

TASK FORCE TRAILBLAZER NEWSLETTER



A Jundi give the thumbs up as he approached the site. In the background, Iraqis are spread all over the work site putting together the bridge.

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Installation Support

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By Miguel Lima

One of the things that set our Army apart from all the others is the amount of training we receive. It's very apparent when you consider that most major US Army installations have all of the major training areas: field training exercise areas, arms and demo ranges, NBC chambers, obstacle courses, land navigation courses and the like. These training areas help remind and refresh a Soldiers' familiarity with those skills and equipment. Training is often something that we take for

granted in the rear. This is because of the commitment to time, resources and standards necessary to conduct the training. Now that I'm deployed, I can say with certainty that I'm very thankful for some (if not all) of the training in which I partook. It builds my confidence in being part of many different missions outside the wire and makes me confident in the proficiency of those around me.

As you may remember, we've done a lot with the Iraqis. Bridge missions, joint route clearance

missions, PT, multiple NCO Academies and the list goes on. As part of an initiative to help leave the 4th IA Engineers in a better position after we depart, COL Spider has been getting a facelift. Some of it has been a joint effort while other projects were completely planned and set into motion by the Iraqis. One could be gone just a week but upon return, something will have been newly improved or added. Like the American Army, the Iraqis understand the importance

INSTALLATION, *Cont on Page 2*



INSTALLATION, *Cont from Page 1*

of training areas. Unlike our Army, however, the 4th IA Engineers don't have the abundance of space or equipment necessary to improve and increase their training areas as much as they would like. They already had a mine field, concertina wire emplacement and fighting position training areas but we've more than doubled that over the course of the past few weeks. Working with our Iraqi partners, C/84th and 4/95th have completed building a small arms range, a PT area and a dry gap for bridge training. A lot of this was at the behest of LTC Hameed, 4th IA Engineer Regimental Commander.

The dry gap was used almost immediately. Within two weeks of the dry gap being constructed, TFTB coordinated with 50th Multi-Role Bridge Company to send a platoon up to Spider to help train the Iraqi Engineers on military bridging. Due to all the recent bridge missions, LTC Hameed requested this training in specific. This type of training doesn't exist anywhere else in the country. The 50th stayed for ten days to train the 4th's Engineers. After instructional courses, the practical exercise involved constructing the bridge across the dry gap. The bridge materials were neatly placed around the site and work was well underway when I got out there. They were constructing a Mabey Johnson bridge. This, in perspective, is very practical training because the Al Fatah Bridge is



a Mabey Johnson float bridge. Similar in concept when compared to the training but the floats and wet gap make the difference. I've had the chance to observe a lot of Iraqis training with TFTB. I've never seen as many Jinood on a single project. You could sense a feeling of the Jinood's eagerness to learn and their earnest in their work. I was only there a day but it was very clear that the Iraqis learned from the training and were able to execute. While I was there, they were constructing a section of the bridge with little direction from the 50th and seemed very effective working as a team. I started to think about how this was only the first of five new areas meant to improve COL Spider's training and mission capability. There was such benefit from this one training event and there is more to follow.

2 Page Spread: The bridge training area with the Mabey Johnson spanning the dry gap; Opposite Page, Left: 4th Jinood tighten bolts connecting the beams; Right: The dust kicked up thickens and obscures the feet of the Iraqis moving a heavy section of the bridge; Above, Left: A Jundi balances as he fastens the crane's chain with some help as others watch; Right: A check on instructions between two bridging engineers.



Memorial Day ESPN Coverage

ESPN contacted the Divison's Public Affairs Office regarding some shout-outs by Soldiers to air on TV on and around Memorial Day. The PAO Office contacted TFTB to support the request. We had a great turn out of folks that were willing to send their well-wishing to their friends and families back home. Soldiers were also encouraged to include something about their favorite sports team as well.. Here are some of the highlights of the event from behind and in front of the camera.

Clockwise from Top: SGT Akridge from 3/25's PAO team gives the TFTB folks some direction before shooting the group shout-out; 1LT Textor waits with the group ready to record the group's shot; PFC Steel stands in front of a Buffalo speaking to his friends and family back home; SFC Legg wishes his family a warm bello and promise to come home soon; a group shot comprised of folks from FSC; PFC Juneau had some technical difficulties as a Buffalo's engine roared in the background but was able to slam duck his second take; SPC Kirchner also spoke out to his friends and family back home; the group is given instructions on their individual shout-outs as they congregate in front of the vehicles set up as a backdrop for the event.



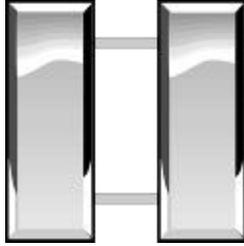
O Captain! My Captain!

Albeit of a naval nature, I think this excerpt from Walt Whitman captures the ascension from Lieutenant to Captain:

“O CAPTAIN! My Captain! Our fearful trip is done; The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we sought is won; The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting...”

This month, six lieutenants were promoted to Captain on the TFTB team. Congratulations goes out to CPT Brian Burch, CPT Justin Coe, CPT Eric Etter, CPT Megan Jeeves, CPT James Earl Jones, and CPT Matthew Textor. Only two of these recently promoted Captains shared a similar experience while getting promoted. Here are some shots* from around the Battalion.

*Clockwise from Top Right: CPT Jeeves, LTC Petersen and CPT Coe check out the promotion certificates; CPT Burch makes plans to smoke a cigar later with COL Russell; CPT Burch's rites of ascension (2 pictures); CPT Textor is promoted on the top of a Buffalo (2 pictures); Middle: Chief Holley gets sentimental and hugs CPT Coe. *Not pictured (...yet) CPT Jones and CPT Etter.*





C/84th Commander's Security Team

By SSG Lucas Velmer

The C/84th Commander's Security Team was extremely busy over the course of the last two months. The Soldiers of the CST Travelled over 2500 miles of Iraq roads so that CPT Painter and 1SG Eagan could visit the Soldiers of Charlie Company all over the battlefield. The CST has also taken part in various construction missions around COB Speicher to maintain proficiency in their MOS.

Between April and May, the CST Travelled to various locations in northern Iraq. The

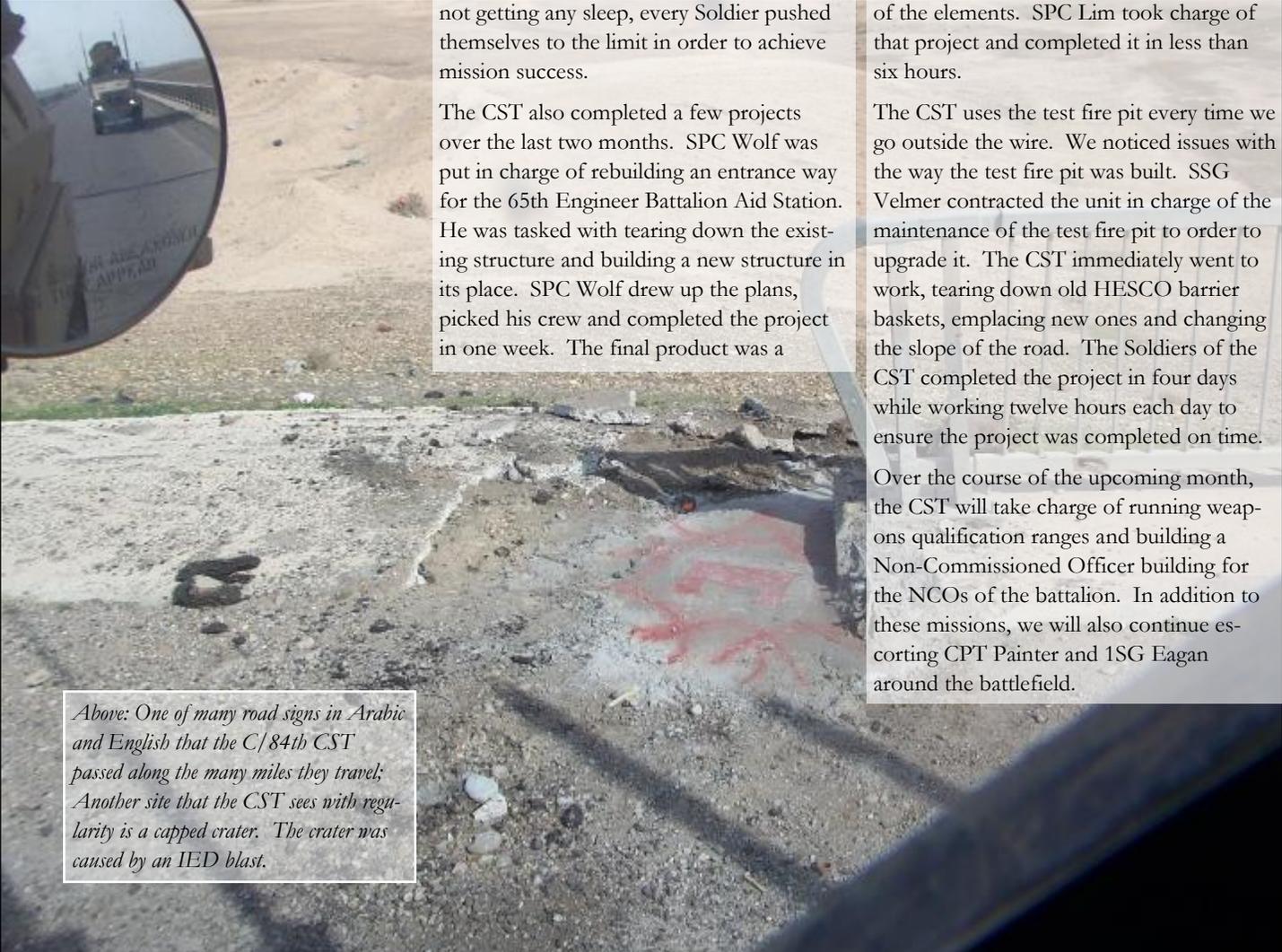
CST is not limited to going outside the wire with the Commander and First Sergeant. The CST also travels on their own to different locations to support the unit's mission. Every Soldier volunteered to be in the platoon and every one of them realizes the importance of being ready to go on a moment's notice. When called, everyone is expected to be ready to go within an hour. One such test came late one night when a bridge embankment washed away and the CST was called to escort trucks loaded with concrete barriers to the site. Within one hour, everyone was ready to go. Despite not getting any sleep, every Soldier pushed themselves to the limit in order to achieve mission success.

The CST also completed a few projects over the last two months. SPC Wolf was put in charge of rebuilding an entrance way for the 65th Engineer Battalion Aid Station. He was tasked with tearing down the existing structure and building a new structure in its place. SPC Wolf drew up the plans, picked his crew and completed the project in one week. The final product was a

10'X6' X10' entrance way that does not leak during the rainy months here in Iraq. SPC Wolf was awarded a 65th Engineer Battalion coin by CSM Morse for his hard work and efforts on that project. SPC Greuniesen was charged with building a weather cover for the two portable toilets located just outside the Aid Station. He, too, drew up the plans and picked his crew. SPC Greuniesen completed his project in just two days. While working on that project, the CST was approached by the Reserve Civil Affairs to see if we could build a water shed to keep their bottled water out of the elements. SPC Lim took charge of that project and completed it in less than six hours.

The CST uses the test fire pit every time we go outside the wire. We noticed issues with the way the test fire pit was built. SSG Velmer contracted the unit in charge of the maintenance of the test fire pit to order to upgrade it. The CST immediately went to work, tearing down old HESCO barrier baskets, emplacing new ones and changing the slope of the road. The Soldiers of the CST completed the project in four days while working twelve hours each day to ensure the project was completed on time.

Over the course of the upcoming month, the CST will take charge of running weapons qualification ranges and building a Non-Commissioned Officer building for the NCOs of the battalion. In addition to these missions, we will also continue escorting CPT Painter and 1SG Eagan around the battlefield.



Above: One of many road signs in Arabic and English that the C/84th CST passed along the many miles they travel; Another site that the CST sees with regularity is a capped crater. The crater was caused by an IED blast.



Clockwise from Upper Left: Aside from maintaining their Caimans, SPC Guffey, SPC Brown and SPC Lim also perform maintenance on the company can; the entire C/84th CST SPC Wolfe, SPC Brown, SGT Dearman, SPC Frazier, SPC Fosberg, SPC Nicely, SPC Guffey, SGT Johnson, SPC Lim, SPC Longnecker, SGT Turner, SPC Wolf, and SSG Velmer; Covered in dust after a mission, from left to right you have SPC Lim, SPC Brown, SPC Frazier, SPC Greuniesen, SPC Guffey and SPC Wolf; SPC Fosberg drives as CPT Painter takes his picture.



Losing to Win

By SPC Julio Garcia

My name is SPC Garcia. Most of the Soldiers of the 65th know me from working in the S1 office as the Promotion Clerk. I came to 65th in January 2008 shortly after redeploying from Iraq back in late 2007. I really can't explain how it happened, but after coming back from deployment, the medics told me I was exposed to TB. It was a latent infection and as a preventative measure, I was prescribed pills that I needed to take for 9 months to ensure it didn't progress to active disease. The pills got me eating a little more than usual. The fact that I can't say 'no' to my wife's delicious cooking didn't help either. Well, that was the old me. When we deployed to Iraq, my goal was and still remains to get back to the weight I was before I joined the Army. I used to weigh 173 lbs, but upon leaving Hawaii and arriving in Iraq, I weighed 245 lbs. Now, thanks to my good friends, water and exercise, I have worked to drop 40 pounds since arriving in country. And, I'm still

losing weight. My goal is to continue to lose enough weight so that I can get my flag removed and go to the promotion board and get my P (promotable) status. Also, as an added bonus after losing all that weight, I was able to reduce my two mile run time on the APFT from a 15:45 to a 13:32. I am training hard for the next PT test to achieve 90 percent in each event and get awarded a PT badge. Oh yeah. It's coming my way slowly. To accomplish this goal, I watch what I eat. My NCOIC also gave me an advice. He said that I should eat fruits, and that's what I did. I started eating healthy implementing fruits instead of strawberries shakes. Also, I haven't had any soda for 4 months. I was a soda freak. I used to buy pizza with a 2 liter bottle of soda and eat the whole thing and finish the soda by myself. Now, with a regular work out regime and healthier eating habits, I'm well on my way to achieving my goal.

SPC Garcia in Kuwait before arriving to Iraq; Right: SPC Garcia leans back against a Hawaiian backdrop. After having lost 40 pounds, he's not resting for long. He'll be back at doing the good habits to continue to lose weight and achieve his goal.



JOB Speicher Tikrit, Iraq

After reading SPC Garcia's amazing story, I wanted to ask some more questions. Here's a few of his comments.

How hard was it? Getting big was easy as a blink of an eye but losing it has taken [a lot of] hard work and dedication. Sometimes, when I am at the gym, I feel like I don't want to do it any more, but out of nowhere, I get the energy I need to finish my exercise. That's because I think of the day I go back and see my family. That's what keeps me going day by day.

How do you feel about yourself now? Now that I have lost a couple of pounds, I feel OK with myself but when I meet my weight goal, I should feel accomplished.

Do you intend on keeping it off? I will keep it off so I can see my daughter grow old. I thought I was healthy, but now, that I check on my pictures when I got here, I say, "Oh, Lord."

What does your family think? My wife is really happy to see the old me [before my first deployment] through the pictures I send home.

Does your success spark anyone else you know to lose weight? PFC Walker talked to me about [how] he was trying to lose some weight and improve his run and I said I'd help him.

Do you help others now that you've successfully lost this much weight? So far just PFC Walker from S6 is joining me on my runs after work or whenever we are not on duty.

I just want to say "Thanks" to my wife Nube for her support and all the people that have helped me in different ways either to lose weight (at least until we redeploy) or helped me to stay in Army and stay motivated.





The Year of the NCO

HHC, 65th EN BN Edition



Intro by SFC Jesse Thornton

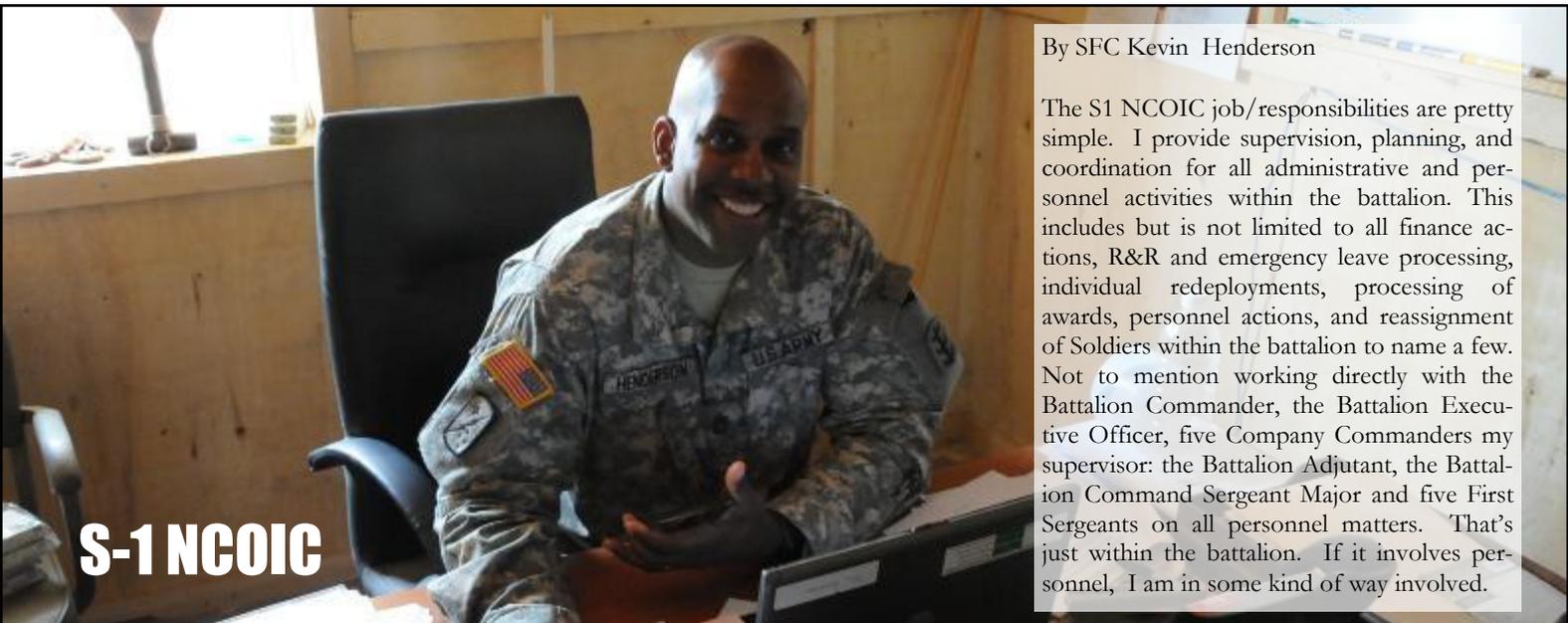
The Army provides education and training through NCOs and on the job experience. Mentorship provides informal education through interaction with a seasoned Army professional. Mentorship is an extremely powerful tool that can help improve your competence, leadership skills, self-awareness and morale. Although we NCOs are responsible for our professional and personal development, the senior enlisted, CSM in the Battalion, can help you navigate your career path. Working with a mentor whose experience is compatible with your goals offers significant benefits.



By CSM Christopher Morse

The Command Sergeant Major is expected to function completely without supervision. Like the old sage of times past, the CSM's counsel is expected to be calm, settled and accurate with unflagging enthusiasm, even in the worst of times. The CSM advises and initiates recommendations to the Commander and staff in matters pertaining to the local NCO support channel. Additionally, carries out policies and standards of the performance, training, appearance and conduct of enlisted personnel. Mentors all Senior NCOs and young Officers.

Command Sergeant Major, 65th EN BN



By SFC Kevin Henderson

The S1 NCOIC job/responsibilities are pretty simple. I provide supervision, planning, and coordination for all administrative and personnel activities within the battalion. This includes but is not limited to all finance actions, R&R and emergency leave processing, individual redeployments, processing of awards, personnel actions, and reassignment of Soldiers within the battalion to name a few. Not to mention working directly with the Battalion Commander, the Battalion Executive Officer, five Company Commanders my supervisor: the Battalion Adjutant, the Battalion Command Sergeant Major and five First Sergeants on all personnel matters. That's just within the battalion. If it involves personnel, I am in some kind of way involved.

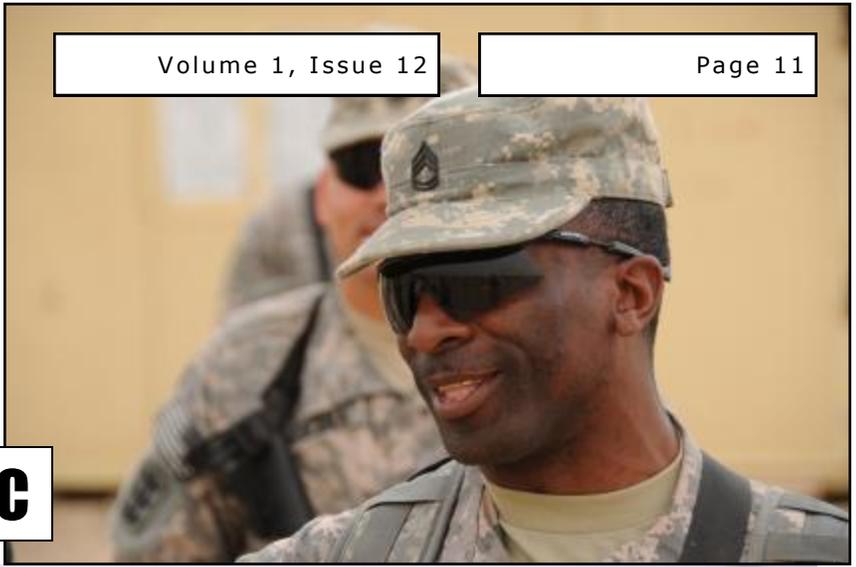
S-1 NCOIC

By SFC Jesse Thorton

Responsible for a section that has 2 Officers and 3 Soldiers. Blue Team leader that is responsible for the production of an intelligence summary for over half of the Battalion Area of Operations. Duties include the processing of Security Clearances for the entire battalion. Personally responsible for the employment of 20 Interpreters within the Battalion. As an additional duty, I am responsible for chemical reports to Brigade and Division. I also mentor young officers.

“Deuces Wild!”

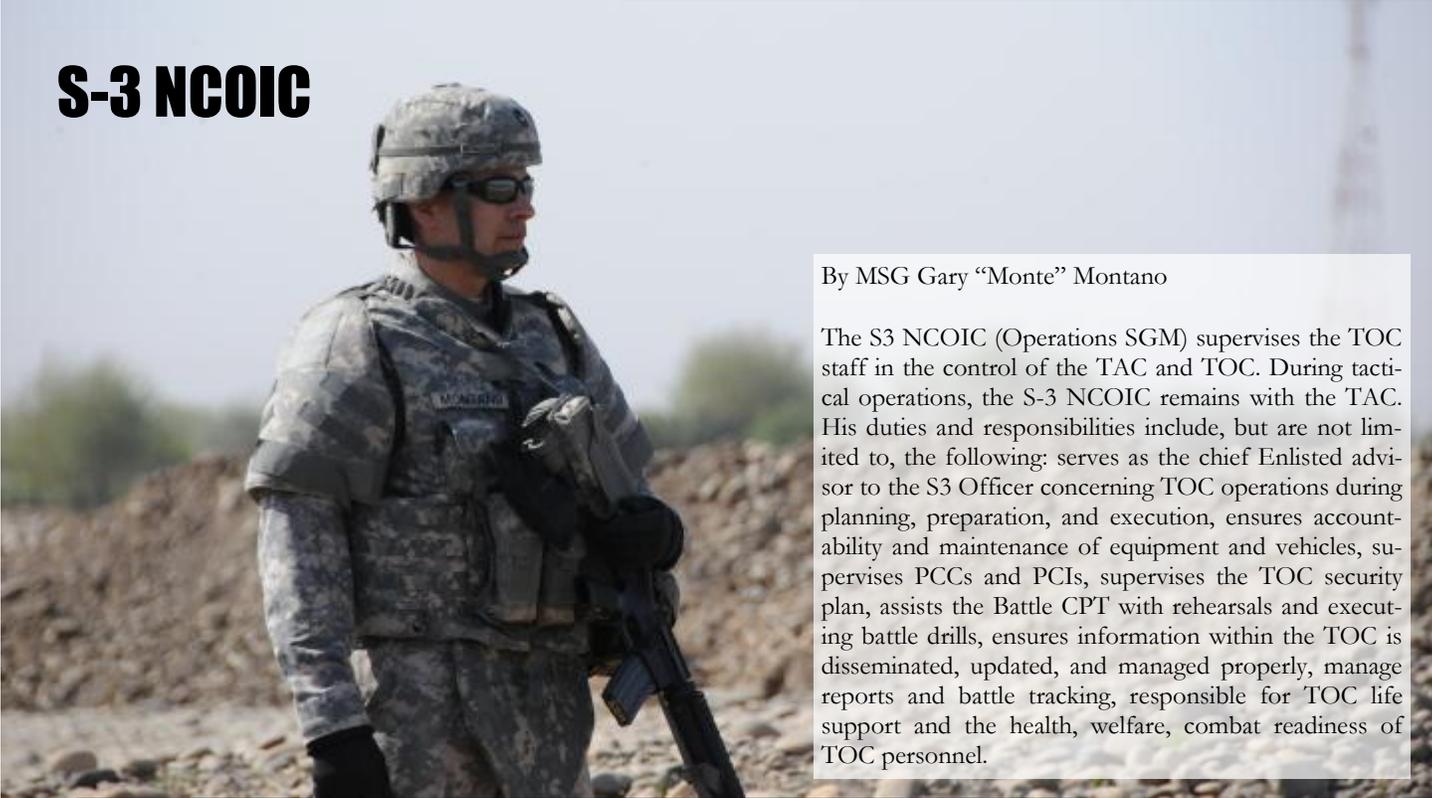
S-2 NCOIC



S-3 NCOIC

By MSG Gary “Monte” Montano

The S3 NCOIC (Operations SGM) supervises the TOC staff in the control of the TAC and TOC. During tactical operations, the S-3 NCOIC remains with the TAC. His duties and responsibilities include, but are not limited to, the following: serves as the chief Enlisted advisor to the S3 Officer concerning TOC operations during planning, preparation, and execution, ensures accountability and maintenance of equipment and vehicles, supervises PCCs and PCIs, supervises the TOC security plan, assists the Battle CPT with rehearsals and executing battle drills, ensures information within the TOC is disseminated, updated, and managed properly, manage reports and battle tracking, responsible for TOC life support and the health, welfare, combat readiness of TOC personnel.



S-4 NCOIC

By SFC Pete Arceo

I am the senior enlisted logistician in the Battalion. I am the facilitator for my soldiers and 5 company elements. I am the enforcer of all supply discipline. Helping to prevent Fraud, Waste and Abuse. I provide logistical support with items to include: Water, Rations, Equipment and personal demand items.

" You cannot Shoot, Move or Communicate without a Quartermaster".





S-6 NCOIC

By SFC Perro

What's my mission as the COMMO NCOIC?

I serve the battalion; Whatever the communication need.

No 'if', 'and', or, 'but's about it.

I do this by taking care of my soldiers and OIC.

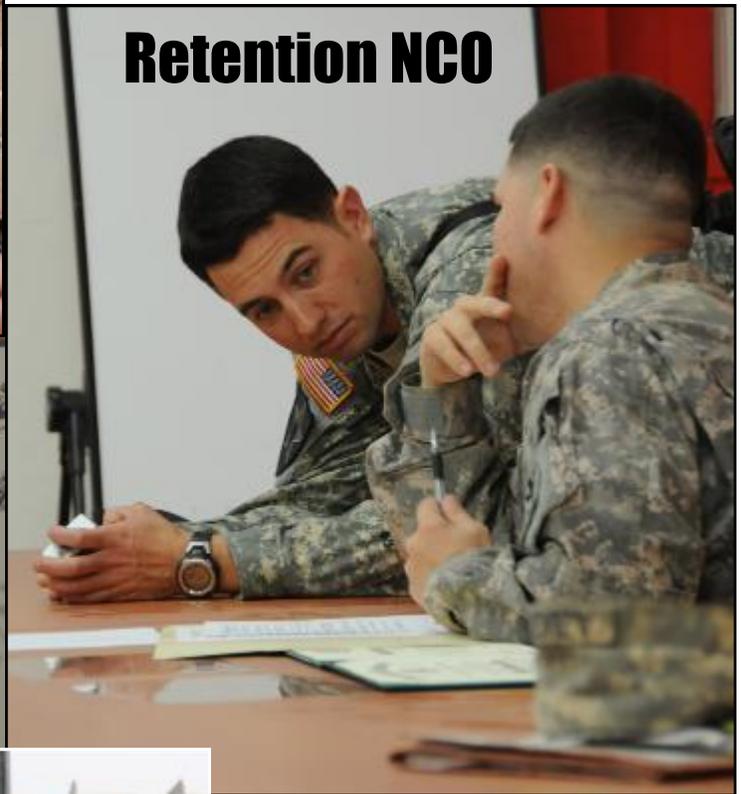
And, in turn my soldiers will take care me.

We assist users with terminal devices, single-channel radio and satellite communications equipment; automated common hardware systems and COTS computer systems. My Soldiers perform field level maintenance on communication and information systems equipment and associated electronic devices. We train and provide technical assistance to users of communication and information system support and associated equipment. The S-6 also operates and performs PMCS on BN vehicles.

I'm an NCO, a PROFESSIONAL!

Professional's serve others, that's what I do.

"I am Signal, the voice of command. Hear me!"



Retention NCO

By SFC Paul Cortez

As the Battalion's Career Counselor, I serve as the Battalion's primary program administrator and expert technical advisor to the Commander and Command Sergeant Major on all reenlistment aspects of the Army Retention Program. Some of my responsibilities include maintaining mission projections and identifying potentially detrimental trends and/or retention mission shortfalls. I also, formulate and submit timely and specific recommendations for the commander to implement. I am overall responsible for maintaining the Army force alignment and its families through the retention of these highly qualified Soldiers.



Medical NCOIC

By SSG(P) Christinean Johnson

I am your medic to serve all when you call. When you look to your left or maybe your right, I will always be there. From medical coverage on missions down to treating your minor colds and cuts, I support the supporters. I accomplish this by first, genuinely caring for those who I serve, and second, by providing support and guidance to those who make the decisions (medically speaking).

Who am I?

I am a Non-Commissioned Officer.



1SG, HHC, 65th

By 1SG Juan Azucena

I'm the one who is overall responsible for everyone in the company and their actions, enlisted and officer. I'm in charge of making sure everything is running smoothly for the company. Overall, one of my biggest responsibilities is being the Mayor for the Town of Vengeance (Badgerville). Another duty of mine is coordinating with the Life Support Office to ensure we have a good working relationship. I'm the one that tasks the company to provide Soldier details for the MWR SPAWAR building, road guard, and police call around ToV. I also help SFC Coleman with all his responsibilities and duties. Lastly, I'm the one that goes around reminding all Soldiers, enlisted and officers alike, of the standards.

Renegade 7 aka TB Green 7!!

OPS SGT, HHC, 65th



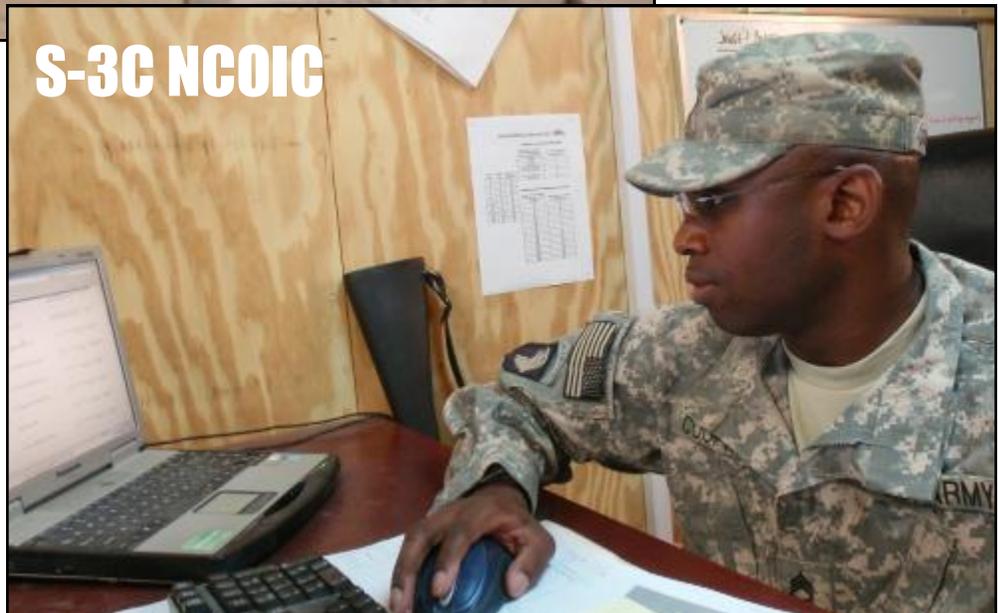
By 1SG Juan Azucena for SFC Leslie Coleman

He is the OPS NCO, but to others he is known as "Mr. Toolman". He builds and fixes a lot of little projects around Town of Vengeance. He is the Master Driver for the Company ensuring all the Renegades are properly trained on all the newly improved MRAP vehicles. He also coordinates all work orders for all living areas. SFC Coleman is the NCO everyone goes to when it comes to getting their living areas squared away. SFC Coleman ensures all of HHC Company Operations ("Ops" for short) are running smoothly and makes sure the company commander's vehicle is ready to go for all missions. Did I mention he also takes care of the Battalion S3 and XO's vehicles?

By SFC Vince Coopwood

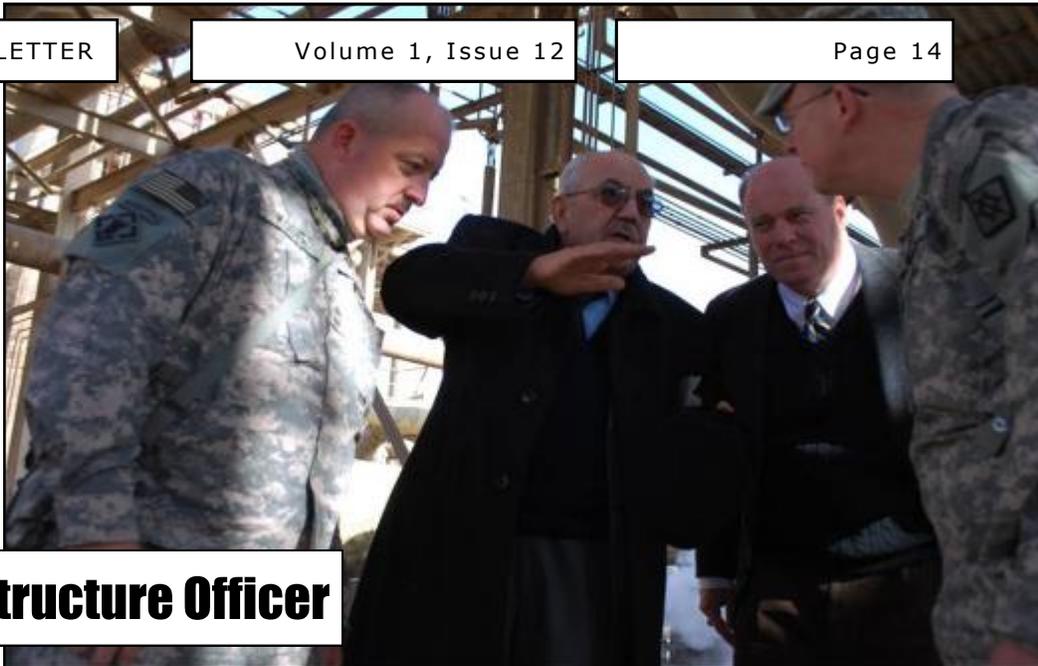
Basically, I do the quality assurance and quality control (QA/QC) on all construction projects (vertical and horizontal), assist in the planning and coordinating. I verify all 65th EN BN project inspections, reports, and trip-tickets of construction units. Also, I work with USACE (US Army Corps of Engineers) on their QA/QC inspections. I analyze short/long range construction needs. I review directives, bills of materials and all required logistical support. I coordinate for local purchase items, provide correspondence between external construction units and 65th EN BN. Prepare designs/BOMs for in-house projects and submit to S3 OIC (officer in charge). Receive daily and weekly construction reports from the companies and report the status of all projects to BN.

S-3C NCOIC



By MSG Russell Kosier

I am responsible for monitoring the oil, fuel, power, infrastructure in Northern Iraq. This includes being responsible for maintaining operational awareness of all infrastructure in MND-N including strategic power, oil production and power generation. I engage, develop and maintain relations with officials of the Government of Iraq and higher Coalition Forces units in order to keep situational awareness and positive communication between all organizations. Although my job is outside the Battalion, I fill a vital role as a senior Engineer NCO.



MND-N Strategic Infrastructure Officer

Closing Comments By SFC Jesse Thorton

Although NCOs are responsible for professional and personal development, A Mentor can help you navigate your career path. Working with a Mentor whose experience is compatible with your goals offers significant benefits. Army Mentors come from many career fields and backgrounds. A Mentor's perspective can help avoid mistakes and make the most of the challenges we, as NCOs, may face. You can ask questions and seek advice from a Mentor who will guide you to be the best you can professionally as well as personally. With a Senior Leader's perspective and experience, he/she can help point you in the right direction towards opportunities you may not have considered. In a staff shop, there is an officer and NCO.

The two are paired together to create a productive team that provides for the entire battalion. The two leaders bring their professional skills and strengths together, the officer's planning and the NCO's execution, to perform their wartime mission to perfection.

The NCO is also one who takes a Soldier from an average civilian fitness level to an Army warfighting machine. The NCO understands the reason to have his or her Soldier physically fit and free from illness. The trained Soldier will be able to function efficiently and effectively during both leisurely time with love ones and wartime with battle buddies.

A highly accomplished unit cannot have wartime success without the use of NCOs.

The NCO leads and trains Soldiers to fight and accomplish missions that would otherwise fail. The NCO is one who guides the youngest private through the rigorous process through the ranks to earn a SGT's rank him/herself.

NCO development begins with the first line leader and encompasses the three pillars of NCODP (NCO Development Program): self development, institutional training and operational assignments. This process, coupled with a Mentor's guidance, has caused the Army to name 2009 as the Year of the Non-Commissioned Officer!

NCOs lead the way!



HHC, 65th NCOs and 4th IA EN NCOs pose after presentation of training certificates.



Clockwise from Top Left: MSG Montano and his metal bouquet; SSG(P) Johnson's on top of things; SFC Henderson is working on his fitness; SFC Coopwood sets up the MARCBOT; SFC Cortez rolls up the colors after "re-up"; Its 11 o'clock. Do you know what your 1SG is doing?; SFC Thorton with Iraqi trainee sporting "deuces"; CSM Morse's first time in an ACS; Center: SFC Coleman and SPC Filmore strike a pose in a sandstorm.

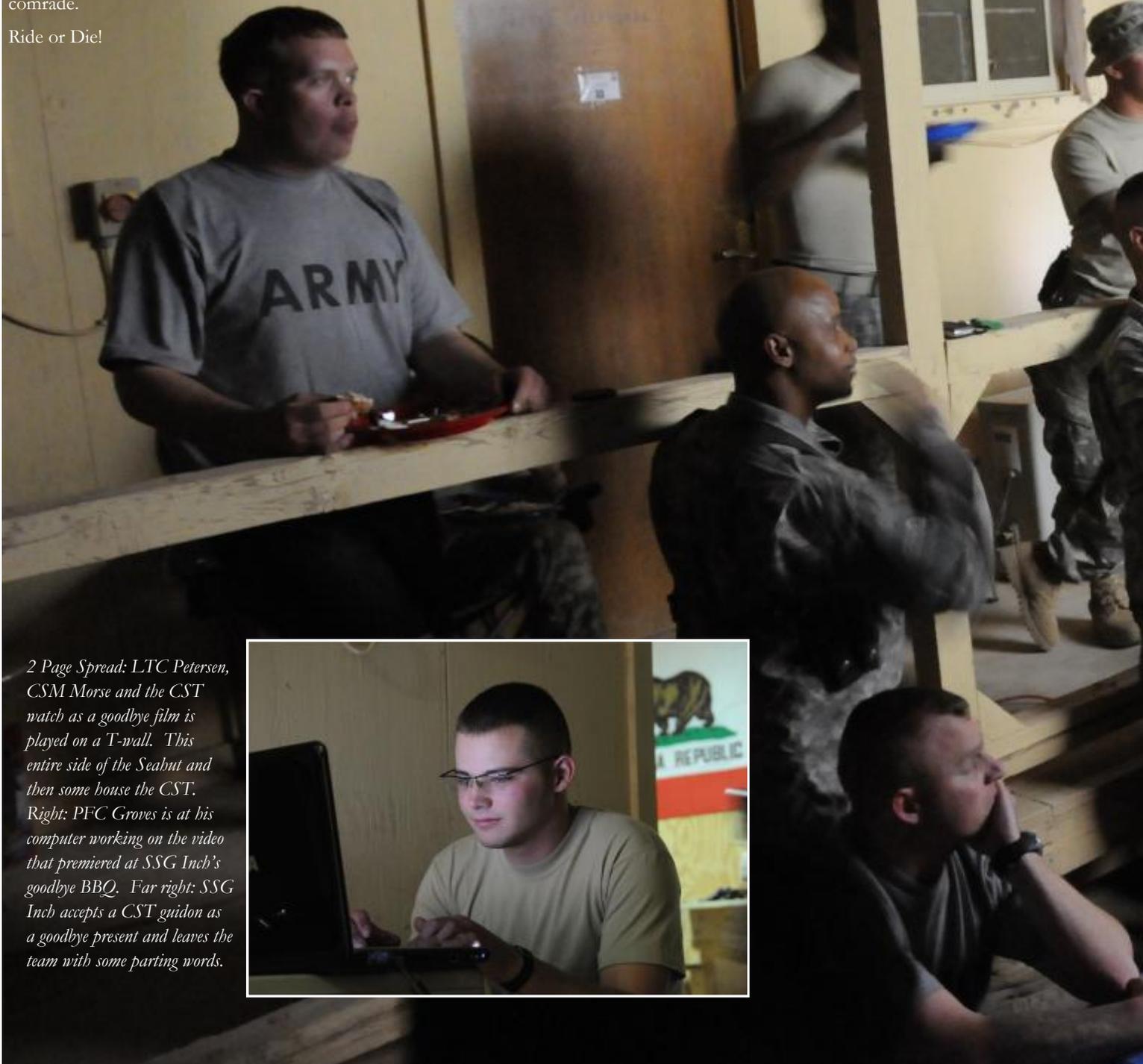


Battalion CST Goes Through Change of Its Own

By PFC Dustin Dagg

On Saturday June the 6th, the 65th EN BN CST held a fair well BBQ for its beloved NCOIC, SSG Norman Inch. SSG Inch was assigned the task of creating a combat security team to provide protection for the 65th EN BN Commander, LTC Petersen. The once non-existent team is now an experienced combat security element that SSG Inch molded and designed, through trials and tribulations, into a team fit to fight. On more personal levels, SSG Inch made a difference in the lives of each soldier that was under his leadership. With a motivated attitude and the willingness to work alongside his Soldiers, SSG Inch earned the respect from each of his team members. One constant in the Army is change, and although the Soldiers below SSG Inch are losing a great leader, the 95th Route Clearance Company is gaining a great leader. In a direct reflection of SSG Inch, each soldier on the CST team will conduct themselves under the new leadership of SSG Torres with great respect and the motivation to always place the mission first, never accept defeat, never quit, and never leave a fallen comrade.

Ride or Die!



2 Page Spread: LTC Petersen, CSM Morse and the CST watch as a goodbye film is played on a T-wall. This entire side of the Seabut and then some house the CST. Right: PFC Groves is at his computer working on the video that premiered at SSG Inch's goodbye BBQ. Far right: SSG Inch accepts a CST guidon as a goodbye present and leaves the team with some parting words.





Times are Changing

By CPT Miguel Lima

As we start our sixth month in Iraq, it should not go unnoticed that times are changing. TFTB folks, Soldiers and Officers, are getting promoted. Personnel are shifting positions from staff to the companies and vice versa. We're even changing the convention of having Sunday as a lower activity day to Friday to match the Iraqi work week. All of these have some effect on how we operate.

The weather, for example, is getting warmer. In fact, it's getting downright hot when you factor in the ACUs and body armor that one wears on mission. Nowadays, when walking around on the COB, some folks have made the change from a patrol cap to a boonie cap because it has little eyelets at the top that vent the natural heat that would otherwise just accumulate. Sometimes, the wind blows the hot air and it feels like the hot air blowing out a vent from your dryer. The only difference is the dryer has one small area that vents the heat whereas here, the hot air blows constantly wherever you go. But, it's no surprise the climate changes. It's natural.

The political climate here in Iraq is changing as well. You may or may not have heard about the Security Agreement between the government of Iraq and the United States but there are some hard dates that will affect the job that TFTB does in the coming months. The latest is the June 30th deadline that states that US Combat Forces will be out of the city by this date. Another of the deadlines is the one that states that by the end of 2011, US troops will be significantly reduced to focus on conducting support operations. Both of these have ramifications on us, now. 2011 is only a year and a half away. If you can remember, two issues ago we mentioned the fact we are just now starting a partnership with an Iraqi Engineer Unit. To the casual on-looker, that may not seem like a lot of time. First impressions like that may prove to be correct but while we're here, we're going to make every engagement count. We have to because the deadlines in the Security Agreement are the

COB Speicher Hurricane Weather Forecast



Above is a snapshot of a weather report from the folks at COB Speicher. Along with sweaty brows; loosened cuffs and a switch from patrol cap to boonie, it's proof positive that the day to day climate here is changing.

set goals we need to work towards. Goals that the Government of Iraq has decided would be sufficient for Coalition Forces to achieve the endstate of what we'd like to define as success in Iraq. A stable country that is able to sustain itself while maintaining the welfare and security of its people is the ideal goal we all hope for. While a day by day progression might leave one with a skeptical outlook, there is a lot that this country has been through in a short amount of time.

US combat forces will be out of the city at the end of this month. That's a large step towards assuring the population of Iraq that the Coalition Forces work hand in hand with the representatives of the Government at the various levels to abide by their elected representatives' decisions. Where do those forces go? They go back to the larger COBs, COSs and FOBs found outside the populated areas. This paves the way for the Iraqis to move in and take on more responsibility. Patrol bases, smaller operations centers and outposts within Iraq have been closing down or are slated to be handed off to the Iraqis. As they settle into these compounds, they settle into the responsibility for more terrain and have a larger stake in the security of the citizens they serve.

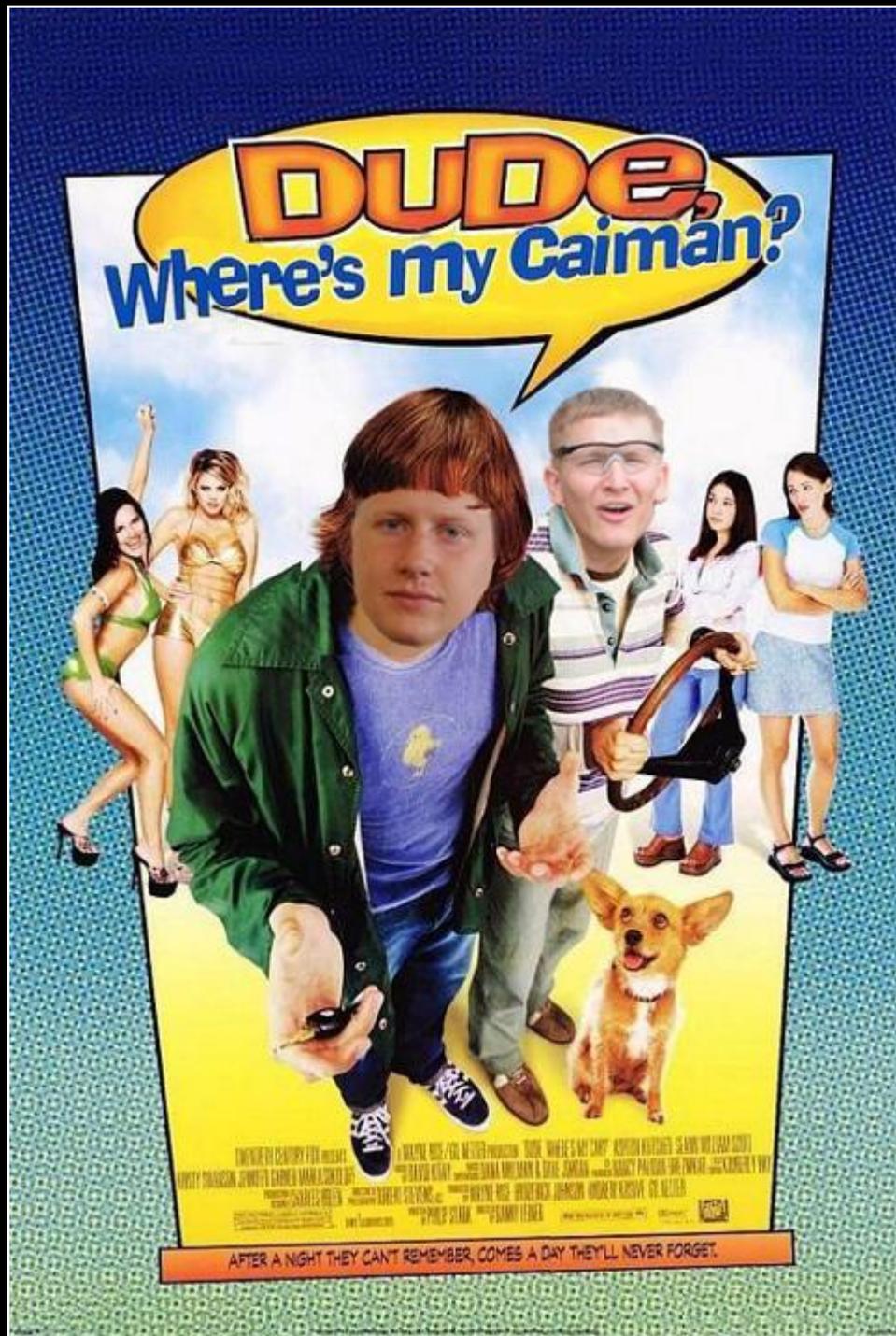
Aside from Iraqi forces taking on more and more responsibility, some US forces are also taking a larger area of operations. This may seem contradictory or even unfair at first, but considering the background for this change, there couldn't be a better reason. As more troops redeploy back to the states, there is no unit to take over for them. This is largely in part to the deadlines stated before. In some cases, additional units are

simply not necessary to take over for a mission that was largely combat or combat support. As we move into an advisory and trainer role, there is less of a need for combat troops to accomplish the new mission taking shape: stability and support.

Since the 65th has set foot in country, the Security Agreement has been in effect and we work through the deadlines as they come to pass. It's a dynamic time that sees a lot of change from a combat mentality to an advise and assist mentality. This is already in action with Military Transition Teams (MiTTs) and Joint Coordination Centers (JCCs) in which Coalition Forces and Iraqi Security Forces live and work together towards a common Iraqi-solution-centered goal. To a broader extent and when applicable, units in theater are partnered with their Iraqi-counterpart unit to work with them and advise and train them on how to do their job better and improve their capability to accomplish their mission. The perfect example are the partnerships that we have with the 4th and 12th Iraqi Army Engineer Regiments.

Times are changing, but we change with them. As the weather gets hotter, we start wearing boonie caps and drink more water. As Soldiers get promoted, they learn and take on more responsibilities. As the Iraqis continue their forward motion of improving their standard and capability, they become better leaders to take over the governance and security of their own country. The Security Agreement is, simply put, a mandate to change for the better. It's a mandate that all parties abide by to ensure that change happens. And, thankfully, the times are changing.

The lighter side of Iraq.....now showing...



2LT Bruzek and SSG Inch, CST's top dogs, wake up one morning from a long night of partying at the main MWR and cannot remember where they parked their caiman. On their journey to find the missing caiman they encounter a variety of people who include their angry Battalion Commander and Command Sergeant Major, an angry COB Speicher street gang, a Turkish vender hounding them for overpriced merchandise, a cult of alien-seeking fanatics, and a group of aliens in human form looking for a mystical device that could save or destroy COB Speicher.

Commander's Corner

Aloha Families and Friends of Task Force Trailblazer,

Thanks again for taking the time to read our newsletter and support your Soldier in Task Force Trailblazer. This month, I thought I'd share with you a few notes on some outstanding Soldiers. Every week, company commanders nominate a Soldier and an NCO to be selected as the TF Lightning (25th Infantry Division) hero of the week. This week, as always, we had some great nominations. These were:

HHC: PFC Brandon Grimes – works on the battalion combat security team (CST), and recently excelled during a helicopter “salvage” reconnaissance in a relatively unknown area.

SGT DeMonte Washington, also on the CST has excelled as a gunner and ensures that all the radios and communications systems in the team work properly—training other Soldiers to do the same.

FSC: SPC Vickers – serves in the distribution platoon there, which travels hundreds of miles a week, was selected as the Bn Soldier of the Quarter, and studied hard to excel on the promotion board.

SGT Reagan Solonga, also in the distribution platoon has served as a mentor in the platoon, has excelled in boards, and drives exceptionally well.

511th: SPC Jason Porbeck does a great job every day ensuring that the critical electronics and radios in 2nd platoon are operating properly during route clearance operations.

SGT Michael Devlin, also in 2nd platoon leads from the front during route clearance operations, and has a special skill in repairing internet problems that has a direct impact on the morale of the unit.

95th: PFC Gregory Vineyard from the maintenance platoon recently excelled in repairing one of our new vehicles that the contractors couldn't figure out, AND scored 299 out of 300 on his Army Physical Fitness Test.

SSG Oumbashi Petersen was also critical to repairing the vehicle by figuring out the electrical problem (and he has a great last name!).

C/84th: SPC Vernon Simmons of 1st Platoon is a superb carpenter who works hard

in his craft and has been key to training our Iraqi partners in constructing some buildings they will use for years to come.

SGT Warren Conner, also 1st Platoon has shown his skill in carpentry during construction of a sensitive facility construction that was far from a standard project—a building inside a steel cage, basically.

We're nearing the 6-month mark of the deployment, and the above Soldiers are just a sample of the Soldiers who have served their country with distinction here in Iraq. The Task Force is full of Soldiers doing their jobs exceptionally every day.

You are probably hearing a bit in the news about the “out of the cities” phase of the Security Agreement between the U.S. and Iraq. For us, it is not likely to mean a lot of change. We will continue to do our missions in construction, route clearance and logistics support—with our Iraqi engineer partners. Our goal of course is to ensure that our partners are able to continue these missions after we leave. We're well on our way to seeing that happen.

Thanks for all you do to support us; be safe this summer (we worry about you too!); and take care of each other as we do!

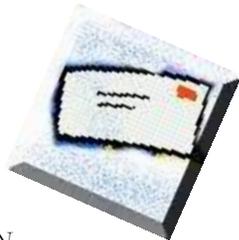
First In, Last Out,

Trailblazer 6

65th Engineer Battalion, US ARMY

MAILING ADDRESS FOR SOLDIERS ON COB SPEICHER

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