, and Recreation Centers on Camp Liberty provide a variety of events and opportunities to relax and have fun.

Company A and C recently fielded teams as part of the Victory Base Complex Softball League hosted by MWR. The teams will compete with other units stationed on VBC. Both Companies started early by getting members together and even arranged to get team shirts made to show their unit pride.

“The league is similar to the ones we have participated in at Fort Riley,” said Capt. Luke Clover, Commander, Company A. “Both companies have a good

chance at winning a trophy, but more importantly they are getting out and having some fun.”

Other Soldiers are taking advantage of the recreational opportunities available in the battalion area.

Soldiers enjoy events, such as a pick-up games of basketball, volleyball, horseshoes, driving their radio-controlled cars around the Lifeline track, or playing in a weekly poker game; anything to pass the time and have a little fun. Nightly one can find Soldiers of all ranks on the basketball court playing b-ball.

The 299th BSB is also getting ready to celebrate Independence Day with a “Grill Off.”

The event will last the majority of the afternoon with Soldiers grilling their steaks for judges and for their coworkers to enjoy.

By the end of the evening the “Soldiers Choice” winner will be crowned.

The 299th BSB has shown that just because the unit is deployed Soldiers can still have fun and enjoy normal recreational activities. 



## LIFELINE HAS FUN DURING DEPLOYMENT

Story by 1st Lt. Harris Malik, 299th BSB, 2nd HBCT



Life Line 6



Lt. Col. Brian Tempest

The Battalion is preparing to enter another historical period for the country of Iraq and the people of Baghdad. Just as in January we witnessed the elections in June we will be part of a major step in the Security Agreement. The mission for the Soldiers will not change in this process; we will continue to provide logistical support to the units in the Dagger Brigade and throughout the Multi National Division- Baghdad. For the majority of Soldiers this transition will be transparent in their daily lives and how we continue to conduct our missions.

This month also marks the return of 1-63 CAB back to the Brigade and we welcome our E Company Soldiers back into the support process. They have accomplished great things while serving with 2-1 AD and will continue to provide superior logistical support to 1-63 CAB. The core companies continue to surpass my expectations.

Riva Ridge Medical Treatment Facility is continuing to provide top of the line medical care to Soldiers and Civilians. The mechanics in B Company continue to ensure that all the equipment and vehicles in the battalion and brigade is mission capable when called upon. A Company continues to receive and distribute all parts and equipment that is ordered by the brigade, while also providing the needed life support of delivering bottled water to the different living areas. HHC is driving on with ensuring the missions are planned and Soldiers are taken care of in the personnel, supply, communications, and support areas. Rear Detachment is taking care of the daily operations that must continue on Fort Riley I thank you all for the support that is given to this command and the Soldiers in this Battalion.

**Lifeline 6**

*“On Call to Serve.”*

**299TH BRIGADE SUPPORT BATTALION**

▲ Sgt. 1st Class David Cain, 299th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, shoots a basketball while playing a game with his fellow Lifeline Soldiers June 15. (Photo by Capt. Kevin Bentz, 299th BSB)

# GRIFFINS PARTNER WITH IA

Story by Chief Warrant Officer Angela Jackson , 2-1 STB, 2nd HBCT



▲ *Sgt. Rajeev Bhattacharya, a 2/1 STB mechanic, and Tito, a 2/1 STB interpreter, Company C, explains the wire schematics for the electrical system to SGT Nasar and other 6th DIV IA mechanics at Forward Operating Base Constitution June 11.*

Beginning in January, the Brigade Special Troops Battalion “Griffin,” 2nd HBCT began their partnership with the Iraqi Army’s 6th Engineer Regiment.

Initially, this partnership focused on route clearance training and combined route clearance patrols. As the partnership grew stronger, it evolved beyond route clearance to other areas such as Personal Security Detachment training, medical training, and logistical training.

This partnership was strengthened in another area at Forward Operating Base Constitution June 11 as mechanics from the 6th Engineer Regiment and Griffin mechanics conducted combined maintenance training to learn proper Preventive Maintenance Checks and Service procedures for the unit’s Badger

vehicles.

During the PMCS portion of the training, the 6th Engineer Regiment Platoon Leader, 2nd Lt. Hasanen, his crew, and the Iraqi Army mechanics eagerly demonstrated to their Griffin Battalion counterparts how they perform inspections on their vehicles. Because the Badger is not common to the U.S. Army vehicle fleet, the BSTB mechanics were very interested to learn about the maintenance and problem areas associated with the Badger.

“We perform inspections on our equipment before and after Explosive Ordinance Disposal and route clearance missions,” said Sgt. Nasar, an IA mechanic.

The exchange between mechanics continued throughout the PMCS portion as Griffin Battalion mechanics continually emphasized the need to use the

appropriate level manual while performing maintenance on any vehicle.

Following the PMCS training the Soldiers conducted electrical system maintenance training.

The BSTB mechanics and some Soldiers from Company C, BSTB worked side by side with the 6th IA mechanics and operators troubleshooting the lighting systems on the Badgers.

The Griffin mechanics then taught them the step-by-step installation process for external security lights.

The BSTB Soldiers emphasized the need to understand the electrical system on their vehicle prior to beginning any installation of external lights. Once the training was complete the 6th Engineer Regiment mechanics jumped right on their Badgers and started installing the external security lights.

They were so confident in their training that 2LT Hasanen challenged the mechanics on how fast they could safely install the lights.

The IA mechanics installed the lights within three hours.

“We are very appreciative of working side by side with your [BSTB] mechanics,” said Hasanen.

When the event ended the IA Soldiers showed appreciation for the STB Soldiers.

“We would like to continue our partnership because we had a lot of fun,” said Nasar to the BSB Soldiers. “We would like for you to come to Muthana to teach you more about the equipment we have and its operations.”

As the BSTB partnership with the 6th Engineer Regiment continues to grow, future iterations of combined maintenance training are already planned. 



▲ A Soldier from the 6th Iraqi Army Division demonstrates a feature on the Badger to Griffin mechanics and operators at Forward operating Base Constitution June 11.



Col. David Imhof

**G**riffins, another month of our deployment has passed, and I want to say how extremely proud I am of every Soldier's efforts. The first 100 days is the most dangerous time in a deployment as Soldiers gain situational awareness of their environment and the enemy operating in it. In the “First 100 Days Handbook”, there are six overarching lessons: (1) Perform tasks to standard every time, (2) Learn all you can from the outgoing unit and from the veterans of previous deployments in your unit, (3) Maintain faith in your skills as a Soldier, your leaders, your fellow Soldiers, and your equipment, (4) Avoid becoming complacent. (5) Be decisive, but not overly aggressive and (6) Take care of yourself and your buddy.

I want to take this opportunity to highlight two of the points. First, “avoid becoming complacent.” Every Soldier does this by ensuring they execute Troop Leading Procedures prior to every mission. Second, “be decisive, but not overly aggressive; conduct yourself as a professional accomplishing the mission.” On 30 Jun 09, we entered another phase of the Security Agreement. As with the implementation on 1 Jan 09, I expect every Griffin Soldier to understand what this means and continue to maintain the same focus and vigilance that you have exhibited throughout the first nine months of this deployment. I challenge every Soldier to maintain the polite, professional, and mission focused attitude that is the hallmark of the Griffin battalion.

Griffin Soldiers are maintaining the pride and honor it is to be part of the 1st Infantry Division through their actions every day. My heartfelt thanks go out to every Griffin Soldier and Family Member for your support, sacrifices, and efforts in making the Griffin battalion a great team.

Griffin 6

“Griffins! Point of the Dagger!”

2-1 BRIGADE SPECIAL TROOPS BATTALION

# PAXTON GIVES TO IRAQI YOUTH CENTER

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

Iraqi kids in the Abu Ghraib area of western Baghdad are just like youngsters everywhere. If you don't give them something fun to do, who knows what they'll get into.

Government officials of Abu Ghraib partnered together with the Iraqi Army and Coalition Forces to provide a place of safety and involvement for local youth.

Soldiers from Company B, 2nd Battalion, 112th Infantry Regiment "Paxton Rangers," 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division—Baghdad visited an Iraqi Youth

Center, here June 11, to help get kids off the streets.

Inside a walled compound alongside local government buildings are soccer fields and other play areas for the children to enjoy.

What they didn't have is sports equipment to use on the fields.

The fact that Iraqis call soccer balls "footballs" became a humorous point in a meeting between Capt. Jason Hoffman, from York, Pa., and Hasen, the Abu Ghraib Youth Center's director, when Hasen presented a list of requested supplies at the behest of Hoffman.



▲ Lt. Saddam of the 3rd Battalion, 24th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, Capt. Jason Hoffman from York, Pa., of Company B, 2nd Battalion, 112th Infantry Regiment "Paxton Rangers," 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division-Baghdad and Director Hasen From the Abu Ghraib Youth Center meet in the youth center to discuss the summer youth programs June 11.

As Hoffman saw footballs on the list he felt surprise and excitement that the Iraqis were getting interested in American football.

Once the correction was made, the director was given a surprise gift of 50 soccer balls.

Hasen, a man in his late 40's, quickly picked up a ball and began dribbling it in the air and bouncing it off his head like a professional.

Soldiers passed out stuffed animals, school and art supplies, and several bottles of bubbles, gifts from the Keystone state, which the children took to immediately.

With a warning not to drink the soapy liquid, they began running around blowing bubbles to the pretend annoyance of some of the adults who began swatting at the bubbles.

"One of our strong lines of effort is reconciliation," said Hoffman. "Reconciliation, not only at the adult level through tribal alliances, but also to reconcile the youth so that in future years we can see the dividends of the youth working together in places such as the youth center."

Many of the children and Iraqi Soldiers expressed their appreciation of their growing friendship.

"Capt. Hoffman and his fellow Soldiers are some of the best I have worked with," said Lieutenant Sadam, an operations officer from the 3rd Battalion, 24th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, who work in concert with the Paxton Rangers in security operations.

Hasen exemplified the professionalism he has seen in U.S. Soldiers and again expressed his gratitude for their humanitarian efforts. 



▲ *Director Hansen, of the Abu Ghraib Youth Center, dribbles a soccer ball presented by Capt. Jason Hoffman, from York, Pa., with Co. B, 2nd Bn, 112th Inf. Regt., 2nd HBCT June 11.*



**S**tryker Task Force Paxton is executing operations night and day to disintegrate the terrorist networks in Abu Ghraib and Western Baghdad. We continue to take the fight to the enemy and attack them on our terms. This demonstrates the agility of the PAXTON RANGERS and highlights the complexity of our mission here in Abu Ghraib. Our partnership with our ISF security partners continues to evolve, building capability in both the Iraqi Army and the Iraqi Police. We must remain committed to training and mentorship ensuring their success now and well into the future. Our companies are training the Iraqi Police on crime scene exploitation, arrest techniques, and patrolling. We are mentoring the Iraqi army in all of the tasks that will make them successful. We are doing this through individual training at the squad and platoon level on combat life saver courses, weapons proficiency at the firing range, and individual movement techniques.

As we close in our redeployment back to Pennsylvania I need to take time and thank some of the people who have made all of our successes the past year possible. We are only as strong as the people behind us and that means our families and friends back home. One thing that has made our military successful for centuries is our connection with our families and the way they support our warriors when they are deployed in far away lands. Just because we are gone does not mean that life at home stops for our families. The challenges and difficulties of the home front remain and our families must deal with them without us. While we are farther away than ever, our families have pulled closer together to support us and support each other. Our families are doing outstanding back home attending to the details of life, keeping all of our lives in order while we are deployed. I want to personally thank each of our families at home supporting us and let you know how much it means to each of us to be able to go about our day knowing that you are all behind us and supporting us. We truly could not do this without each of you back home.

**Paxton 6**

*"Quick, Silent, Deadly."*

**2ND BATTALION, 112TH INFANTRY REGIMENT**

# NEW CENTER FOR DISABLED

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Mark Burrell, MND-B PAO

**T**he al-Hamza Center for the Disabled re-opened in Yarmouk here June 15 to the Iraqi public with the help of Coalition force's funding, elevating access to health care for a demographic that was once largely ignored by Saddam Hussein.

Dedicated CF Soldiers and Iraqi contractors spent about three months and \$192,000 to help renovate the building, which also serves as dentistry, pharmacy and radiology clinics, said the project manager for the clinic, Capt. Mandi Breyman, assigned to the 46th Engineer Battalion, attached to 5th Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division.

"You couldn't recognize this facility three months ago," said the Republic, Ohio native, referring to the facility's state of disrepair.

The building was completely overhauled by hiring an Iraqi contractor to fix shattered windows, broken doors, busted water pipes and electrical wiring among other things, she added.

According to Breyman, the CF and Government of Iraq teamed up to hire local labor. Involving locals boosted the economy and provided the neighborhood with a sense of ownership of the clinic.

"Today we turn the facility over to the Ministry of Health. Iraqis have done everything here and it's theirs, we want them to take control over this facility," Breyman added before a large crowd of Iraqi doctors, patients and neighbors. "Iraqis own this project, now they need to keep it up. Take it as a gift, but take care of it."

One of the Iraqis, Nadia Ali Abulkarim, who will benefit from this gift, sat quietly by nodding her head from her wheelchair next to her daughter.

"I hope that this center will come to serve all disabled people and help all people like me," said Nadia after the ceremony. She also praised the humility of the American effort in recognizing the need for projects such as this.

"This is one of the best ways to help the handicapped," added Nadia, who is also a wheelchair

fencing enthusiast. "Giving us the proper medicine, supplies and a clinic like this serves the whole Yarmouk area."

According to Nadia, before the fall of Saddam, the Iraqi Government wasn't very interested in taking care of its disabled population, so this is a step in the right direction.

"It improves relations with the community," said Lt. Col. Todd Auld, a civil military operations officer from Little Rock, Ark., assigned to 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div. "And these types of projects fill a gap in health care that is needed."

Not only will this clinic improve community relations, boost the Ministry of Health's resources and increase trust for the GoI, but it also makes Iraq safer for Soldiers in the area, added Auld.

"When you fill these essential services for a community, you isolate the enemy," said Auld after touring the large outpatient clinic with doctors. "People that might be sitting on the fence could be swayed either way and that improves the security situation down on the ground."

After the ceremony, CF, doctors, Iraqi Security Forces and local Iraqis enjoyed mingling together in a jovial atmosphere while a celebratory feast of local cuisine was provided inside one of the newly-renovated white tiled rooms.

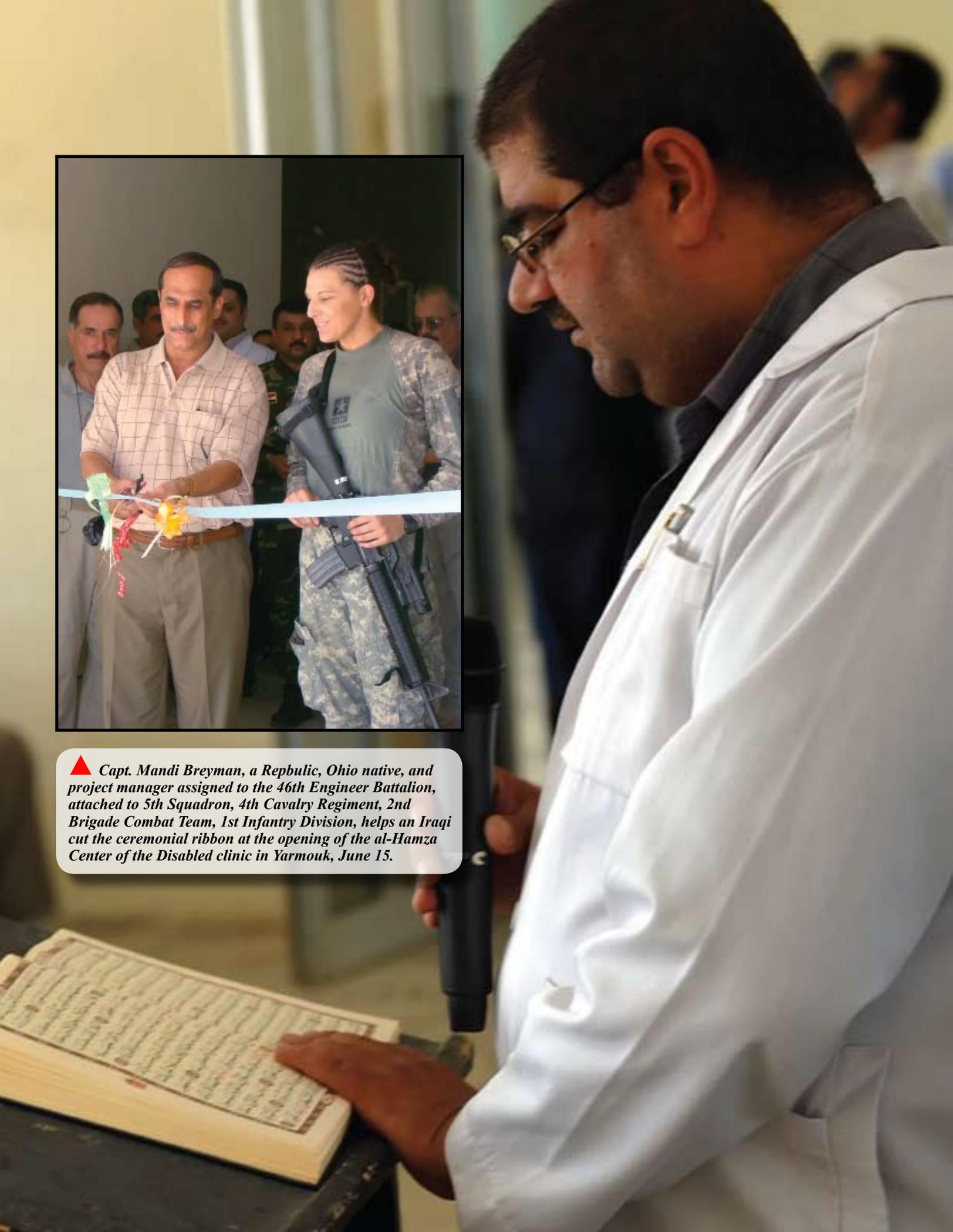
As the crowd began to disperse and the doctors went back to work, Auld explained, "If you improve the overall quality of life, it improves security, increases services and makes them less likely to support the insurgents and more likely to support their government."

The simple renovation of a clinic can have an immediate impact on Iraqis such as Nadia, but can leave a lasting impression on all of Iraq by restoring faith in the government that supports and protects them. 

► *An Iraqi doctor reads a prayer from the Quran to begin the re-opening ceremony of the al-Hamza Center for the Disabled in Yarmouk, here, June 15. The building renovation was funded by Coalition forces and took an Iraqi contractor about three months to complete.*



▲ *Capt. Mandi Breyman, a Republic, Ohio native, and project manager assigned to the 46th Engineer Battalion, attached to 5th Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, helps an Iraqi cut the ceremonial ribbon at the opening of the al-Hamza Center of the Disabled clinic in Yarmouk, June 15.*



# NO NEGLIGENT DISCHARGE

By Thomas McMurray, 2nd HBCT Safety officer

There have been 37 reported negligent weapon discharges in the DAGGER BDE since TOA 08. Of these, 62% occurred while at the clearing barrels. Most of these have occurred due to absence of supervision; mishandling of the weapon; either not knowing what they were doing, or not treating the weapon as a weapon; simply put, complacency and over confidence.

This trend can become fatal in a single incident. Weapon Safety is Key!



▲ It takes two to clear a weapon. Soldiers should treat their weapon as exactly what it is: a weapon. Ensure to follow all weapons clearing procedures.

## Mitigation Measures:

- Leaders supervise clearing procedures – Know your Soldiers weapons and ensure they know how to use the weapon they are assigned.
- Conduct continual re-certification checks on all systems in the squad.
- Only go “Red” when ordered to do so and then ensure weapon remains on safe.
- Assume weapons are loaded, treat the weapon for what it is: a device designed to kill.
- Maintain grip on charging handles.
- Call out each step of the clearing procedures.
- Check the whole chamber when clearing – two

people.

The M4 is the prevailing systems during this time frame accounting for 25 of the NDs followed by the M240B with 6 Nds.

The M4 major sub categories are:

- Clearing with and without supervision (failure to drop magazine, or check the breech).
  - Improper handling or finger placement.
  - Failure to follow proper procedures
- The M240B major sub categories are:
- Improper handling or finger placement.
  - Failure to follow proper procedures.

**ALWAYS THINK WEAPONS SAFETY!** 

# BLOGGING A HIT AMONG SOLDIERS

Story by April Blackmon

A few strokes on the keyboard, a click of the mouse and BAM! Your personal comments have instantly been shared with billions around the world. No, you're not an influential journalist, you're a member of the citizen media; you're a blogger.

Today's virtual voice potential is extremely powerful, according to Weblog tracker Technorati, which currently tracks more than 104.1million blogs.

That's up drastically from the 27.2 million in 2006 and the mere 4million in 2004.

About 150,000 troops are fighting the Global War on Terrorism in Iraq.

Anywhere between the 1.1 million tracked by Technorati and Google's 15 million Iraq-related postings are battling an information war in cyberspace. "Milblogging" has been the coined term to define those who write about the military. John Donovan considers himself to be the "Big Red One's milblogger." His blog, "The Armorer of Argghhh!!!" regularly features news and comments about the 1st Infantry Division and Fort Riley.

"Someone's got to tell the stories. My (reach) is multinational. People in China, Burkina Faso, Iceland and Nepal read about the Soldiers of the Big Red One via my site. Not huge numbers, to be sure – but they're there, and they read," Donovan said.

Donovan often uses humor in his blogs.

One of his blogs state, "If you're going to be one, be a Big Red One. No mission too difficult, no sacrifice too great, Duty First! Unless we've had a bad week – then it's 'No mission – too difficult. No sacrifice– too great. Duty? First I'll have a beer, thanks.'"

While many Soldiers feel their First Amendment rights are fully stripped from them when they take the

oath, there are no regulations prohibiting them from chiming in with their two-cents worth.

The Army does, however, have regulation to prevent operational security.

"Soldiers, civilians, contractors and Family members all play crucial roles to protect critical and sensitive information from getting into the wrong hands. At stake is not a Soldier's First Amendment rights, but rather his or her life as well as the lives of fellow Soldiers," wrote Paul Boyce, Deputy Division Chief, Office of the Chief of Public Affairs, to Wired magazine's blog network.

OPSEC violators who are caught will face punishment.

Surprisingly, blogs are not significant OPSEC culprits, according to various reports from the Army Web Risk Assessment Cell. And it seems most Soldiers are savvy enough to watch what they write.

For the majority – the responsible milbloggers in cyberspace – blogs provide an outlet to the world; a chance to share stories rarely seen in the news.

"Repeatedly we hear from people, 'I never would have heard this story in the mainstream media,'" said Army Reserve Spc. Claude Flowers of the 304th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment from Kent, Wash. in 2006.

Flowers was part of a Central Command team established to engage these writers and their electronic information forums.

"People really are interested in what Soldiers are doing. Blogs are individual statements," said Flowers. "They're the voice of individuals. They're a way of understanding this war on a very human level."

For more information on "Milblogging" and blogging policy, visit [http://www.mnf-iraq/images/stories/For\\_The\\_Troops/bloggers\\_policy.pdf](http://www.mnf-iraq/images/stories/For_The_Troops/bloggers_policy.pdf) 

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