

Crossed Sabers

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VOLUME 1 ~ ISSUE 18

MULTI-NATIONAL DIVISION-BAGHDAD

OCTOBER 26, 2009

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Brighter future ahead as Twin Schools open



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

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

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – On Oct. 12, a ceremony celebrated the grand opening of two schools nestled in a small village north of Baghdad, culminating two years of hard work.

Known as the Twin Schools to American Soldiers, here, they will now educate over 1200 students, and provide the children of the area the schooling they deserve.

In the past two years this project experienced many hurdles and it wasn't until the Soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division assumed the project that the schools

Ozark, Ala. native, Lt. Col. Eric Schwegler, commander of the 1st Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, speaks to the students of the Twin Schools during the grand opening ceremony here, Oct. 12.

had any hope of being open for the new school year.

When the U.S. troops arrived in the Taji area in mid-August, the battalion made civil capacity and essential services missions a main priority. By focusing on things that better the lives of a large majority of the local population, the American Soldiers here feel they can leave a lasting impact in their area of operations.

"The projects we fund are geared at benefitting a large group of people," said Whitewater, Wis. native, Staff Sgt. Nicholas Lien, the civil capacity and essential services officer. "The Twin Schools will benefit the over 1200 children, their

families, and most importantly the future of Iraq."

As the sun shone bright in the small village, hundreds of children, local leaders, and U.S. Soldiers stood in attendance to celebrate this historic day. In the background stood the schools with classrooms full of desks and chalkboards, staffed with faculty, ready to offer the children of this village and surrounding areas a proper education.

When he walked to the podium to give his speech, Ozark, Ala. native, Lt.

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Sheikh council meeting brings resolve

Story by Pfc. Kimberly Hackbarth

4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div., MND-B

BAGHDAD—U.S. and Iraqi commanders, along with prominent members of the Abu Ghraib community, met Oct. 3 to discuss security gains as well as rebuilding dialogue in this western community of Baghdad.

Col. John Norris, commander of 4th Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, suggested a representative from 24th Bde., 6th IA Div. attend the council meeting to help bridge the communication gap between Abu Ghraib sheikhs and the Iraqi Army since a recent rift.

At the meeting, Iraqi Lt. Col. Yaser assured council members that security in the past could not be compared to how it is now. He pointed out that things are safer and more stable all over Baghdad, largely

“The Iraqi Army could receive their concerns about security and could, in fact, respond and resolve the issues and the concerns they had with security instead of me being the interface. That’s ultimately part of our strategy of irreversible momentum: to be able to ensure that the people trust the Iraqi Army and the Iraqi Army support the people.”

-- Col. John Norris, commander of 4th Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division

due to actions such as patrols and warrant-issued arrests made by the IA and Iraqi police.

“Every day is getting better,” Yaser said.

Yaser’s presence at the meeting opened ways of communication between the IA and the council members by allowing the two groups to share thoughts and opinions on issues in the area with little input from Norris.

“The Iraqi Army could receive their concerns about security and could, in fact, respond and resolve the issues and

the concerns they had with security instead of me being the interface,” said Norris. “That’s ultimately part of our strategy of irreversible momentum: to be able to ensure that the people trust the Iraqi Army and the Iraqi Army support the people.”

Security was not the only issue brought up at the meeting.

Internally displaced persons are a growing concern for the Abu Ghraib council members. Yaser reassured the council members the Iraqi forces look to help the IDPs and want those people to

live in peace with the rest of the populace.

One of the final topics discussed in the meeting was the need for people to go to the authorities if they had information about crimes committed. He explained to the council that one of the biggest reasons why violence still existed in their areas was because people would not come forward with tips.

Overall, the meeting broke new ground for all members involved by repairing the partnership between the IA and the council member and allowing them to work together to try to make the area a safer place for the citizens.

“Just (Yaser’s) presence and his willingness to receive the information and the concern to discuss security-related issues and the issues within the communities with the sheikhs was a big victory for us in terms of improved security and immediate change in perception that the Iraqi army is, in fact, there for the people and supporting the people.” ✂

Marysville native serves in Baghdad

Story by Pfc. Kimberly Hackbarth

4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div., MND-B

BAGHDAD—Pfc. Robert Moritz, a radio telephone operator with 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, awoke one afternoon in Nasir Wa Salam, here, when the driver of his Stryker vehicle barged in with news of a mission.

No stranger to this kind of wake-up call, the native of Marysville, Wash., put on his gear, readied his M4 carbine and headed out to where the rest of the members of the scout platoon were waiting.

Even with a mission as simple as escorting interpreters to a nearby joint combat outpost, the team must have every aspect of the mission worked out. That’s where the importance of Moritz’s job comes into play.

“Communication is the key to success. It’s important that everybody knows what’s going on within the battalion,” Moritz said. “It’s important that the [platoon leader]

communicates to all right people about the situation.”

Not only is Moritz an RTO, he’s an infantryman whose training included more detailed infantry skills, such as performing combat missions in an urban environment. Even though the focus of U.S. forces has altered from a combat force to one of assisting and advising the Iraqi Army, Moritz and the rest of his platoon trained hard for the deployment; despite the fact that they’re all fairly new to the battalion. The pre-deployment rotation at the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, La., was the first time the platoon trained together as a team and since then they’ve continued to grow.

“For the most part, we all know each other pretty well. We all understand each other pretty well. We know what’s expected of us and we do our tasks the best that we can,” he said.

Moritz’s attitude is one of the things that get him noticed by those in charge of him, including 1st Lt. Shannon Kay, from Rancho Cucamonga, Calif.

“He does everything a leader or [noncom-

missioned officer] asks him to do and he does it without complaining. You don’t hear positive or negative out of him; he just does it and he does it to the best of his ability. He’s the type of Soldier any platoon leader would want in his platoon,” Moritz’s platoon leader said.

After only being in country two weeks, Moritz admits his first deployment isn’t exactly what he had imagined it would be so far.

“I figured it’d be a lot more kicking in doors.”

He knows the brigade’s mission is to assist and advise the Iraqis. While he hasn’t taken part in any partnership missions, he is ready to assist with the mission in any way.

“It’s important that if we’re going to leave Iraq that we all help each other out so we can leave it in the hands of the Iraqis. Whatever [the commanders] see fit for us to do to help with that effort, then we’ll do it.” ✂

A native of Marysville, Wash., Pfc. Robert Moritz is now a radio telephone operator with 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division.



Photo by Pfc. Kimberly Hackbarth, 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div., MND-B



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TWIN SCHOOLS~ From Pg. 1

Col. Eric Schwegler beamed with pride. As the battalion commander, Schwegler has played a large role in cultivating the progress of the Twin Schools project. Understanding that the children of Iraq possess the hope for a stable future in Iraq,

Schwegler and Lien relentlessly ensured that the schools would open for the upcoming school year.

“Lt. Col. Schwegler let it be known that the Twin Schools were a top priority,” explained Lien, who oversaw the project for the battalion. “We stayed in contact with the contractors daily and made bi-weekly

visits to the site to ensure that the school opened in time.”

Thousands of man hours, nearly one million dollars, and two years later, the schools are finished. After all of the hard work by so many people, the grand opening ceremony held such great meaning to all of the children, local leaders, and U.S.

troops.

“The children standing here are the future doctors, engineers, and leaders of Iraq,” said Schwegler during his ceremony speech. “This project is a testament to the Government of Iraq, local leaders, and [U.S. forces], in our shared vision for the future of Iraq.” ✂



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

Decatur, Ala. native, Sgt. Nathaniel Greer, a civil affairs team member attached to the 1st Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, shakes hands with young students of the Twin Schools here, Oct. 12. After two years of work, the Twin Schools will now educate over 1200 students in a small village north of Baghdad.



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

Students of the Twin Schools wait for the official opening of the schools here, Oct. 12. The Twin Schools will provide and education to over 1200 children in a small village north of Baghdad.



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

Three students of the Twin Schools salute the flag of Iraq during the schools' grand opening ceremony here, Oct. 12. After two years of efforts by U.S. Troops and local Iraqi government, the Twin Schools are now open to educate over 1200 students in a small village north of Baghdad.



The Daily Charge can be viewed at the MND-B Portal, PAO homepage.



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Freedom Radio
Baghdad 104.1
and 107.3 FM

Ironhorse Soldiers provide assistance to Sol security mission

Story by Sgt. Jon Soles
MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – As the Sons of Iraq continue to carry out their job of helping maintain security, visits from their American and Iraqi partners provide assistance and support to make sure the SoI have the resources to keep the peace.

Soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, visited SoI checkpoints near Taji, here, Oct. 6, to inspect and check on supplies and the SoI's contingency plans in the event of an attack.

First Lt. Peter Muse, an infantry officer from Boston, led a platoon of Soldiers that took the troops down miles of dusty back roads. The mission began on a diplomatic note, as U.S. troops met with Sheikh Yasin Muhammad Hasayn at the Iraqi Army's Joint Security Station Hor al-Bosh, to discuss the local SoI needs.

The conversation was mostly about such needs as water and pay issues, but the sheikh also delighted in telling Muse about his grandchildren. The small talk

helps build the relationships that pay off in earned trust between American Soldiers and Iraqis, said Muse.

"Sheikh Yasin is always helpful. He will stop in a lot to make sure things are working between locals and SoI."

Most of the SoI members are from the local neighborhoods they defend.

"The SoI guys are from around here so they have a better understanding," said Muse. "They know the people in the area, so they are a valuable asset."

At each checkpoint, Muse met with the SoI members to discuss their needs and tactical operations.

"We wanted to make sure they have food and water. We wanted to make sure they have a response plan if they come under attack; if they have a serious injury," said Muse. "They had plans for both."

Staff Sgt. Michael Litteken, of Electra, Texas, stood outside one checkpoint pulling security while Muse talked with the SoI guards. Litteken said such missions contribute to the area's security.

"We're making sure the area is safe and secure and putting out a U.S. Soldier



Photo by Sgt. Jon Soles, MND-B PAO

First Lt. Peter Muse takes notes from Sons of Iraq members at a checkpoint near Taji, here, Oct. 6.

presence here. We want to let them know we are still out here, still involved and to check on the SoI and make sure they are still doing their job like they're supposed to."

The inspection showed that the SoI is committed to the task of defending Iraq, according to Muse.

"Overall, I'm pretty happy. I was glad

to see they know how to respond to certain situations and they have a plan," said Muse.

The future of Iraq's security is dependent on the preparedness of its security forces. The inspection of SoI checkpoints by American Soldiers was another way to check the SoI's readiness and hold them accountable for maintaining security. ✂

U.S., Federal Police conduct air insertion mission

Photos by 1st Lt. Josh Risher
1st Bde. PAO, 1st Cav. Div., MND-B



BAGHDAD—Milpitas, Calif. native Spc. Glenn Escano (right), 1st Squadron, 7th U.S. Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, chats with an Iraqi policeman from the 1st Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 1st Federal Police Division, while sweeping a highway for improvised explosive devices. The combined air assault force swept three separate urban stretched of the Baghdad-Diyala highway in just a few hours.



(Right) An Iraqi policeman (left) from the 1st Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 1st Federal Police Division, observes as Fort Worth, Texas native, Spc. Mario Macias, a mortar man from 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, uses a metal detector to search for improvised explosive devices along the Baghdad-Diyala highway. U.S. troops conducted multiple combined air insertions along the highway with their partners from the Iraqi Federal Police.



American troops with 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, and policemen from the 1st Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 1st Federal Police Division, position themselves to provide security after dismounting from a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter. The combined force conducted three air insertions, all in clear view of the busy highway. The mission aimed to deter insurgents by showing them how quickly and unexpectedly the combined force can arrive and was first time that U.S. Soldiers and Federal Police conducted an air insertion mission into local urban areas.

Mada'in Academy prepares IA Soldiers

Story by Staff Sgt. Mark Burrell

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – Warrant Officer Haider Maan Abdul Sada has been in the Iraqi Army for 14 years.

Since 2003, he has worked closely with U.S. forces and understands all too well what is at stake for his country's future.

"We live in a very tough situation, so I have to be involved to help my people," said Haider, with the 45th IA Brigade, 11th IA Division.

When Haider's military tactical and technical knowledge reached a plateau, he sought out the Mada'in Training Academy at Combat Outpost Carver, here, in southeastern Baghdad.

"Whenever we reach a certain level of military knowledge, we need to find more," explained Haider. "So we come to American academies like this."

Throughout Baghdad, U.S. Soldiers have set up courses to impart their combat skills to Iraqi Soldiers in academies like this one.

On Oct. 8, Soldiers from Company A, 1st Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, graduated another class, bringing the total number of IA Soldiers successfully trained to 288.

The 5-day course focuses on company-level leadership skills for lieutenants and below, with instruction ranging from counterinsurgency operations to identifying improvised explosive devices to reflexive fire to checkpoint operations to first-aid lanes.

"Everybody in the IA is supposed to be a Soldier and everybody should know these techniques," said Haider. "This is my motivation for going to this class. I am a Soldier and this is my duty."

Like Haider, Sgt. Daniel Montijo, an instructor at the academy, has a military family tradition too. Both of his grandfathers fought in World War II; instilling a strong sense of duty in him.

"I've always wanted to take care of Soldiers," said Montijo, a combat medic from Ramona, Calif. "They are Soldiers just like us. The IA are allies and if I can help them secure a better future for Iraq, then it will help keep



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

Iraqi Army Soldiers from the 45th IA Brigade, 11th IA Division, bandage each other as Spc. Wesley Richards, an infantryman from Hueytown, Ala., looks on during the final exercise of the Mada'in Training Academy at Combat Outpost Carver, here, Oct. 8.



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

Spc. Wesley Richards, an infantryman from Hueytown, Ala., demonstrates how to properly pull security while fellow Soldiers receive aid during the medical training lanes at Mada'in Training Academy on Combat Outpost Carver, here, Oct. 8.

us out of here."

According to Montijo, positive feedback from the graduates reinforces the fact that, given the chance, the students want to become better Soldiers.

"I think that they don't have the opportunities available to further their military knowledge like we do in the States," explained Montijo. "So if we can impart our knowledge and technical strengths, then we can help them as an army and a country."

The Paratroopers understand that providing the know-how to secure a community can be just as valuable as walking those streets themselves.

"By teaching the students principles of patrolling, how to set up over watch positions, checkpoint procedures and all the other techniques taught in this academy, the IA can provide aid to the surrounding community," said Montijo.

To help each other out, once the students graduate, they usually pass on what they've learned to their fellow Soldiers.

"It seems like every class that comes through are better

able to answer the medical questions," Montijo explained. "It's a testament that they're going back and spreading their knowledge learned here."

The instructors noticed a change in the students when they combined their newly-acquired skills for the final medical lanes exercise.

"Certain individuals may have had a problem with the PowerPoint and the lectures, but when they accomplish the lanes portion, they do have a sense of pride and they feel better knowing that they can accomplish these tasks," said Montijo.

With smiles on their faces, all the students received diplomas and the coveted 82nd Airborne patch. Most of the students will return to their checkpoints, except two.

Instructors hand-picked Haider and another student for permanent assignment to the academy; the first students to do so.

They will undergo a two-week training regimen before they become primary instructors teaching alongside U.S.

Paratroopers. ✂



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

An Iraqi Army Soldier from the 45th IA Brigade, 11th IA Division, searches Spc. Arnold Graham, an infantryman from Eddington, Maine, during a practical exercise on proper searching techniques at Mada'in Training Academy at Combat Outpost Carver.

Old Hickory helps IA help themselves

Story by Spc. Ruth McClary

30th HBCT PAO, MND-B

BAGHDAD – U.S. and Iraqi Soldiers work together on missions to make the streets safer here in Iraq.

But every month or so, a group of Soldiers trade their weapons for wrenches at Forward Operating Base Falcon to help their Iraqi Army counterparts make the Iraqi vehicles safer for the road.

Soldiers of Company B, 230th Brigade Support Battalion, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, taught humvee maintenance techniques Soldiers of 17th Iraqi Army Division's Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance section.

The Iraqis received hands-on instruction for repairing front and rear brakes, radiators, and replacing tires on a vehicle that had not been driven in three months.

"This training is so important to these guys, who are not mechanics and are usually left to fend for themselves," said Capt. Chad Zinnecker, an advisor with the 17th Iraqi Army Military Transition Team, from Austin, Texas. "Without this training they wouldn't have vehicles that are mission capable. This allows them to be more self-sufficient."

The focus of most missions for the U.S. troops revolves around maintenance

work in a specific area around Baghdad, and the IRS Soldiers fall within that area. Their compound is about a mile from FOB Falcon, which puts it in close enough proximity to easily exchange parts and receive the ongoing training necessary to keep the vehicles running. Before, they shopped the local populace to get parts and paid out of pocket for repairs.

"They repaired the front and back brakes during two days of this training," said Spc. Tony Cline, of Lincolnton, N.C. "It would cost them about \$100 at the marketplace, now it will cost \$20 in parts and they can do the repairs themselves."

Zinnecker said the Iraqi Soldiers not only have problems getting parts, they also can't get supporting products such as petroleum oils or lubricants to maintain the life of parts, which usually leads to them having to find a way to buy the parts again.

"We try to talk them through it or give them literature to take back for those problems, that way they can teach the other Soldiers at their compound too," said Cline.

"There is no better way for them to learn than to work through the problems they have on the vehicles," said Zinnecker.

"Safety first" is one lesson Cline is determined to teach the Iraqi Soldiers. Lessons, he said, they unhappily learn through trial and error.

"Yesterday they didn't use drip pans. I



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

Sgt. Waled Chaleb (left), of the 17th Iraqi Army Division's Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance section, and Spc. Tony Cline, of Company B, 230th Brigade Support Battalion, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, work together to replace front brake pads and calipers on an Iraqi humvee, Sept. 30. Chaleb learned how to repair brakes and a leaky radiator during classes at Forward Operating Base Falcon, Sept. 28 to Oct. 1. Cline, of Lincolnton, N.C. is the main instructor for the monthly IA maintenance classes.

made them clean the whole bay. Today they asked for drip pans as soon as they got here."

Zinnecker said they also teach the Iraqis resourceful ingenuity, such as using dish detergent in place of lubricants to get

humvees to run.

"We supply Iraqi solutions to Iraqi problems," said Zinnecker. "Helping them work out issues to get it fixed themselves is the main objective." ✂

Iraqi Army engineers train on heavy equipment



BAGHDAD – Soldiers of the 11th Iraqi Army Field Engineer Regiment observe Staff Sgt. Frank Lopez (left), of Webster, Mass., from the 101st Engineer Battalion, 225th Eng. Brigade, during a three day maintenance class, Oct. 3-6. The "Train the trainer" course provides IA engineers an opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills to teach other Iraqi Soldiers and civilians on how to keep the equipment running and mission capable.

Photos by Staff Sgt. April Mota, 101st Eng. Bn. PAO, 225th Eng. Bde., MND-B



An Iraqi engineer from the 11th Iraqi Army Field Engineer Regiment gets a hands-on look at an armored front loader during a three day operator and maintenance class taught, here, on Victory Base Complex, Oct. 3-6.



(Left) Staff Sgt. Frank Lopez (center), from Webster, Mass., with the 101st Engineer Battalion, 225th Eng. Brigade, explains the importance of proper maintenance during a three day "Train the Trainer" class, Oct. 3-6, for the members of the 11th Iraqi Army Field Engineer Regiment, here, on Victory Base Complex.

Ironhorse engages with knock, talk mission



Photos by Sgt. Jon Soles, MND-B PAO



TAJI, Iraq – Staff Sgt. William Cannon (left), of Taylor, Mich., and Sgt. Jhonny Beldor, of Fredericksburg, Pa., confer about directions during a patrol near Taji Oct. 5. Both non-commissioned officers are artillerymen assigned to Company A, 1st Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division.

(Left) Spc. Marcus Jeter, of Atlanta, walks through a sunflower field near Taji, Oct. 5, during a joint patrol with the Iraqi Army. Jeter, an artilleryman assigned to Company A, 1st Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, searches for weapon caches and other suspicious activity. "You get more in-depth and meet a lot of people, see different cultures and see a lot of kids," said Jeter. "Plus, I get to do a different job because basically [artilleryman] usually sit on the [forward operating base]."

Staff Sgt. Shad Fowler, of Amarillo, Texas, looks inside a barrel while searching through a garbage pile on a joint patrol with the Iraqi Army near Taji Oct. 5. Fowler is a light-wheel vehicle mechanic assigned to Company A, 1st Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division.

Thunderous welcome

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



CAMP TAJI, Iraq- Smoke and dust rise as an M109A6 155mm howitzer assigned to 1st Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, fires during a visit from Brig. Gen. John Murray, the deputy commanding general for maneuver, 1st Cavalry Division, and Gen. Ayad, the Rusafa area command chief of staff, to Firebase Mayhem, here, Oct. 8.



Rusafa area command chief of staff, Gen. Ayad offers his gratitude to Little Rock, Ark., native Capt. Alex Aquino, commander of Battery B "Pacesetters", 1st Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, for the invitation to observe the "Pacesetters" conduct a fire mission at Firebase Mayhem, here, Oct. 8.

1st ACB Soldiers help by giving shirt off their back

Story by Sgt. 1st Class Kap Kim

1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

COPPERAS COVE, Texas – Before Lt. Col. Charles Dalcourt and the rest of 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, deployed to Iraq, he wanted to revive the relationship between their Adopt-A-School and his unit.

With 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment's operational tempo, their involvement fell off, admitted Capt. Michael Hutson, its rear detachment commander during this deployment to Iraq.

So, Hudson, of Lufkin, Texas, and his Soldiers visited with Copperas Cove Junior High School's Stacy Bradley, who is the Community in Schools site director, and basically asked her what she and her students wanted.

Bradley, who works with students whose families may have socioeconomic disadvantages, asked Hutson for clothes, shoes and positive role models.

"There are so many guys here who just don't have a real, strong role-model," she said.

Last summer, Hutson's unit members

started a clothes and shoes drive throughout the entire 1st ACB. During their brigade's "Back to School Bash," last summer, they gathered more than six, big boxes of clothes and shoes for Bradley's class.

"With the gently, used clothes they've brought me already that look great, I can help with the kids' self esteem," Bradley said. "It helps as they go through the day – some of them get picked on because their clothes aren't clean or new – it's one less problem they have to worry about going through the day."

Although Bradley was elated with the donation of clothes and shoes, 1st Sgt. Palermo Deschamps, said he feels that it hasn't been enough.

"There's a lot of needs that they have, and unfortunately given the circumstances, we've been so busy with rear detachment work, we haven't been able to give them everything that they need," said Deschamps of the Bronx, N.Y. "They could use a lot more than what we've given them."

There are a few future projects the rear detachment sergeant major has in the works. Along with mentorship and tutoring, Deschamps, who is somewhat of a handyman, plans on painting and building shelves for Bradley's classroom.

The relationship between Copperas Cove Jr. High School and 1st Bn., 227th



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

Stacy Bradley (right), Copperas Cove Jr. High School's Community in School's site director, helps 1st Sgt. Palermo Deschamps (middle) and Spc. William Colley of 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, bring in donated clothes, Oct. 1, in Copperas Cove, Texas.

Avn. Regt., is one that Bradley is extremely happy about.

"I love these guys," she said of the Soldiers.

Hutson said his unit feels the same way about CCJHS.

"Ms. Bradley is an amazing teacher ...

she really believes in the kids and their education and she's been our point of contact the entire time we started the program," Hutson said. "We are committed to helping her out any way we can. She's just an amazing person, and she gives a lot of herself to these students." ✂

FIRST TEAM



Photos by Sgt. Jon Soles, MND-B PAO

MND-B celebrates Hispanic-American heritage month



CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – Division Special Troops Battalion Command Sgt. Maj. Clinton Joseph takes on a piñata at the Multi-National Division—Baghdad Hispanic Heritage Month Observation, here, Oct. 9. The piñata was filled with traditional Mexican candy. Soldiers enjoyed a night of entertainment, dancing and Hispanic foods at the event. "It was a great event to celebrate a very special heritage with all kinds of people from all over the world," said Sgt. Maj. Bernie Serna, of Laredo, Texas, who is of Mexican descent. "It's what makes our armed forces strong – the diversity."

Staff Sgt. Alma Selvera (left), of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, and Sgt. 1st Class Frank Rodriguez, of San Marcos, Texas, perform a traditional Jalisco Mexican dance as part of the group "Raices Mexicanas" at the Multi-National Division—Baghdad Hispanic Heritage Month Observation, here, Oct. 9. Rodriguez is the equal opportunity advisor for MND-B. Selvera is a dental assistant assigned to the 502nd Dental Company, 1st Medical Brigade, Multi-National Corps-Iraq. "We want Soldiers to come to the observances so they can learn about the different heritages," said Rodriguez. The folkloric dance and costumes originate in the Mexican state of Jalisco.



NOV 01

The Cold War

On this day in American Military History

United States tests first hydrogen bomb

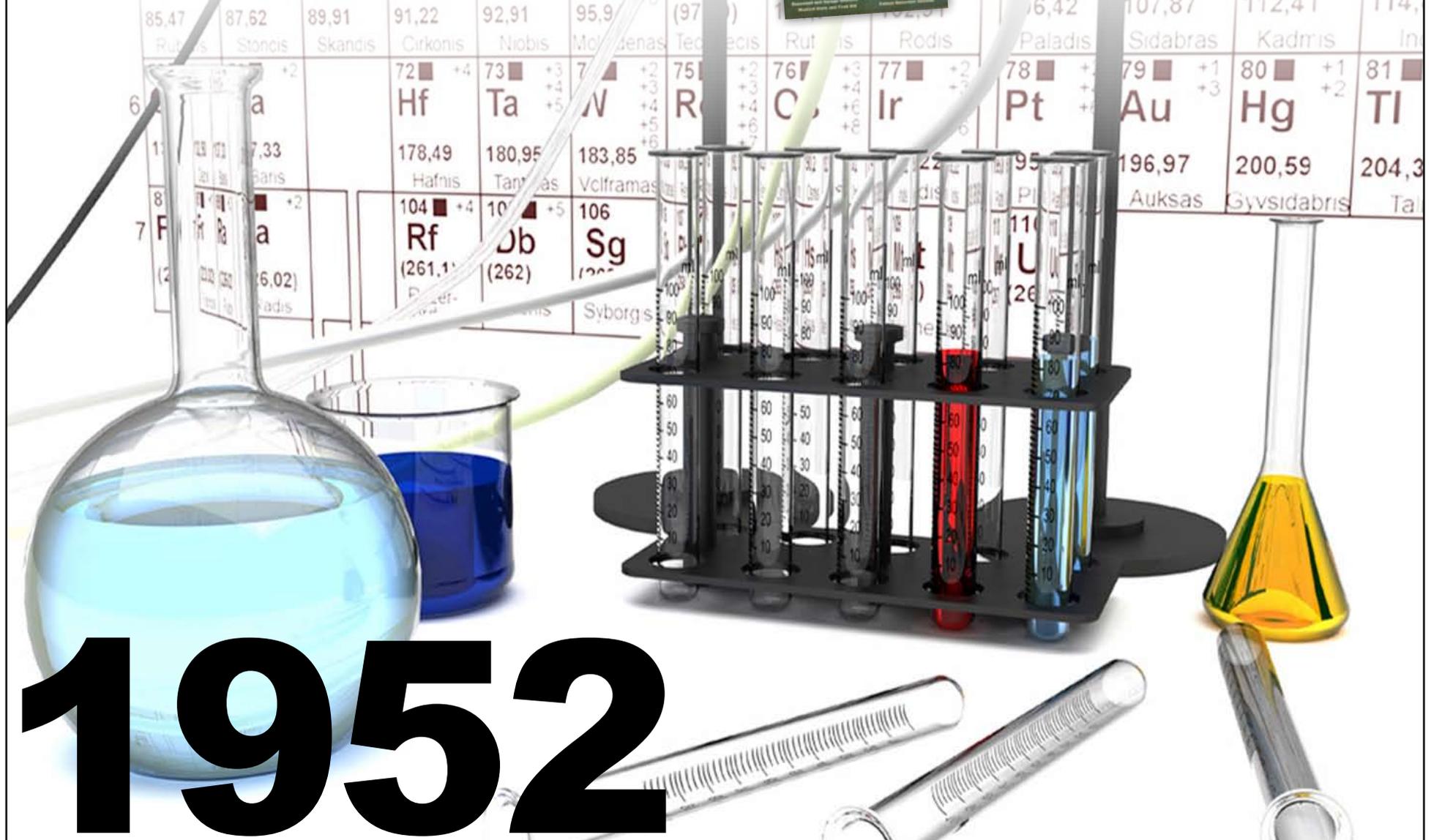
The United States detonates the world's first thermonuclear weapon, the hydrogen bomb, on Eniwetok atoll in the Pacific. The test gave the United States a short-lived advantage in the nuclear arms race with the Soviet Union.

Following the successful Soviet detonation of an atomic device in September 1949, the United States accelerated its program to develop the next stage in atomic weaponry, a thermonuclear bomb. Popularly known as the hydrogen bomb, this new weapon was approximately 1,000 times more powerful than conventional nuclear devices.

Opponents of development of the hydrogen bomb included J. Robert Oppenheimer, one of the fathers of the atomic bomb. He and others argued that little would be accomplished except the speeding up of the arms race, since it was assumed that the Soviets would quickly follow suit.

The opponents were correct in their assumptions. The Soviet Union exploded a thermonuclear device the following year and by the late 1970s, seven nations had constructed hydrogen bombs.

ARMS RACE!



Tournament promotes unity across Mada'in

Story by Pfc. Jared Gehmann

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

BAGHDAD – It may have not been the World Cup, but for eight Iraqi community teams pride was at stake during a day-long soccer tournament held throughout the vast Ma'dain region, Oct. 9.

The small remote towns of Jasr Diyala, Narwan, and Village 10, located on the outskirts of eastern Baghdad, hosted the tournament matches.

As normalcy continues to fill the worn-torn country, U.S. and Iraqi officials want to show the Iraqi populace that the improved security is here to stay.

"It is wonderful to see everyone here working together under the logo of cooperation and brotherhood," said Dr. Khalid Alrrakabi, sports director for the Ma'dain region and the manager of the Jasr Diyala sports complex. "There are few events such as this where all the different communities of our region can come together and bond."

As the teams played, residents from the surrounding community gathered near the field to observe and cheer on their favorite team. However, with all the fun and excitement, Paratroopers of 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division and their ISF partners maintained security to keep everyone attending the games safe.

"We would not have been able to hold these without the help of the U.S. Army and the Iraqi police protecting the surrounding area. A large gathering such as this could be a good target for violence," said Alrrakabi.

Prior to the games, Paratroopers handed out soccer jerseys, balls and other equipment to many of the players. Many of the balls were donated by the "Kick for Nick" organization. The organization was founded in honor of Pfc. Nick Madaras, who was killed by an improvised explosive device in Baquba, Iraq, on Sept. 3, 2006.



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

Iraqi soccer teams take to the field during a match at the Jasr Diyala sports complex, Oct. 9, in the town of Jasr Diyala, Iraq, on the outskirts of eastern Baghdad. Eight Iraqi communities team participated in the day-long tournament held across the vast Ma'dain region.

Leaders from the 3rd BCT, along with key Iraqi officials have been planning this tournament for weeks and for many seeing the event take place was a sign that their hard work was bearing fruit.

"I know that these guys put a lot of work into getting this thing organized. Now it's our job to protect our superior officers and the people while they enjoy watching the games," said Sgt. Clay Hartsook, of Oakridge N.C.

There were winners and losers, but the unity between the players and the people of the region was truly the ultimate 'goal' of the day. ✂

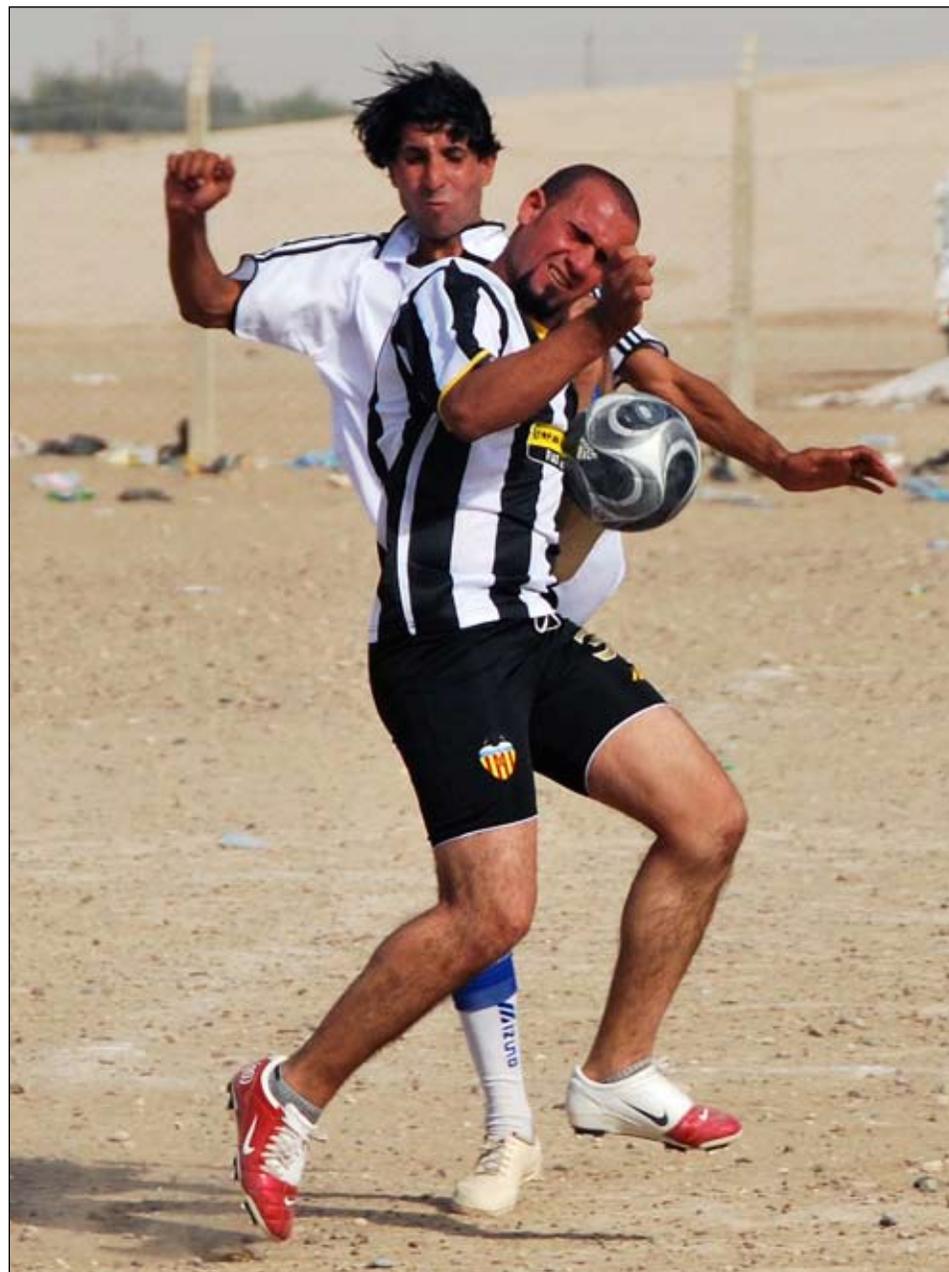


Photo by Pfc. Jared Gehmann, 3rd BCT PAO, 82nd Abn. Div., MND-B

A soccer player grimaces after the ball hits his stomach during a community tournament soccer game, Oct. 9, in the town of Narwan, Iraq. Eight teams from eight different communities around the Ma'dain region, located outside east Baghdad participated in the tournament.



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

U.S. Army officers assigned to the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division and local Iraqi leaders watch a soccer match between local communities, Oct. 9, in the town of Narwan, Iraq. The games were organized by Iraqi community leaders and Paratroopers assigned to the 3rd Brigade Combat Team.

Engineers help with classroom supplies

Story by Staff Sgt. April Mota

101st Eng. Bn. PAO, 225th Eng. Bde., MND-B

BAGHDAD – Sgt. Rokeisha Berymon, a kindergarten teacher from Alexandria, La., knows that a little help with school supplies can go a long way in the classroom.

On Oct. 7, she and fellow Soldiers with the 225th Engineer Brigade saw firsthand how a giving hand from back home is helping Iraqi children thousands of miles away.

Berymon and others helped unload boxes and boxes of pencils, paper, erasers and other much needed supplies for the crowded classrooms in need of repair.

“I was astounded by the classroom conditions,” said Berymon. “The floors were falling apart and even for October, it was fairly hot in the small rooms.”

That’s why Berymon felt tremendous satisfaction in giving to the Iraqi children knowing that they will show up every day and put the supplies to good use.

“At least they are in school learning. That’s an advantage.” Berymon said with a smile.

Spc. Charles Chester, of Alexandria, La., was ecstatic when he found the night before that he would be going on this mission.

“I absolutely love kids, and to be here was amazing,” said an excited Chester.

When Chester opened up the box of supplies the young Iraqi students giggled with glee. One of the students, Masma, was the first to stand up to offer her help in distributing the goods, passing out a bag full of erasers to her classmates.

“We are happy to see you here, you help us so much. We are very excited for the new things you bring us. I like passing the things out to others in my class,” Masma said excitedly.

The school supply drop off was a partnership effort between the 225th Eng. Bde and the 11th Iraqi Army. The Iraqis provided security for the mission.

Lt. Colonel Greg Parker, from Gonzales, La., said the effort was spearheaded by the brigade’s involvement with a program called Operation Homefront Louisiana. Parker coordinated the donations with friends and family members back home.

“Operation Homefront Louisiana did a great job of collecting supplies. The children of Iraq will now be given the opportunity to attend schools with the supplies they need.”

Pfc. Taylor Crooks, Pineville, La. volunteered to be a part of this humanitarian mission.



Photo by Staff Sgt. April Mota, 101st Eng. Bn. PAO, 225th Eng. Bde., MND-B

Spc. Charles Chester, of Ponchatoula, La., passes out supplies at the Khawla Bint Al-Azhar School in Baghdad, Oct. 7.

“We’ve been packing boxes for two weeks now. We’ve gotten a lot of supplies from different places in Louisiana. We’ve been receiving supplies for months.” Crooks said with pride.

As the Soldiers were getting ready to leave, the stu-

dents sat in their seats and eagerly looked for instruction from their teacher. The teacher counted to three and the children all waved and shouted “thank you”, first in English, then in Arabic. ✂

277th Engineers beef up security at FOB Hammer

Story by 1st Lt. Michael Lind

101st Eng. Bn. PAO, 225th Eng. Bde., MND-B

BAGHDAD – Since signing the Status of Forces Agreement between the U.S. and Iraq, American forces have begun drawing back to bases outside city limits.

To safeguard the massive amount of troop movements throughout the country, building up security to bases is a job suited to U.S. engineers.

Wincing at the approaching day’s light, Soldiers of the 277th Engineer Company, from San Antonio, Texas, and the 1192nd Engineer Company from Ravenna, Ohio, both under the 101st Engineer Battalion, 225th Engineer Brigade, focused on the Hesco barrier mission at Forward Operating Base Hammer, here, Oct. 9.

Hesco barriers are collapsible wire mesh containers that include fabric liner to hold within sand, soil, or rocks. They provide added internal blast protection and prevent

breaching of external defense walls.

Because of this, the 277th engineer’s mission expanded into a project larger than anticipated. The mission’s focus broadened from interior defense construction to building up the external walls as well.

“(The 277th) is in charge of interior Hescos. We started the initial push to build the exterior walls and now the 1192nd came out to help us set them up,” said 1st Lt. Ryan O’Connor, 277th Eng. Co., of Dallas, Texas.

Overall, the mission is continuing on schedule. While the harsh desert environment is taking a toll on the vehicles and Soldiers, unit morale is still upbeat.

“Hammer is a good place for Soldiers to learn how to operate construction equipment, particularly without fear of enemy contact,” added O’Conner.

The project is scheduled to be complete by the end of November. The total project at FOB Hammer will produce almost eight miles of perimeter wall construction. ✂



Photo by Sgt. Tracy Knowles, 101st Eng. Bn. PAO, 225th Eng. Bde., MND-B

U.S. engineers with the 277th Engineer Company, 101st Engineer Battalion, 225th Engineer Brigade, fill Hesco barriers with dirt on the perimeter of Forward Operating Base Hammer, Oct. 9.

Half-a-million mark for 1st ACB fuelers

Story by Sgt. Alun Thomas

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

BAGHDAD – Keeping the AH-64D Apache attack helicopters in the air 24 hours a day requires non-stop supplies of fuel at an unrelenting pace.

Fuelers maintain that around the clock pace; servicing the ongoing aviation missions.

With this never-ending stream of activity, the Soldiers of Company E, 4th Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, pumped their half-millionth gallon of fuel, here, Oct. 8.

And the deployment isn't even half over.

Delivering half a million gallons is a significant milestone for the "Equalizers," as it indicates the hard work expended so far, said Staff Sgt. Venancio Rodriguez, from Rockdale, Texas, a petroleum supply section sergeant.

Lt. Col. Randall Haws, battalion commander, received the milestone gallon, Rodriguez said.

"He flew in and just happened to be on the lucky aircraft."

The high point is also reward for the sometimes precarious nature of fueling the aircrafts, something they do day in and out.

"The most difficult thing we do is de-fuel, which is dangerous because of static electricity," Rodriguez said. "Fuel doesn't like to come out but it likes to go in, so it tends to be a bit more unsafe at times."

Having done his job for the last 18 years, Rodriguez said, it is something he still enjoys doing.

"I wouldn't change my job for anything," Rodriguez said. "The aviation side's a lot more glamorous than the ground side, but we're proud to back the



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

After hooking a fuel line up to an AH-64D Apache attack helicopter, Spc. Greg Lofton, from Houston, a petroleum supply specialist monitors the fuel quantity panel while refueling. Spc. Kanedria Wilson (background), from Louisville, Ky., a petroleum supply specialist, waits for his signal to stop the fuel flow, here, Oct. 9.

1st ACB and our mission."

Equally as proud of the company's efforts is 2nd Lt. Christine Limsiaco, from The Woodlands, Texas, a distribution platoon leader, who said reaching half a million gallons represents their work ethic.

"It shows how hard my guys have been working. It's non-stop unless there's a

weather hold, otherwise there's always a bird coming in and they're constantly flying."

With the dedication of her Soldiers, the job is made much easier, Limsiaco said.

"They are professional, fun to work with and very hard working. Half a million gallons may not sound like a lot on a large

scope, but it's a good milestone because it shows how far we've come since the beginning of the deployment."

At the current pace, the company should exceed a million gallons, said Limsiaco.

"With the (operational tempo) still going the way it is, we will." ✂

OLD HICKORY

UAVs provide over watch across the battlefield

Story by Spc. Kelly LeCompte

30th HBCT PAO, MND-B

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Unmanned aerial systems operations are keeping Soldiers in the Baghdad area safe thanks to cooperation between four different brigades that have centered operations, here, north of Baghdad.

"The launch and recovery site for all of [Multi-National Division] Baghdad is at Camp Taji," said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Darryl Della Rossa, the UAS officer with the 86th Military Intelligence Company B. "By consolidating, they can support four brigades in one place."

The four U.S. brigades have pooled their UAVs at Camp Taji's airfield, along with the maintenance personnel who launch and recover the vehicles; while the vehicle operators are located wherever their respective units work from.

"The units share the birds, hanger space, personnel; it can all be shared at one place," said Della Rossa, from Pueblo, Colo. "It's great because it keeps you fly-



Photo by Spc. Kelly LeCompte, 30th HBCT PAO, MND-B

Sgt. David Gomez, from Brooklyn, N.Y., prepares an unmanned aerial system for launch at Camp Taji, north of Baghdad, Oct 5. Gomez is with the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division.

ing all the time. It ensures all the brigades can have more coverage."

"We service the birds, and we launch them," said Sgt. Conrad Jahn, a maintenance shift lead with B Co. "We launch them and

then we'll hand them off to a control site that's forward, so that the actual mission flying is done from the forward sites."

"I think it works really well," said Jahn. "We have a really good team here and

we're able to support each other... and we pool a lot more experience this way. Our standard of maintenance is a lot higher and our production is a lot better because we have such a large pool of materials and talent and experience. It's a really good team. We're like a big family here."

Della Rossa, who works from Forward Operating Base Falcon, where Company B's operators are, said he agreed the system works. The MI company has been serving in Iraq since April and has logged 2,500 flight hours so far; all accident free.

"That's more than some companies fly in a whole year deployment," Della Rossa said.

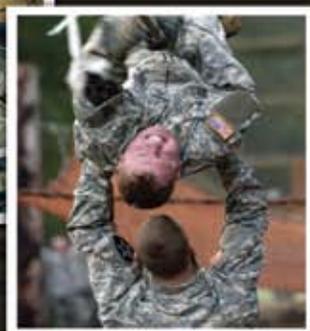
The Soldiers in B Co., whether serving at Camp Taji or FOB Falcon, work 12 hour days, seven days a week. Della Rossa said without the system at Camp Taji, there would be days at the time when operations would have to stop for maintenance on the vehicles or for crew rest, and it would be unlikely to fly so many hours have they have so far, especially without incident.

"It's a great system," Della Rossa said. "Since a bird is always in the air, we can be always ready." ✂



2009

The Year of the Noncommissioned Officer



Army NCO - No One is More Professional than I...

“Charlie Med” drill core medic skills

Story by Spc. Ruth McClary

30th HBCT PAO, MND-B

BAGHDAD – Sounds from an explosion erupt as a call for medics blares from loud speakers.

This sends Iraqi police running to respond to victims of an improvised bomb during a training exercise at Forward Operating Base Falcon, here, Oct. 6.

Eighteen Iraqi Federal police officers of the 1st Mechanized Brigade attended the first organized medic’s training implemented into their curriculum with the medics of Company C, 230th Brigade Support Battalion, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team; better known as “Charlie Med”.

“The Federal police have done a lot of training with Maj. Leigh Shakir, the Mechanized Brigade Surgeon,” said Sgt. Alex Norman, the 6010th Federal Police Transition Team’s medical advisor. “A lot of this training may be redundant, but it’s better to go back over it.”

The two-day training course, held at the U.S. base south of the capital, began with classroom instruction and basic patient assessment demonstrations, and then progressed to the officers taking on the role of medics in a tactical environment.

Shakir said the officers usually receive bi-monthly medical training that is on par with American standards, except they lack the use of training aids such as pressure dressings, and tourniquets.

U.S. medics ran through the lane first, giving the officers a visual guide on juggling the application of patient assessment, the order of treatment for the five victims, removing casualties, teamwork and maintaining a safe perimeter throughout the scenario.

“If you know anything about Charlie Med, when we train we take it seriously,” said Sgt. 1st Class Barbara Campbell. “Every day there is training here, usually taught by one of the medics in either trauma or medical aid. It’s hard work but it’s worth it.”

The Federal officers split into teams; each running the lane as the others observed. Charlie Med medics and Soldiers of 6010th Federal Police Transition Team, who were on hand throughout the scenario, nudged the officers along, reminding them of time, teamwork and quick assessment tips as they worked through the lane.

A native Pfc. Mike Lovette, of Fayetteville, N.C., asked the Iraqi officers questions to keep them on track during the scenario.

Is this a life threatening injury? Have you checked his vital signs; is the patient going into shock?

Haider Ali, an Iraqi Federal officer with some experience in basic medical treatments, was impressed with the realistic aspects of the training, especially with the weight of one of the casualties.

“The training was very practical. The guy we pulled to safety was very heavy; so, I’m very tired now, but it was good training.”

Sgt. 1st Class Gerard Thomas, of Fayetteville, N.C., cast as a casualty during the scenario, summed up the training, as he removed a fake stomach casing with intestines oozing out.

“This was a great experience for the Iraqi police officers, but it definitely was a great experience for us too.” ✂



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

An Iraqi Federal police officer helps a fellow officer after a make-shift explosion at Forward Operating Base Falcon, Oct. 6.

U.S. Iraqi police on



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

First Lt. Heather McGhee (left), of Fayetteville, N.C., a registered nurse with Company C, 230th Brigade Support Battalion, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, applies make-up to create realistic visuals on casualties during a medic's training exercise, Oct. 6.



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

Hamid Matrood assesses a casualty during a medic's training exercise at Forward Operating Base Falcon, Oct. 6.



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

"If you know anything about Charlie Med, when we train we take it seriously." Every day there is training here, usually taught by one of the medics in either trauma or medical aid. It's hard work but it's worth it.

-- Sgt. 1st Class Barbara Campbell



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

Staff Sgt. Tory Jones (right), of Company C, 230th Brigade Support Battalion, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, teaches Iraqi federal police officers, of 1st Mechanized Brigade, basic pressure dressing techniques, Oct. 5. Jones, of Durham, N.C., was one of the coordinators of a two-day medic's training course for the officers at Forward Operating Base Falcon.

(Left) Hamid Matrood, a 1st Mechanized Brigade Federal police officer, coordinates with members on his team to make sure combat lifesaver bags are properly equipped before the medic's training exercise began, Oct. 6.

DSTB Soldiers focus on teamwork during ambulance evacuation class

Story by Sgt. Jon Soles

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – Every Soldier is an infantryman, no matter their military occupational specialty. In the event of a casualty, every Soldier must also be a medic.

Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division Soldiers gained more knowledge about taking care of injured Soldiers during an ambulance evacuation class at the DSTB aid station on Camp Liberty, here, Oct. 9.

The class focused on improving their skills in helping fellow Soldiers survive on the battlefield. Specifically, the class covered the teamwork required to move injured Soldiers by litter to an ambulance.

Training instructor Spc. Armando Reyes, of San Antonio, Texas, said the class helps Soldiers learn how to assist medics and set up triage for casualties, or prepare Soldiers for evacuation in the absence of a medic.

“In case an [improvised explosive device] attack

should occur, Soldiers who are trained in this class can help the medic load the patient in the next vehicle,” said Reyes. “We train them so that just in case something goes wrong with us, they know what to do.”

While one Soldier played the part of the casualty, four other Soldiers rehearsed the coordinated action of picking up a litter and carefully placing the litter inside an ambulance. It requires the teamwork of all four Soldiers to carry a litter. The training seemed well received by the Soldiers.

“One of the things I learned that they didn’t teach us before was using the straps,” said Spc. Christopher Myers, of Lowell, Ark. “We never learned how to put them in an ambulance either.”

Myers was one of several psychological operations specialists assigned to the 362nd Tactical Psychological Operations Company, DSTB, 1st Cav. Div., who took part in the training.

“It’s a good class for each of us to know because you never know what can happen. This is a combat zone,” said Pfc. Kamella Givans, a supply specialist assigned to

Company A, DSTB, 1st Cav. Div. “This is my second time in this class and it’s never too much.”

Although every deployed Soldier is required to take the combat lifesaver course, extra training is always helpful, according to Reyes. The very real threat of an indirect fire attack means that Soldiers may have to carry casualties to the casualty collection points for ambulance evacuation.

“You’ve got to make sure that you put them in the right place so that they get to the quickest location or get the right treatment at the quickest time,” said Reyes. “It allows the Soldier to react quicker and if he knows how to do the job, he can help out the medic.”

The journey of learning that is a Soldier’s life never ends, and the ambulance evacuation class is just one part of helping ensure that every Soldier knows how to be a medic save the life of a fellow Soldier. ✂



Photo by Sgt. Jon Soles, MND-B PAO

Spc. Murphy Wakefield, of St. Albans, Vt., (left) and Pfc. Kamella Givans, of West Palm Beach, Fla., load a litter onto an ambulance outside the Division Special Troops Battalion aid station, here, Oct. 9. Both Soldiers are assigned to Company A, DSTB, 1st Cavalry Division.



Photo by Sgt. Jon Soles, MND-B PAO

Pfc. Kamella Givans, of West Palm Beach, Fla., fastens a strap around a Soldier acting as an injured patient on a litter during ambulance evacuation training, here, Oct. 9.



Army 10-miler satellite run on FOB Hammer

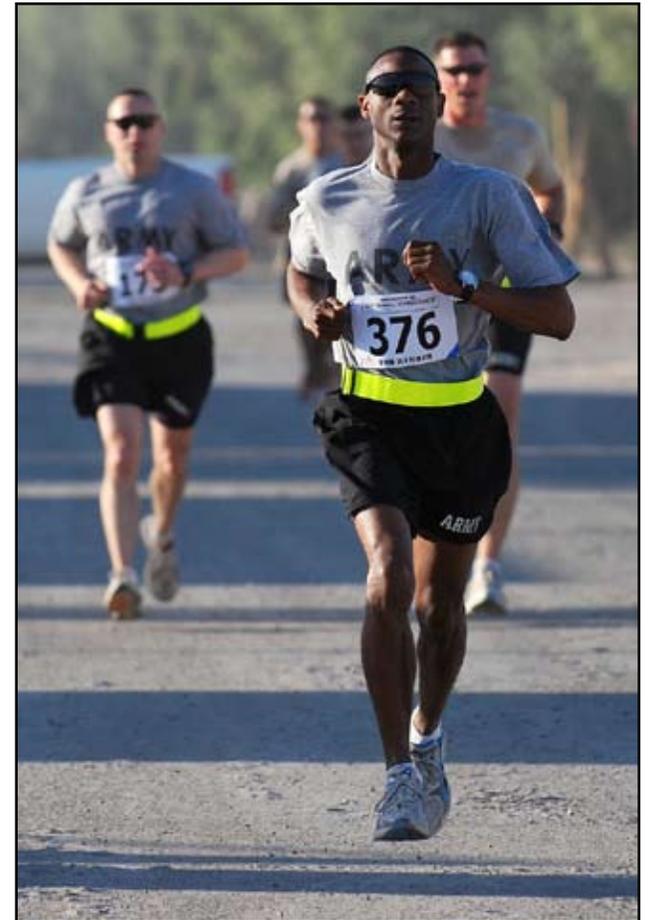
Photos by Sgt. 1st Class Alex Licea and Pfc. Jared Gehmann, 3rd BCT PAO, 82nd Abn. Div., MND-B



BAGHDAD – Runners turn the corner during the first mile during the Army Ten Miler “FOB Hammer Shadow Run”, Oct. 4, at Forward Operating Base Hammer, Iraq, located in the Ma’dain region outside eastern Baghdad.



A Paratrooper assigned to the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, sprints to the finish line during the Army Ten Miler “FOB Hammer Shadow Run”, Oct. 4, at Forward Operating Base Hammer, Iraq, located in the Ma’dain region outside eastern Baghdad.



Runners head for the finish line as they compete the tenth and final mile of the Army Ten Miler “FOB Hammer Shadow Run” held Oct. 4 at Forward Operating Base Hammer, Iraq, outside eastern Baghdad. Paratroopers assigned to the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, along with fellow service members and civilians took part in the satellite run to commemorate the 25th Anniversary of the Army’s Ten Miler. More than 300 runners at the desert base participated in the event.



Paratroopers assigned to Company C, 82nd Brigade Support Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, unite and celebrate completion of the Army Ten Miler “FOB Hammer Shadow Run”, Oct. 4, at Forward Operating Base Hammer, Iraq, located outside eastern Baghdad.



The sun begins to rise as runners pace themselves during the Army Ten Miler “FOB Hammer Shadow Run”, Oct. 4, at Forward Operating Base Hammer, Iraq, outside eastern Baghdad. Paratroopers assigned to the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, participated in the run to commemorate the 25th Anniversary of the Army’s Ten Miler, held yearly in Washington D.C.

Engineer commander pledges future Iraqi training

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

BAGHDAD – What started out as a gift delivery for the months of mutual support and admiration, turned into a promise for continued support.

During a visit to the Iraqi engineer school here, Oct 12, Brig. Gen. Owen Monconduit, commander of the 225th Engineer Brigade, assured his Iraqi counterpart that U.S. engineer assistance would continue.

The Louisiana-based engineers are just weeks away from completing their mission in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Monconduit, of New Orleans, La., showed his gratitude to Col. Falah, the Taji Engineer School commandant, for his leadership in turning out some highly trained Iraqi engineers who are securing the cities of Baghdad and will help rebuild the country.

“Col. Falah is an outstanding leader who shapes and influences the Soldiers and he gives them their capabilities,” said Monconduit. “The purpose of the mission is to assure the Iraqi leaders that partnership will continue under a new command of the 16th Engineer Brigade when the 225th departs.”

“It’s always important for engineer commanders to visit here and check on the Soldiers’ training,” Falah told Monconduit during the hour-long meeting. “It is very important for me to meet other commanders who come to my school to discuss any issues we have face to face.”

Lt. Col Hatem, commander of the 11th Iraqi Engineer Regiment, traveled with Monconduit to visit the school. Hatem’s unit leads the way in getting engineer equipment and training Soldiers on that equipment.

“We graduate many students who are leaders in the Iraqi Army. They are very capable engineers,” praised Hatem. “They have a special feeling for this school.”

Since the 225th arrived in Baghdad last January, dozens of classes were conducted at the Taji school. The U.S. engineers helped train hundreds of Iraqi Soldiers on skills ranging from route clearance of improvised explosive devices to general engineering like electrical and plumbing.

“We have a solid partnership with you,” Monconduit assured Falah. “The partnership will continue.”

“I want to thank you for paying extra attention to us. And I am very sure you know in your heart you will know that you are special to us,” said Falah. ✂



Gen. Owen Monconduit (right), commander of the 225th Engineer Brigade, thanks Col. Falah, commandant of the Taji Engineer School for the months of successful partnership efforts between U.S. and Iraqi forces.

U.S. troops help stock Radwaniyah clinic

Story by Sgt. Mary Phillips

30th HBCT PAO, MND-B

BAGHDAD –The citizens of Radwaniyah have something special to be happy about.

A new clinic in the Radwaniyah Community Center, here, south of Baghdad, received a truck load of medical supplies, Oct. 8, from Soldiers in Company D, 252nd Combined Arms Battalion, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team.

The empty clinic was void of doctors, furniture and medical supplies, as Soldiers and local members of the Son’s of Iraq unloaded a cargo truck.



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

Cpl. Marc Strickland, a medic with Company D, 252nd Combined Arms Battalion, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, carries boxes of medical supplies into the clinic at the Radwaniyah Community Center, south of Baghdad, Oct. 8.

“Right now it’s just a big empty building,” said Fuquay-Varina, N.C. native, 1st Lt. John Burt. “[The Iraqis] were going to have a hard time getting it filled.”

The Iraqi fiscal year starts in January, and money from the government of Iraq won’t be available for the clinic until after that date.

“The clinic will have a hard time getting money till January 1st,” said Pittsboro, N.C. native, Capt. Robert Steele, the company commander. “We’re trying to bridge that gap.”

For Cpl. Marc Strickland, a medic with Co. D, it only made sense to give the medical supplies to the clinic.

“They didn’t have any supplies and these are things we either don’t need, or they are better suited for a clinic.”

Expendable medical items are not brought back to the states once they have been shipped to Iraq, even if they remain unused. These extra items were the ones the Soldiers brought to the clinic.

“We can’t take the supplies with us,” said Strickland, “and the people at the community center need it worse than we do.”

One Soldier said the clinic will support many people in the rural farming community of Radwaniyah, giving them the convenience of a local clinic, and making it easier for them to get the care they need.

“Everybody needs it,” said Durham N.C. native, Travis Steiner. “There are not many places for people here to get medical care.”

Sheik Ayad, the contractor for building the center, also saw the impact that the clinic could have on the community.

“[Ayad] saw it wasn’t going to be big enough,” said Steiner. “So, he put a lot of his own money into the medical clinic to get it to where it needs to be so it would actually help the people. He saw the need of the people and he did what he needed to do to meet that need.”

Ayad had the clinic building built larger than what was originally planned on, making it better suited for the amount of people in the area. He said the locals were happy with the delivery from the U.S. troops.

“You can see the people, their faces looking happy because you bring the medical supplies today,” he said.

Dr. Nazik, one of the Iraqi doctors working with Ayad to build the clinic, said opening the clinic will change the lives of the people in Radwaniyah.

“This location serves many poor families. They have the right to health care, and because this is countryside, they didn’t have these kind of services.” ✂



Spc. Lee Ipock, with Company D, 252nd Combined Arms Battalion, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, carries boxes of medical supplies into the clinic at the Radwaniyah Community Center, south of Baghdad, Oct. 8. Ipock, of Greenville, N.C., and other Company D Soldiers unloaded an entire cargo truck full of medical supplies intended to help get the clinic opened quicker.

The Mechanic's Corner: Checking the half shafts

Story by Spc. Howard Alperin
MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – Part of quality preventative maintenance is looking for anything loose that shouldn't be and making the adjustment.

On humvees specifically, the bolts to the four half-shafts, two in the front and two in the rear, consistently need to be checked and tightened when necessary.

The four half-shafts act like axles for the humvee said Spc. Charles Marshall, a light-wheeled vehicle mechanic, from Wheeling, W.V.

"They are attached to the front and rear differentials. They convert power from the transmission to the wheels."

"All it takes is a 15mm wrench. Get underneath; if you can move those bolts with your fingers, you need to tighten those down," said Sgt. Michael Clark, a quality control and assurance shop foreman, from Arlington, Texas, assigned to Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division.

Tight bolts on half-shafts are essential to a humvee's driving performance.

"It can cause damage to the brakes, you can lose steering," said Marshall. "There are about 30 different problems that can occur from losing a half-shaft."

Eventually, a tow may be needed. Bolts can break down the whole system; if you lose one half-shaft, you lose power to that wheel, dead lining the vehicle.

Bolts become loose for various reasons: general wear and tear, constant vibration from uneven roads, re-installments for upgrade purposes or work done to the brakes, said Marshall.

"Centrifugal force loosens the bolts over time, it's just something you can't help, you can tighten them as hard as you can all day long and eventually they still will come loose, whether it be a week from now or a month from now," said Clark. "This problem has been around since humvees have been around."

Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected vehicles work differently than humvees when it comes to suspension systems.

MRAPs have solid axles. Half-shafts of humvees are independent axles. Soldiers are not able to check the bolts



Photo by Spc. Howard Alperin, MND-B PAO

Spc. Charles Marshall, a light-wheeled vehicle mechanic, from Wheeling, W.V., indicates a half-shaft that is separated from its base. Bolts attached to the base become loose for various reasons: general wear and tear, constant vibration from uneven roads, re-installments for upgrade purposes or work done to the brakes.

of the axles on MRAPs. They are completely encased, said Marshall.

Half-shaft bolts of a humvee are exposed making it easier for Soldiers to crawl under to verify that all 24 are tight, before rolling out. Checks under the hood, checks inside and outside the vehicle, and checks underneath the vehicle all count the same when it comes to preventative maintenance. ✂

Engineer inspired by Army Ranger

Photos by Staff Sgt. April Mota
101st Eng. Bn. PAO, 225th Eng. Bde., MND-B

BAGHDAD – Less than one year ago, Pfc. Andrea Miedzionoski, of Forward Support Company, 101st Engineer Battalion, 225th Engineer Brigade, found herself signing on the dotted line at her local military entrance processing station.

Miedzionoski, 30, from Peabody, Mass., now serves as a signal support systems specialist, working on the company's convoy support team and helping maintain their radios.

"I'm happy to be doing my job, it suits me," she said of working with the team.

Miedzionoski was inspired by her cousin, an Army Ranger, to join the Massachusetts Army National Guard. She saw the sense of pride he had for himself and his country.

"I was looking to have that same pride in myself as my cousin had. I was looking for some meaning in my life," stated Miedzionoski.

Miedzionoski, attended basic training at Fort Jackson, S.C., then went on to her Military Occupational Specialty school at Fort Gordon, Ga. She graduated and immediately reported to her home station with the 101st Eng. Bn., in Whitinsville, Mass. One day later, the unit departed for their mobilization station at Ft. Mc Coy, Wis., to begin the train up for deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"Reporting to a unit that was leaving the next day was a little nerve wracking; it definitely had its ups and downs. Ultimately, I think it was the best situation though. I was still focused on my military training I had just received," Miedzionoski explained.

Her main concern with deploying so soon after graduating was she knew no one in the unit. But as soon as she arrived, she was welcomed with open arms.

"I came into a tight knit group and was instantly taken in and warmly welcomed. I've quickly created a very strong bond with everyone here. We've got a great team."

After the deployment is over, Miedzionoski is interested in going back to school. She's leaning toward the medical field and would like to try to reclassify as a combat medic.

"I'll possibly go on Active duty, but I wanted to try the National Guard first to get my feet wet," Miedzionoski said.

Since joining the unit, Miedzionoski has continuously stepped up to the plate to get the job done, displaying the initiative and motivation of a well seasoned Soldier. ✂



Photo by Staff Sgt. April Mota, FSC, 101st Eng. Bn. PAO, 225th Eng. Bde., MND-B

Pfc. Andrea Miedzionoski, Forward Support Company, 101st Engineer Battalion, 225th Engineer Brigade, of Peabody, Mass., works on verifying communication frequencies of the command post's radio.

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Operation Proper Exit visits 1st ACB



CAMP TAJI, Iraq—Living with partial blindness from a road side bomb, retired Cpl. Graig Chavez talks with Soldiers of the 1st ACB about his recovery process and what has driven him to move forward with his life, during a visit to Camp Taji, Iraq, Oct. 13. Chavez has an emblem of the Purple Heart Medal – an award he received for his injuries – embedded into his glass eye. At one time a ground trooper, Chavez was offered a desk job upon his recovery, but decided against it. To him, his options were to be on the ground – in the fight – or not at all, he said.

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

During a visit to Camp Taji, Iraq, Oct. 13, Sgt. John Hyland (in doorway), who lost his leg during combat operations on a previous deployment to Iraq, recounts his story to medevac Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st ACB, on how he was medically evacuated on a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter similar to the one he stands next to.



Servicemembers participating in Operation Proper Exit, talk with Soldiers of the 1st ACB in a town hall forum about injuries they sustained in combat, the recovery process and organizations that have helped them and others who were wounded in combat. One question fielded by the wounded warriors was whether or not they were forced to retire after their initial recovery. To which the answer was an overwhelming no. Some stayed in, while many chose to retire.



To show appreciation for his sacrifices, Col. Douglas Gabram, from Cleveland Ohio, commander of the 1st ACB, presents a flag which was flown over Baghdad in an AH-64D Apache attack helicopter, to retired Sgt. Ethan Payton. Payton, along with other wounded servicemembers visited Camp Taji, Iraq, Oct. 13, as a part of Operation Proper Exit. During their visit they got to tour the 1st ACB's aircraft, watch videos and talk to Soldiers. Gabram was in awe of their dedication to their country.

During a return trip to Iraq as a part of Operation Proper Exit, Sgt. John Hyland (left) and Sgt. 1st Class Joshua Olson (center), get a tour of a CH-47F Chinook helicopter by Josia Ortiz (right), a crew chief in Company B, 2nd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, here, Oct. 13. The military personnel participating in Operation Proper Exit had been wounded previously in combat and have made the trip to Iraq to face the places they were wounded in order to gain closure on that part of their lives.

MRAP operator training teaches driving, safety issues

Story by Spc. Howard Alperin

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – The side doors, operated by an electric hydraulic system, weigh 1,400 pounds each and have the words “Pinch Point” labeled in big letters next to where the doors open and close.

It is a reminder to Soldiers of the safety issues involved when getting in and out of a Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected vehicle.

“The vehicle will take care of you, but respect the vehicle,” declared Frank Davis, the civilian instructor at the Regional Support Area on Camp Liberty, to Soldiers attending the Operators New Equipment Training class.

All of the instructors for MRAP vehicle classes are former military service members. These knowledgeable instructors don’t hold back when guiding their students. It’s their job to train Soldiers to standard so when they are out on mission they know how to use their MRAP vehicle safely.

The class has 40 hours of instructional time divided up over 4 days. It covers preventative maintenance checks and services, recognizing warnings, cautions and controls of the vehicle, egress and roll-over drills, operating the gunner’s point kit, ground-guide procedures, and day and night-time driving. Soldiers are tested on their knowledge on the last day.

During the first day of class, Soldiers received hands-on training inside and outside of an MRAP vehicle.

“We learned that the seatbelts are a five-point harness, that the windows are able to withstand a .50 cal [round], how to get in and out of the hatches, the driver’s control, how to turn the vehicle on and off, releasing and applying the brakes, and making sure things are locked up when we’re done,” said Spc. Chase James, from Newark, Del.

As supply and logistics specialists, these Soldiers of the 702nd Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division will travel often to forward operating bases in the Baghdad area. Many of the Soldiers taking the class have recently arrived in country and most have never driven an MRAP vehicle.

“I’m pretty excited about getting on the road. I want to get my license so I can go outside the wire and support everybody else through re-supply missions,” said James.

In order to learn how to operate these vehicles, Soldiers must get to know their characteristics.

“We went over all the controls and control panel. They are all labeled in there, but it’s good to know where they are in case of night-time driving,” said Spc. Josh Overton, a personal security detachment team member, from West Liberty, Ohio.

“Also, we went over switches for the AC, heat, power doors, and how to properly open and close the doors without making them malfunction.”

“Mostly what we’re learning is how to properly control and move around in the MRAPs, how you do your egress, what you do with the rollover, what you have to be thinking,” continued Overton. “It’s practice for when you’re outside doing

the real thing. That way, when something happens, it’s a habit, and we’re able to perform better and possibly save lives.”

Soldiers take what they are taught about the vehicle’s physical features and capabilities, and apply it to daytime and night-time drives.

“For someone who is used to humvees, it’s a step up regarding space, equipment and gadgets,” said Spc. Mike Demma, an electrician from Traverse City, Mich., who recently completed the driving portion and test for the class. “There are quite a few blind spots. It’s important to readjust your mirrors and utilize them. You’ve got to make sure you can see around your vehicle.”

“You have to watch for the edges of the shoulder and look for potholes or anything that might cause the vehicle to rock because this multiplies the possibility of a rollover. The vehicle is top-heavy. In making turns, you have to be cautious. You really don’t want to brake or accelerate.”

During the two days of driving, Soldiers learn to drive on a variety of surfaces and grades.

“They took us up and down slopes and we practiced four-wheel drive,” said Demma. “They take you through different terrain features to become familiarized and comfortable with the vehicle. There is a hardball course, pavement, and we did off-road too with sand and mud.”

After graduating the class, Soldiers are able to use their knowledge in the role of train the trainer.

“Its extensive training, very thorough, but you learn what you need to know.

Its good information to pass on to your battle buddies that haven’t been through the class, so that at any given time if the situation arises, somebody can hop up in that seat and feel confident in driving the vehicle,” said Demma. “The trainers are all [subject matter experts], they’ve got it down; they’re excellent.” ✂



Photo by Spc. Howard Alperin, MND-B PAO

Spc. Chase James (left), from Newark, Del., checks fluids from the engine of a Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected vehicle as Spc. Mario Hurtado, from San Clemente, Calif., observes the process during an Operators New Equipment Training class, here, Oct. 6.



Photo by Spc. Howard Alperin, MND-B PAO

Spc. Josh Overton, from West Liberty, Ohio, holds the air filter of a Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected vehicle as instructor Frank Davis explains how to keep the filter clean, here, Oct. 6.

Helping hand for Rashid elementary school

Story by Spc. Kelly LeCompte

30th HBCT PAO, MND-B

BAGHDAD – Children at a girl's school in the Rashid district of southern Baghdad, received school supplies from Iraqi Federal Police during a visit to the school, thanks to efforts from Soldiers of Company A, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team.

U.S. Soldiers gave new back packs stuffed with pencils, pencil sharpeners and educational materials to Iraqi police officers of the 2nd Federal Police Division, to hand to the students of al-Imtithal Elementary School.

The Soldiers also gave soccer balls, crayons, coloring books and office supplies to the school's principal, Eman Ibrahim Hussein, to distribute and use later.

"It's a great thing to be able to do this," said one Iraqi police officer. "We need to do more of this. It's win-win for everybody."

Hussein accompanied the group as they visited each classroom.

Children smiled and giggled as the Iraqi police officers presented each child with the items.

"It was nice to see the Federal Police working with the schools and see the children being comfortable around the Federal Police," said 1st Lt. Troy Smith, from Charlotte, N.C. "It's important to have that interaction."

The students in each class called out a unanimous thank you as the group left one classroom to go to the next.

Hussein said the students were very happy to receive the gifts, and thanked



Photo by Spc. Kelly LeCompte, 30th HBCT PAO, MND-B

both Iraqi and American forces as they were leaving.

"They are so happy," she said. "Thank you. You are welcome here any time."

Capt. Ricardo Maldonado, from Topeka, Kan., talks with students after the children received school supplies from U.S. and Iraqi forces, Oct. 12. The U.S. Soldiers gave the items to Iraqi Federal Police, who gave the items to students of al-Imtithal Elementary School, in the Rashid district of southern Baghdad.

Tiger Academy situational training tests IA capabilities

Story by Pfc. Adam Halleck

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

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Strengthening the skills and core competencies of the Iraqi Security Forces is a vital mission for U.S. Soldiers, here.

After conducting their weeklong Tiger Academy, the Soldiers of 1st Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, tested their Iraqi Army counterparts in a day long situational training exercise, focusing on all core aspects of the academy.

The purpose of the Tiger Academy is to further enable the Iraqi Army to better serve and secure the citizens of Iraq. By focusing on adaptability, the Tiger Academy provides Iraqi Soldiers the basic skills and tactics they need in today's urban combat environment.

"Being prepared for a wide range of situational outcomes is essential in combat," explained Rochester, New York native, Sgt. 1st Class Ward Wright, the battalion operations sergeant major.

"[U.S. troops] put great emphasis on planning, which is something we focused heavily on during Tiger Academy."

To test the adaptability of the IA Soldiers, the Americans created a full scale training exercise; incorporating several difficult scenarios that could occur at any given time while on a patrol.

They tested their counterparts on how to react to an improvised explosive device, knowledge of casualty evaluation procedures, close quarters combat, room clearing procedures, detainee operations and sensitive site exploitation.

"For only going through a week of training [the Iraqi Soldiers] grasped a good portion of the training," said Sandy, Ore. native, Staff Sgt. James Lacapra, the battalion intelligence noncommissioned officer in charge. "Considering the amount of time they were given to learn the procedures, they were pretty effective."

The U.S. troops trained their counterparts to become a more versatile security force but they understand there is still work to be done.

"This training is a step in the right direction for the ISF," said Wright.



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

Soldiers from the 37th Brigade, 9th Iraqi Division, move into position to clear a building during a simulated training exercise here, Oct. 15. The exercise tested the IA Soldiers' comprehension of the weeklong training they received from Soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division.

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1st ACB medics focused on crucial training

Story by Sgt. Alun Thomas

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

BAGHDAD – In the midst of battle, with wounded and injured Soldiers in need of crucial medical help, aviation medevac teams will always be there to save lives.

For the air medevac team of the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, passing down knowledge of lifesaving steps to Soldiers who need it most is equally as important to those on the frontlines.

Medics in Company C, 2nd Battalion, 1st ACB, here, taught essential medevac basics, Oct. 2, to members of Military Transition Team 10520 Phoenix, should they need them.

Staff Sgt. Robert Martinez, from Robinson, Texas, a flight medic with Co. C, said the exercise covered various facets of medevac procedures.

“We showed them how to set up landing zones and how to load patients,” Martinez said.

“We are trying to see what can best facilitate saving time, saving lives and best help us procure that life and get them to a medical facility.”

Martinez taught several techniques to the MiTT team, including litter carries, loading procedures and overall safety.

“The aircraft safety issue is definitely number one more than anything,” Martinez said. “Anybody approaching the aircraft has to be careful because we don’t want to cause more injury to the patient or cause further casualties.”

Medevac evacuations are a time sensitive issue which makes it vital to be as efficient as possible.

“People’s adrenaline is already high, so we have to keep cool, calm and collected under those conditions,” Martinez said.

Martinez said his personal experiences in combat revealed that Soldiers are sometimes taken by surprise when they are called upon in medevac situations.

“Most people are frazzled because they don’t expect contact and the catastrophic events that occur,” he said. “Coming from the ground myself that’s why I’m in a flight medic community now, so as to be at a higher level of care and to save more lives.”

Martinez was impressed with the MiTT team’s proficiency at completing the medevac training under the spinning blades of an UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter.

“They did great executing everything. It was a good hands-on orientation which gave them a better understanding of themselves and their troops should anything happen.”

Maj. Dante Antonelli, the MiTT’s chief, from Fort Bragg, N.C., who helped his team through the procedures, said the intent was to familiarize his team with both hot and cold load medevac situations.

“We did both, so the first time they were exposed to working under a hot rotor system was not in combat,” Antonelli said, himself a former medic. “This was important because it gave us a chance to understand the commands they have to take under a rotor system where normal communication is not allowed.”

Although some of the MiTT team had worked under these conditions in combat before, some had not.

“This was their first opportunity to actively be under a rotor system with a helicopter,” he said. “They met the training objectives today.”

Antonelli praised the Co. C medevac team for making the training a valuable experience.

“Their medevac crew supported us on a very short notice training cycle because we are waiting to push from Taji. They responded and were very professional. They got the job done.” ✂



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

UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter flight medics from Company C, 2nd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, train Soldiers from Team 10520 Phoenix, a military transition team for the Iraqi Army, how to safely approach and load a litter into a Black Hawk, here, Oct. 2. The training keeps Soldiers fresh on aircraft operations.

Making friends, ensuring security in the Mada'in

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



BAGHDAD – Spc. Jake Norris, of Reno, Nev., shows off his strength by lifting an Iraqi boy in the air with one arm to the amazement of his friends while providing security for a soccer game, Oct. 9, in the Ma'dain region, located outside east Baghdad. Paratroopers and Iraqi forces provided reinforcements during a neighborhood soccer game. Norris is an infantryman assigned to the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division.

Gibson City brothers reunite for re-enlistment

Story by Pfc. Kimberly Hackbarth
4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div., MND-B

BAGHDAD – Becoming a “lifer” in the U.S. Army is a big deal. It’s an even bigger statement when you make that commitment in the beginning of your second tour in Iraq.

To Sgt. 1st Class Philip Neal, a native of Gibson City, Ill., now the 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division’s legal team noncommissioned officer-in-charge, reenlisting indefinitely wasn’t the only thing that made the event special.

His brother, Capt. Matthew Neal, also of Gibson City, a physical therapist with 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, did the honors of reenlisting him at the al-Faw Palace, here, Oct. 13.

Philip originally joined the Illinois National Guard in 1994 as a paralegal specialist to pay for college. He enjoyed his job so much he switched to active duty in December of 1997.

In 2003, he became a recruiter. Meanwhile, his brother, Matthew, wanted to be a physical therapist and decided to enlist.

“I was trying to get into the U.S. Army Baylor physical therapy program. I didn’t get selected the first time around, so I enlisted as a medic,” he said.

It was only right that he went to the one person he knew would never do him wrong.

“A lot of Soldiers say ‘My recruiter lied to me.’ I couldn’t say that because he’s my brother, so he’s not going to lie to me,” he said.

When he got out of school, Matthew applied to the physical therapy program and got selected. Now, in 2009, the brothers reunited in Baghdad where Matthew reenlisted Philip indefinitely.

Matthew came down from Forward Operating Base Warrior, in the Kirkuk region, to attend a physical therapy conference and made a stop at the palace.

Out on one of the palace’s many balconies, with the view of Baghdad in the background, Philip stood with his right hand raised in front of coworkers from the legal team and old friends and recited the oath of

enlistment for the last time.

The ceremony was the first time the two encountered each other in uniform and until then, Philip always insisted that he wouldn’t salute his little brother.

The brothers shared the inside joke with the attendees of the ceremony as they watched Philip salute the brother he himself enlisted nearly six years ago.

Joking aside, Matthew admitted that his brother motivates him.

“I just look at him and he’s squared away, so it kind of inspires me to make sure that I am striving for the same excellence in my career,” he said.

In return, Philip always tried to set an example for his little brother.

“I’ve always tried to do the right thing,” he said. “And if I didn’t, I would just blame it on him [Matthew]. What are little brothers for?”

The older Neal sets an example not only for his brother, but for Soldiers worldwide by committing himself to the Army in a job he loves and hopes others can follow his lead.

“As long as you’re happy doing what you’re doing you should continue doing it. I enjoy being a paralegal, so I figure I’ll stay in and finish out my 20 [years] or more.” ✂



Photo by Pfc. Kimberly Hackbarth, 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div., MND-B

Capt. Matthew Neal (left), a physical therapist with 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, reenlists his older brother, Sgt. 1st Class Philip Neal, the 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division’s legal team noncommissioned officer-in-charge, indefinitely at al-Faw palace, here, Oct.13.

NFL Week eight matchups: Nov. 1-2



Walking a different path

Story by Sgt. Alun Thomas

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

BAGHDAD – Overcoming the odds and creating a better life sometimes means walking away from the safe and easy to pursue a different path.

For one Soldier in the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade there is no looking back, even if she gave up her college scholarship to join the Army.

As the Army celebrates Hispanic Heritage Month, Pfc. Yamilette Bautista, from Woodland, Calif., a strength management clerk with 1st ACB, 1st Cavalry Division, can safely say she did just that.

Bautista, 19, who was born in San Diego, said all her family is from Tequila, Mexico, where they continue to live today and where she herself spent some of her formative years.

“My mother left me with my grandmother when I was six months old and I lived in Mexico until I was five,” Bautista said. “The memories of living there are hard to forget.”

The way of life in Mexico was far different, Bautista said, with a strong emphasis on family interaction.

“You’re always with your family, especially on Sunday, which is always family day,” Bautista said. “Everybody gets together; it doesn’t matter if you’re five hours away.”

“There’s always family in the house and at night the neighborhood comes together for bonfires. There is so much culture there, but over [in the U.S.] there are more opportunities. In Mexico you

live one day at a time.”

At the age of five, Bautista moved back to the U.S., where she lived with her mother and siblings.

“Every two or three years I go to Mexico, spend some time and come back,” Bautista said. “I love going back there because you can relax, it’s your culture. They have so many things there they don’t anywhere else.”

Bautista adjusted to life in the U.S. and worked as hard as she could at school, trying to set herself up for a successful future.

“I had an academic scholarship because I always tried my best at school. But it was too hard with just me, my siblings and my mom. I was working and it took me hours to get to school.”

“But once I had my college paid for I had all these other expenses. I also had to work and give my mother the money,” she continued. “It was hard for me to have what I wanted but at the same time keep helping my family.

This made it impossible for Bautista to accept her college scholarship and left her pondering what direction to take with her life.

One thing she said she did not want was to take the traditional route expected.

“Usually with my family it’s about getting married at a young age and I wanted to prove that you can do something else with your life. Even though you’re a female you don’t have to get married young. I was trying to get out of that routine and circle.”

Shunning this direction, Bautista decided to join the Army just a month after graduating from high school, a decision



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

Pfc. Yamilette Bautista, from Woodland, Calif., a strength management clerk with the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, computes the personal strength of 1st ACB battalions Oct. 1. Bautista is a Hispanic American who spent the first five years of her life living in Tequila, Mexico.

she initially regretted.

“I worked really hard to get that scholarship and I gave it up as soon as I joined the Army. But when I really think about it now, I don’t regret it because the Army has opened up so many opportunities and I get help to go to college.”

Bautista said her initiation into the Army was hard, having to go straight from her initial entry training to an immediate deployment in Iraq.

“I was at Fort Hood for three weeks and I deployed, so Iraq is my first real unit. I’ve been coping with it well, however, and I have great support.”

Helping Bautista adjust into her deployment is Sgt. 1st Class Trevor Davis, from Timmonsville, S.C., her platoon sergeant, who said he has been

impressed by Bautista’s attitude and adaptability.

“She is a hard worker and always where she is supposed to be and I don’t have to talk to her about being late or anything like that. She is a quick learner and came in here and picked everything up.”

As Bautista continues to gain Army experience, she said that she finds few Hispanics in the Army with a background similar to hers and is grateful when she does.

“It’s rare to meet someone that really speaks the language because many (Hispanic-Americans) were born and raised in America. It makes me feel happy to meet them, because being Mexican is a part of you. You can relate to them.” ✂

CASTLE

Thousands of mission miles pay off

Story by Lt. Col. Pat Simon

225th Eng. Bde. PAO, MND-B

BAGHDAD – Driving a dump truck for the Louisiana National Guard almost three decades ago, then Pvt. Jerry Crooks, could not even begin to imagine that he would travel the world; eventually climbing to the highest rungs in the military.

On Oct. 4, before some of the same Soldiers that he has worked and traveled with through the years, the small town farm boy from Deville, La., now deputy commander of the 225th Engineer Brigade, proudly received his promotion to colonel.

“It’s taken me longer that I had originally planned, but as a 19 year old kid trying to lay out long term plans and not fully understanding the requirements and the competitive nature of the process, it was hard,” reflected Crooks.

Crooks’ military travel can easily qualify for frequent flier miles: more than 20 missions that took him to countries like Belize four times, Honduras, Panama and Guatemala twice, the Bahamas, Jordan, Italy, England, Germany and now Iraq.

Crooks’ most memorable missions



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

With his son, Pfc. Taylor Crooks (right) by his side, Lt. Col. Jerry Crooks (center), deputy commander 225th Engineer Brigade, from Pineville, La., is promoted to the rank of colonel by Brig. Gen. Owen Monconduit, commander of the 225th Eng. Brig., Oct. 4. The elder Crooks’ military career spans almost three decades; highlighted by over 20 overseas partnership, humanitarian and combat missions.

were humanitarian and partnership in nature to Guatemala and Belize; building schools and roads in 1992 after the devastating effects of Hurricane Mitch.

“Entire communities were just gone,” recalled Crooks. “It’s amazing the amount of water and the flooding that took place in such a short time period. The elevation rose

20 plus feet in just two to three hours.”

It is those missions that helped shape Crooks’ skills in leading Soldiers and dealing with civilian and military leaders from different countries.

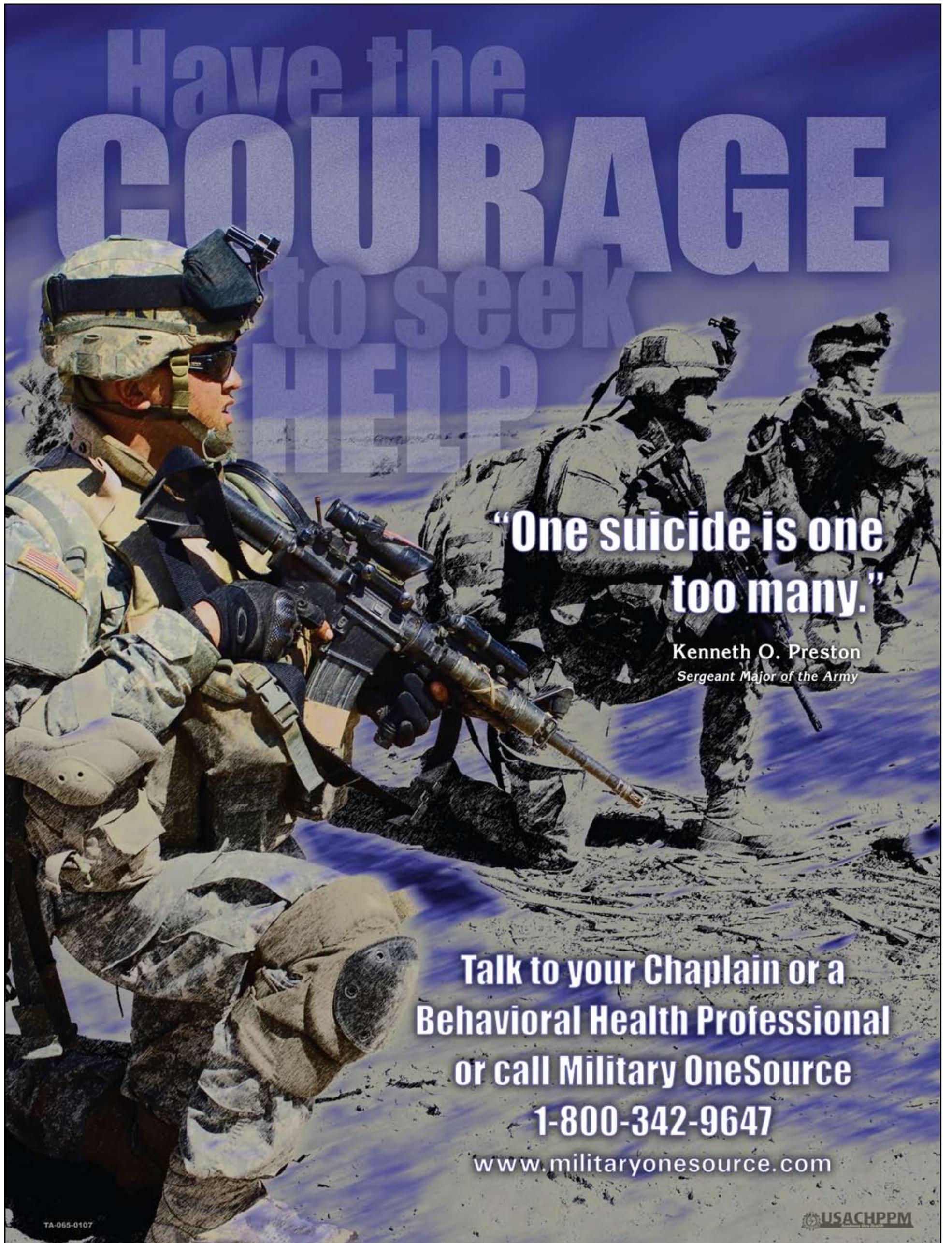
“As you continue to get bits of training opportunities, it leads to leadership development,” Crooks added. “As some leaders say, the science of leadership is there. You can read and train. You can prepare. You have trained staffs that can support that, but the many years of experience fine tunes the overall art of leadership.”

Like his father, Crooks’ son, Pfc. Taylor Crooks, also joined the Louisiana National Guard in his late teens. Crooks said he is fortunate to have his son along with him during his current tour supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom, and was proud to have him at his promotion ceremony.

“In some ways, I think he was more excited. He was just so pumped up,” said Crooks with a smile. “It was just good seeing the excitement on his face. He and I have come a long ways in the last 18 months as a father and son and there’s no doubt that a lot of that is a result of the military.”

Wherever his military travels may take him next, Crooks plans to take it all in stride as long as he can.

“I’m not through yet. I think I have a few more years in me.” ✂



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ACB medics teach IA first responders

Story by Sgt. Alun Thomas

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

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Two Iraqi Soldiers struggle and sweat as they attempt to lift their fallen comrade suffering from an exposed abdominal wound.

Keeping a watchful eye on the proceedings are medics from the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, observing to see if they utilize the proper techniques.

Eventually the wounded is bandaged and carried to safety in quick time; successfully completing their first aid training.

This was the scenario for the medics as they taught Soldiers from the Iraqi Army 34th Armored Brigade necessary first aid procedures, here, Oct. 12, to prepare them in the event of real life injuries.

The training helps sustain the brigade's proficiency with first aid basics, said Sgt. 1st Class James Neel, from Camp Lejeune, N.C., the medical noncommissioned officer in charge.

"The training has been outstanding. A few of them are having this taught to them the first time out here, but they are catching on quickly," Neel said. "They should be able to use the skills if they ever come across a casualty."

Neel said they taught the Iraqi's the two phases of care the U.S. Army uses, which are care under fire and field care.

"Care under fire is when they're under effective hostile fire and have to utilize certain medical procedures during that time," Neel said. "First and foremost is a tourniquet because massive hemorrhages are the biggest killer on the

battlefield."

The Iraqi's then transitioned to tactical field care, which taught them how to dress wounds, make a splint and care for abdominal wounds.

"Very much the basics of first aid," Neel said.

Having U.S. Army assistance makes a difference overall, Neel added.

"If we mentor them, then they learn how to do it right," Neel said. "Hopefully the next time I see them training it will be more hands-on based with lane training, instead of classroom instruction and power point slides."

The guidance from Neel was appreciated by Col.

Ali Hussein Sameer, training manager, 34th IA Armor Bde., who said first aid training is always a key to successful soldiering.

"Medical training is important for them because it gives them

During first aid training two Iraqi Soldiers carry a wounded comrade to safety after treating his wounds, here, Oct.12. The training helps to sustain previous first aid skills and teach newer IA Soldiers how to respond in an emergency situation.

a guarantee to save their fellow warriors lives," Sameer said. "This will make them successful in war because medical units are so important."

Sameer said many of those training are skilled medics, but not all involved had received extensive first aid courses.

"After this I hope they will all be qualified to do their job as medics," Sameer said.

Having the U.S. Army to assist is a benefit that Sameer said he is pleased to use.

"The U.S. Army has given us a lot of advanced information in addition to the medical expertise we already have," Sameer said. "We have gained a lot from their medics and Soldiers." ✂



Photo by Sgt. Alun Thomas, 1st ACB PAO, 1st Cav. Div., MND-B



Photo by Sgt. Alun Thomas, 1st ACB PAO, 1st Cav. Div., MND-B

Soldiers from the 34th Iraqi Army Armored Brigade practice bandaging a Soldier playing the role of the wounded, as part of basic first aid training administered by medics from 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Oct.12.

Soccer tournament garners esprit de corps, teamwork

Story by Staff Sgt. Mark Burrell

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – “It doesn’t matter where you come from,” said Dakar, Senegal native, Spc. Mour Diop. “I wasn’t thinking about ‘Hey, they’re Iraqis!’ I was thinking about, we’re all friends when we step on the field.”

Paratroopers from 1st Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division and Soldiers from the 45th Iraqi Army Brigade, 11th IA Division, teamed up together to compete in the semi-finals of the Panther Soccer Tournament, Oct. 12 on Combat Outpost Carver, here.

Each U.S. airborne company fielded a team intermingled with their IA counterparts to play against each other in the spirit of camaraderie and partnership.

Diop, a human resources specialist assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, has been playing soccer for more than 30 years and, like most of the other paratroopers, enjoyed the time he spent with his IA counterparts.

“Even though we do missions together, it’s nice to get to know [the IA] on a first name basis,” said Sgt. Daniel Dukin, an infantry team leader from Queens, N.Y., “Out on mission, it’s a part of a job but here when we play together, it’s for fun.”

The competition was fierce as Paratroopers and IA Soldiers from all over southeastern Baghdad came together to play soccer and enjoy lunch.

For Soldiers like Dukin, the impact of the day’s events is felt off the field as well.

“It brings us closer together when we go out there on mission together,” added Dukin, assigned to Company B. “Next time we see them out in sector, we can share a handshake and talk about the

game.”

The event organizer and referee, 1st Lt. Paul Wistermayor from Denville, N.J., agreed that the implications of the soccer competition run deeper than just bragging rights.

“It lets us work closer with the IA and the easier it is for them to trust us and listen to us...then the better we become together as a team,” explained Wistermayor. “It’s just another step...another compilation of Soldiers working together.”

The tournament is the second one that the Paratroopers have held with their IA counterparts and things weren’t always as easy.

“The first time we got together, it wasn’t as smooth, but four months of working together on and off the field, you can tell they make a good team,” added Wistermayor.

In preparation for the tournament, the Paratroopers and IA Soldiers have been practicing during their downtime at their different bases, which has made a huge difference in their communication and teamwork, explained Wistermayor.

Another difference that has improved relations is that each team had a professional appearance with matching uniforms donated by the program Kicks for Nick, a program set up by the parents of a fallen 82nd Paratrooper.

“The uniforms add a little bit of professionalism and that pride factor that’s really important,” Wistermayor said. “When they wear that uniform again, they can look back on the memories they made with us.”

For now, the chance to make more memories isn’t over yet. Two of the four teams advanced to the finals on Oct. 16 in a stadium at Salman Pak, here. For these Soldiers, it really doesn’t matter where they are from but that they going there as a team. ✂



Leaping to try to block an overtime penalty kick by an Iraqi Army Soldier the goalie, Spc. Nicholas Pieniasek, from Delanson, N.Y., makes a bold attempt during a semi-final joint soccer match at Combat Outpost Carver, Oct. 12, here.



While still wearing combat boots, an Iraqi Army Soldier assigned to the 45th IA Brigade, 11th IA Division kicks a soccer ball during a joint soccer tournament at Combat Outpost Carver, here. Two semi-final games were played Oct. 12 to determine which teams will play in the championship game on Oct. 16 in Salman Pak stadium.



Spc. Nicholas Knickerbocker, from Claremont, Calif., jumps up to head the ball as Sgt. Daniel Dukin (right), , watches to see where the ball lands during a semi-final soccer game with Iraqi Army Soldiers at COP Carver, here, Oct. 12.