

BLACK JACK ROUND UP

November 2009



**MOUNT UP!!
2/1 Cav prepares
to return home**

**Kid Rock JAMS during
'Tour for the Troops' concert**

Armor shields Soldier from sniper's fire

**BEST OF THE BEST: NCOs AND SOLDIERS
COMPETE IN YEARLY COMPETITION**

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Black Jack Round Up

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The end of our rotation is drawing to a close, and another is beginning. The past year has been a tremendous source of challenges and rewards, each one unique in its own right, and the 1st Armored Division's "Ready First" brigade assuming responsibility for Kirkuk province is eager to continue the absolutely important work we've been privileged to be a part of. I'm confident the partnerships we've built will be in good hands.

And while our time here has been defined by our partnerships, the Soldiers in this brigade also deserve recognition. My staff is without a doubt one of the greatest collections of talent I have ever seen. From adapting to a changing location and mission, they also adapted to a significant change in organization. They reorganized for the fight in a way that allowed them to quickly move out with my intent; keeping me, the battalions and our higher headquarters informed along the way.

And the successes of the battalions are substantial. From 1-8's successes in seeking out and disrupting the very active insurgent threats in the Mahuz triangle, to 4-9's quick and decisive response to the worst bombing



Kirkuk has seen for years in Taza, to 3-82 effectively pulling together the diverse communities throughout the city of Kirkuk to achieve meaningful partnerships with their political and security officials, to 2nd STB's support to the highly successful KRG elections, to the extremely successful partnership between the 15th BSB and the 12th Motorized Transport Regiment. And I want to also thank 1-5, for their absolutely wonderful support of operations on the east side of Baghdad. They were

always in our thoughts and prayers, and I welcome them back into the Black Jack family. I am proud of all the achievements of what I believe to be the best commanders and Soldiers in the Army.

I want to thank each and every Soldier in this brigade for taking on an enormous responsibility, diving right into a high-profile, strategic mission and rising to the challenge. You can each hold your heads up high, knowing you served your country proudly at an important time and place.

And I want to thank the friends and families, whose steady support throughout this year allowed us to stay focused on our mission here. This year hasn't been easy for anyone, least of all the friends and families who have been patiently waiting for our return.

And that return is coming soon. I can't think of a better way to honor our work than to be with our loved ones in time for Christmas and the holiday season. I hope it will be a merry one for each of you, and you each take a well-deserved rest.

God bless you all, and we'll all be back together soon



EXPERIENCING HISTORY AGAIN

Story and photos by Spc. Justin Naylor



Soldiers from 2nd Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, explore an ancient house in the Citadel of Kirkuk, Nov. 16.

Historical sites are an important ingredient in any nation's culture and identity.

For a group of Soldiers in Kirkuk an opportunity arose, Nov. 16, to get a glimpse into Iraq's past and to see some of the sites that make Kirkuk unique.

The Soldiers' first stop was the Kirkuk Museum.

The museum was stripped of many of its artifacts in 1991, because it was not considered a safe place; now, with the help of the Government of Iraq, artifacts will soon be returned.

Although all the artifacts have not been returned yet to the museum, the people there were very proud of what they did have, said Spc. Kristie Ford, a Clovis, N.M., native and a chaplain's assistant with 15th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division. "I would love to see it again once filled with historical artifacts."

Soldiers with 2nd BCT have been working with the Iraqi and Turkish governments to help establish a project that will renovate the museum and install a safety alarm system. The project will also provide for the renovation of an old Turkish barracks that is on the museum's grounds.

"This is one of the most important archeological spots in the city," said Ayad Tariq Hussein, the director of the museum. "The renovations are really important. Once we are renovated, the government will send us artifacts again."

Kirkuk has a long history, and the museum is a physical way to remind people of the heritage this city has and the people in this province have, said Lt. Col. Hugh McNeely, the deputy commander of 2nd BCT, who led the group of Soldiers on the trip.

During their visit, the Soldiers were treated to a tour by Ayad, who showed them the arti-

facts gave the Soldiers the history to accompany them.

After the tour came to a close, the Soldiers went to a far more recognizable spot in the city: the Citadel of Kirkuk.

The Citadel has a history extending back thousands of years, and was the seat of various empires and cultures. The Citadel is now largely empty except for some historical buildings, mosques, churches and what is believed by residents here to be the burial spot of the biblical figure Daniel.

The Soldiers started their tour of the Citadel with Daniel's Tomb.

Spc. Ford said the visit to Daniel's Tomb was the best part about today's trip.

"To show the Soldiers the heritage of this province, this is a very focal point to do that," said Lt. Col. McNeely.

Spc. Ford agreed by saying, "It's not every day you get to stand in front of Daniel's final resting place".

The Soldiers were able to take photos of the tomb and listen to stories from some of the Kirkuk residents.

After the Soldiers departed from Daniel's Tomb, they were treated to a tour of the rest of the Citadel, where they saw a nearly 1,000 year-old church-turned-mosque, an ancient marketplace, historic homes, and numerous other historical spots.

The brigade commander, Lt. Col. McNeely, who had visited the site a few times, said that there is so much there that he has learned a little more each time. He also said the Soldiers visiting this site can benefit from it, because it helps them to have more respect for Iraq and its long history.

"We may never know if our ancestors may have stood in that spot where the marble columns were, or if they built those columns," Spc. Ford said about the historical spots she visited.

"History is just an awesome sight to behold, and there is so much to learn from it."



Soldiers stand around what is believed by residents here to be the tomb of the biblical figure Daniel in Kirkuk, Iraq.



Spc. Ford prepares to go down a set of stairs into a room once used for prayer by monks and priests during a tour of the Citadel of Kirkuk.

BEST OF THE BEST: NCOs AND SOLDIERS COMPETE IN YEARLY COMPETITION

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Jason Douglas



A Soldier performs reflexive fire as part of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division NonCommissioned Officer and Soldier of the Year competition Nov. 6 on Forward Operating Base Warrior, Kirkuk, Iraq.

A day in what took almost a year in the making, Noncommissioned officers and Soldiers competed to take home the title of 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division NCO and Soldier of the Year, Nov. 6.

The five competitors, who won NCO and Soldier of the Quarter competitions during the year put their skills to the test during a day of grueling competition.

The competition began with a road march in full gear to a firing range, where Soldiers performed reflexive fire, which involved firing weapons from different positions while walking.

Following the range, Soldiers were rotated through a round-robin of events to test their knowledge on automatic weapons, communications equipment, casualty treatment and evacuation, and searching detainees.

After a short break, the final portion of the competition was held. The ever nerve-wracking board appearance had NCOs answering a myriad of questions on military knowledge, from basic rifle marksmanship, troop leading procedures, and first aid to U.S. government history.

After tallying the scores the winners were announced.

Sergeant Randall Williams, a Round Rock, Texas, native and wheeled vehicle mechanic with the 15th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd BCT, was named the Black Jack NCO of the Year.

Sergeant Williams, who serves in Iraq as a member of the Kirkuk Provincial Reconstruction Team's personal security detachment, said he had been competing in different boards throughout the year, winning each one along the way to get this far.

He gave much of the credit to his platoon sergeant, Staff Sgt. Willie Martin, for much of his

success.

“I had tremendous support from my NCO support channel in preparing me for this,” Sgt. Williams said. “Winning was definitely an honor, because I want to be an example to my

“Winning was definitely an honor, because I want to be an example to my Soldiers.”

-Sgt. Randall Williams

Soldiers.”

The most difficult portion of the competition for Sgt. Williams was the opening event, in which Soldiers had to run in full gear for a mile and were timed.

“The 1-mile run in gear was brutal,” Sgt. Williams said.

The brigade’s Soldier of the Year title was bestowed

upon Spc. James Shindo, a Buena Park, Calif., native and petroleum supply specialist with 15th BSB, who also serves as a member of Kirkuk’s PRT PSD.

Specialist Shindo, who has been to several boards since May, said the previous board appearances prepared him for this day.

“I have been to five boards during this deployment,” Spc. Shindo said. “But, the most difficult part of the board isn’t performing the tasks or answering questions, it’s the personal discipline to take the time to study.”

Specialist Shindo also believes this is an important step to becoming an NCO.

“Hopefully, I can take what I’ve learned and will continue to learn during this process and apply it to the promotion board,” Spc. Shindo said.

For Spc. Shindo, the competition wasn’t easy, he said, but it reassured him he could do it. “I love the Army.”

According to Sgt. Maj. Christopher Frediani, a Pflugerville, Texas, native and an operations sergeant major for 2nd BCT who helped organize the competition, the competition was an opportunity for NCOs and Soldiers to show their best.

“The competition brings out the best in NCOs and Soldiers,” Sgt. Maj. Frediani said. “It also allows them to sharpen their skills and set them apart from their peers.”

Sergeant Major Frediani said it also gives NCOs confidence in being leaders and prepares junior Soldiers to become NCOs.

A number of questions during the board were focused on U.S. government and the constitution, a topic Sgt. Maj. Frediani feels is essential for a Soldier to understand.

“It’s absolutely important for NCOs and Soldiers to know what is behind the constitution



Specialist Shindo displays his knowledge of the 50 Caliber Machine Gun during a competition for the brigade’s NonCommissioned Officer and Soldier of the Year .

and what it is they are defending,” he said. “It’s not just an oath when we pledge to defend the constitution, knowing why we are defending it is equally important.”

Frediani said Spc. Shindo and Sgt. Williams will eventually appear before the 1st Cav. Div. NCO and Soldier of the Year board once the unit returns from deployment, to compete against other brigades in the division.



Sergeant Williams inputs information into the “Blue Force Tracker” during a competition for the brigade’s NonCommissioned Officer and Soldier of the Year.



Staff Sergeant Craig Wayman performs first aid on a simulated casualty as part of the brigade’s NonCommissioned Officer and Soldier of the Year competition.

Armor shields Soldier from sniper's fire

Story by Staff Sgt. Jason Douglas

The Combat Action Badge was awarded to one 1st Cavalry Division Soldier for actions during what started out as a simple mission but ended up turning into a near-fatal incident one early October afternoon in Kirkuk, Iraq.

First Lieutenant Felice Terrigno, a platoon leader with 3rd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, and his Soldiers had a simple mission Oct. 2; escort the U.S. Air Force Explosive Ordnance Disposal team from Forward Operating Base Warrior in Kirkuk to an unexploded ordnance location.

"We were tasked to take the EOD team out to an area the Iraqi Police reported to contain unexploded ordnance pointed towards the base," 1st. Lt. Terrigno recalled. According to 1st. Lt. Terrigno, his platoon was to arrive at the scene, dismount, and establish security around the unexploded ordnance, allowing the EOD team to dispose of it.

After arriving to the scene, 1st Lt. Terrigno said he heard what sounded like a thunderous clap; the sound of weapon fire.

"I could tell it was close, and my first thought was what happened," he said.

In what 1st. Lt. Terrigno described as the longest three seconds of his life, he said he felt a thud to his stomach and immediately hit the ground; not so much as from the impact of a bullet but as a trained reaction to the sound of gunfire.

"My platoon sergeant yelled out 'Sniper!' and everyone hit the ground and began taking cover," 1st. Lt. Terrigno said. "I got up, adrenaline pumping, and ran to the back of one of the vehicles."

First Lieutenant Terrigno said he still didn't fully comprehend what exactly had just taken place but soon realized that he had been shot.

"I knew I was in a lot of pain."

First Lieutenant Terrigno climbed into the back of one of the Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles, informed his Soldiers he had been hit and they began removing his gear to assess the extent of his injuries.

A single round had penetrated two of 1st. Lt. Terrigno's ammunition magazines and had nearly passed through his armor plate just above and to the right of his belly button.

Once his gear was removed, 1st. Lt. Terrigno said his stomach had a sizeable welt and was swelling from the impact of the bullet against his body.

"I thought I had broken a rib," he said.

The determination was made that his injuries were not life threatening; and the incident was reported to higher headquarters.

The shooting was an eye opener for 1st. Lt. Terrigno and his men.

"It ... has served as a reminder to us that things still happen here in Iraq," 1st. Lt. Terrigno said. "I feel like I'm a lucky guy because if it weren't for my ammo magazine the bullet would have caused a lot more damage but, I'm glad it happened to me and not one of my Soldiers."



1st Lt. Terrigno (center) is awarded the Combat Action Badge for actions stemming from an Oct. 2 sniper attack in Kirkuk, Iraq.

GIVING THANKS FOR PARTNERSHIP

Story and photos by Spc. Justin Naylor



Private First Class Vexey Rolland, an Atlanta native and an infantryman with 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, serves traditional Iraqi Chai tea to Iraqis and U.S. Soldiers alike before a Thanksgiving meal at Joint Security Station McHenry.

Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, and their Iraqi Security Force partners broke bread together and dined on turkey, stuffing, and other Thanksgiving trimmings at Joint Security Station McHenry in Kirkuk province, Iraq, Nov. 24.

“The concept was a fellowship dinner celebrating relationships between 1st Bn., 8th Cav. Regt., and our partnered commanders in the Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police,” said Maj. Warren Sponsler, the executive officer of 1st. Bn., 8th Cav. Regt.

The event was attended by brigade and battalion commanders from three different IA brigades, as well as commanders of 22 different IP stations, and other key IP leaders in the area.

“The intent was to show our gratitude for the common bonds we’ve built over the past eleven months by providing a traditional Thanksgiving-type dinner,” said Maj. Sponsler.

Soldiers from 1st Bn., 8th Cav. Regt., prepared all the food, served it, and even brewed traditional Iraqi Chai tea that was served before and after the meal.

“It was a very happy occasion,” said Lt. Col. Abdulla Ali, the director of the Joint Coordination Center in Dibbis, Iraq. “This was the first time I have got to have thanksgiving at McHenry.”

“It is very important for us to share things with the U.S.,” he said. “Anything we do,

we try to share with them. We have a good relationship.”

Abdulla compared this event to the Kurdish holiday of Nowruz on March 21, which celebrates Kurdish independence. He said the two events are very similar in that people come together to eat, talk and spend time with one another. Abdulla shared his most recent Nowruz holiday with his U.S. partners and was glad he had the opportunity to share in a traditional American holiday with them also.

“I have fed the U.S. Soldiers many times, and it is good to have them feed me for once,” he joked.

For 2nd Lt. Muhammed Akmed, an officer with the 2nd Battalion, 47th Battalion, 12th Iraqi Army Division, this holiday was a good way to wrap up the last 11 months of partnership he has shared with these Soldiers as they prepare to redeploy to the U.S.

Following the dinner, the Iraqis were presented certificates of appreciation from Lt. Col. David Lesperance, the commander of 1st Bn., 8th Cav. Regt., for their assistance and partnership with the battalion throughout the year.

“This is a really nice celebration, and I am very happy to have participated in it,” Lt. Col. David Lesperance said. “We have had a really good partnership and cooperation, and this is a great way to end that.”



Captain Justin Michel, the commander of Company A, 1st Battalion, 8th Cav.



Capt. Eric Hong, the commander of Company B, 1st Bn., 8th Cav. Regt. ladles gravy onto mashed potatoes for one of his Iraqi partners during Thanksgiving.

U.S. ARMY CAPTAIN HELPS BUILD A COMMUNITY

Story and photos by Spc. Justin Naylor



Capt. Eric Hong, a Queens, N.Y., native and the commander of Company B, 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, listens as a local Sheikh discusses problems in his village near Hawijah in Kirkuk province, Iraq, during a visit from Hong Dec. 3. Hong and his company have played a vital role in building up small communities by working with local leaders throughout their deployment.

Sitting cross-legged and bootless on the carpeted floor, he could have looked completely at home bantering back and forth with the sheikh if not for his uniform.

But the uniform is what brought him here in the first place, and it is a symbol of the commitment Capt. Eric Hong has made to his Soldiers and the community around Joint Security Station McHenry in Kirkuk province, Iraq, which he has spent nearly a year helping to develop.

Capt. Hong, who originally hails from Queens, N.Y., has lead Company B, 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, for a majority of its deployment to Iraq.

Being a company commander means leading Soldiers, taking part in key leader discussions with Iraqi community leaders, managing projects and supervising the development of the junior leaders in the company, along with whatever else the battalion requests of the company, explained Hong.

During this deployment, Hong experienced a dramatic departure from previous tactics as the security agreement came into effect, leaving him in the position of training his Soldiers to think in a whole new way, one in which they share the roads with Iraqi residents, work closely with Iraqi Security Forces, which means taking a backseat role within the inner circle of the area and its people.

“A lot of the guys are combat veterans,” he explained.

They are used to a more tactical and hostile environment, so part of the challenge was

teaching them that we now work in an advisory and assistance role, he explained.

After helping transition his Soldiers to the new style of operating, Hong's next challenge was building up his ISF partners.

"We sat down with them, and showed them how they could improve," he said.

Hong and his company worked with local Iraqi Police chiefs to help develop warrant based target strategies, and they took part in training with various ISF organizations.

"We tried to help them build their own strategies," he said.

Hong's company lead training on numerous subjects including: checkpoint operations, medical training, map reading, mortar fire, room clearing, and various other topics.

Although empowering the local ISF was a full-time job, Hong and his company still had more left to do.

Working with local village leaders, Company B took part in numerous community improvement projects, and handed out dozens of micro-grants to small businesses.

With his company only days away from redeploying back to Texas, the final challenge for Hong is transitioning authority to the new group of Soldiers who are replacing his, and hoping the positive changes his company has made in the area are permanent ones.

"We are just trying to pass on what we have learned to our replacements," he said.

This unit and the next one to follow are going to have a big role as the drawdown of Soldiers takes effect, and it is important that they understand what their mission is here.

Myself and my company have spent a year developing relationships in the area, and this are something that will be passed on to the new unit.

"I'm very proud of my company and what it has accomplished," he said. "I've been very blessed to have such a great groups of leaders and Soldiers."



Capt. Hong, speaks with village leaders in a small village near Hawijah in Kirkuk province, Iraq, Dec. 3. Hong has worked closely with village leaders to build up local communities.

KID ROCK JAMS DURING 'TOUR FOR THE TROOPS' CONCERT

Story by Staff Sgt. Jason Douglas



Singer Kid Rock performs "Rock and Roll Jesus" during a concert at Forward Operating Base Warrior, Kirkuk, Iraq, Dec. 2. Rock, along with comedian Carlos Mencia and singer Jessie James are performing throughout Southwest Asia and Europe as part of an U.S. Air Force Reserve sponsored tour dubbed "Tour for the Troops 2009".

Kid Rock and the Twisted Brown Trucker Band entertained servicemembers at Forward Operating Base Warrior in Kirkuk, Iraq, Dec. 2.

"Tour for the Troops 2009", formerly known as Operation Season's Greetings, also included comedian Carlos Mencia and singer/songwriter Jessie James. The two-week event, which began in Europe and will travel throughout Southwest Asia, is their way of thanking the troops for their work and sacrifices.

The concert on FOB Warrior began with James, who sang several songs from her debut album. James, whose father is a colonel in the U.S. Air Force, hoped the event would allow servicemembers to take a break from their duties to relax.

"I hope the troops take away a good time," James said. "I think they need a break from all this, just smile and act like boys and crazy girls."

James said her favorite part of performing for the troops was seeing them enjoy themselves and feels that it's important for celebrities to show their support because without the servicemembers, they wouldn't have the freedoms to perform.

James was followed by Mencia, who performed for nearly an hour using his distinctive wit and up-bringing as an immigrant to keep the crowd laughing.

"I'm just here to entertain, to give a little piece of home and to tell some jokes about back home and make people remember that there are a lot of us out there that care," Mencia said.

Mencia said following his visits overseas to entertain troops; he receives unbelievable praise and credit.

"People write about me and people say 'Hey Carlos, thanks for performing for the troops' but, when you [servicemembers] go home you don't get that kind of fanfare and you're here sacrificing way more

than I could ever imagine.”

The final and main event of the evening was Kid Rock, who had crowds cheering as he performed songs including his “Rock and Roll Jesus” and “All Summer Long”.

Performing for the troops is great because the military is the most receptive audience in the world, Rock explained.

Rock said he was raised to very patriotic which was evident even in his early music and that he started doing anything he could for the military. Rock also said this was his fifth concert tour in support of the troops.

“It makes me feel great to be here and play my music, have people respond and that makes me feel great anywhere but, to do it over here is extra special,” Rock said.

Rock said it’s important for everyone to show their support for the troops because while Soldiers don’t create policy, they execute it and people should never lose sight of that.

“But, I’m in the entertainment industry and I think it’s important to [entertain troops] because we more so than anyone enjoy and take full advantage of all the freedoms that they protect for us,” Rock said. “To give a little bit back and say thank you, to use your God-given talent to entertain the people that do so much for us I think is the least we can do.”



1st Lt. Billy Bridges gets his hat signed by singer Kid Rock during a visit to Joint Security Station McHenry.



Singer Jessie James performs songs from her debut album during a concert at Forward Operating Base Warrior.

Prior to the concert at Warrior, the tour made a stop at nearby Joint Security Station McHenry, near Hawijah, in Kirkuk province. Soldiers were able to get memorabilia autographed and photos with the stars.

“It’s kind of a ‘wow its Kid Rock’ thing,” said Pfc. Benjamin Whittaker, a Boise, Idaho, native and an infantryman with 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division.

“I am a big fan, and it’s a good present to get to see someone famous before we leave Iraq.” Pfc. Whittaker said. “It was a surprise to hear Kid Rock was coming, because no one really famous has

come to visit us. It’s good to see people remember we are here.”

For another Soldier at McHenry who is close to completing his deployment to Iraq, the visit was the perfect send-off for him and a great way to welcome his replacement.

“I think it says a lot about their character, because they came here to support the troops and it shows that we are not alone,” said 1st Lt. Billy Bridges, a Killeen, Texas, native and an infantry officer with 1st Bn., 8th Cav. Regt. “This is good for the incoming troops, because it shows that they are not alone out here, and it is a good going away present for the people who are getting ready to go home.”



A Soldier with 1st Bn., 8th Cav Regt., has his shirt signed by comedian Carlos Mencia at Joint Security Station McHenry in Kirkuk province.

Long road to recovery: Rebuilding homes destroyed by car bomb one bucket at a time

Story and photos by Pfc. Staff Sgt. Jason Douglas



Captain Brennan Mullaney (left), from Cumberland, Md., and commander of Troop B, 4th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, meets with Mayor Talib of Taza, Iraq, Nov. 24.

A little more than five months have passed since a devastating car bomb attack in the city of Taza in Kirkuk province, Iraq, killed approximately 90 residents and wounded more than 200, and left hundreds without homes.

Initial assistance from international organizations like the United Nations, Government of Turkey, Kirkuk Provincial Reconstruction Team, and the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, based at Forward Operating Base Warrior in Kirkuk province, provided humanitarian relief in the form of blankets, tents, food, and some financial assistance. However, the road to reconstruction has taken longer than expected.

Colonel Jangees, Taza's police chief, and Mayor Talib of Taza, took time during a meeting with Soldiers from the 4th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 2BCT, to discuss current reconstruction efforts and security, Nov. 24.

Since the attack, Col. Jangees has implemented additional security measures to prevent the same attack from happening again.

"We increased the number of checkpoints on the roads leading into the city," Col. Jangees said. "We now have nine separate checkpoints which are manned 24 hours a day."

Colonel Jangees also said additional equipment was purchased by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense to detect bomb making materials.

"We now have explosives detection equipment which 'sniffs' out explosives and other

chemicals, which we can use to inspect vehicles at the checkpoints,” Col. Jangees said.

Mayor Talib said the recovery following the attack and removal of debris from the blast site was swift but reconstruction efforts of destroyed homes were taking longer than initially expected.

Local businesses in Taza that were affected by the attack received assistance from the 2BCT. Capt. Brennan Mullaney, from Cumberland, Md., and commander of Troop B, 4/9th Cav., said at least 22 micro-grants were distributed to businesses in Taza to help with reconstruction.

According to Mayor Talib, the Government of Iraq is still in the process of distributing financial aid to the victims. Without it, he said, many of the families will not be able to rebuild their homes any time soon.

However, Mayor Talib said support for Taza had been great, with essential services up and running, U.N. donations, and aid from Kirkuk’s governor.

“Every family has returned since the attack. I will continue to work with the [GoI] to make sure the financial aid makes it to the right people,” Mayor Talib said.

At the blast site, hardly a trace of debris from the explosion remains, and one might even think the barren landscape is a city park if not for the few homes beginning to sprout up again.

Ali Kamebr Gidan, an officer with the 19th Iraqi Army Brigade, who lost his home during the attack, has begun rebuilding his home and was using his week of vacation to assist his neighbor to rebuild his. Using shovels and a bucket, Ali helped pour cement to lay down the foundation and mixed mortar to build the new walls of the house.

“It is community and friendships which have made it possible to recover,” Ali said.

Ali said he was fortunate because his family was not home at the time of the attack like so many others, and he had his own money to begin rebuilding his home.

“Someday, this area will be as it used to be,” Ali said.



Ali Kamebr Gidan and his son, help a neighbor rebuild his home following a devastating car-bomb attack last June. Ali, who also lost his home, is in the process of rebuilding his home and is, like many Taza residents, are waiting for financial assistance from the GoI.

Cavalry Soldiers receive their combat spurs

Story and photos by Pfc. Justin Naylor



Major Jose Martinez, the operations officer for 15th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, receives his gold spurs from Lt. Col. Chris Whittaker, the commander of 15th BSB, during an award ceremony at Forward Operating Base Warrior, Kirkuk, Iraq, Nov. 7

Since the mid-1800s, horse spurs have been a symbol of the cavalry Soldier. Soldiers have been presented with silver spurs for proficiency of Soldier skills and gold spurs for deploying in support of a cavalry unit.

As 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, prepares to send its advanced elements back to Fort Hood, Texas, in preparation for the Brigade's return from deployment, a group of Soldiers from the 15th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team received their combat spurs during an award ceremony on Forward Operating Base Warrior, Kirkuk, Iraq, Nov. 7.

"We continue the longstanding tradition of the cavalry trooper today," said Lt. Col. Chris Whittaker, a Lexington, Va., native and the commander of the 15th BSB.

These spurs were awarded to Soldiers who have deployed with a cavalry unit for the first time in a combat zone, explained Whittaker.

"These Soldiers have done a phenomenal job supporting logistics, partnership and security in the Kirkuk province in support of the 'Black Jack' Brigade," he said. "We'd be amiss if we didn't recognize them for all of that hard work."

The history of the spur is intertwined in the history of the cavalry units who now present them to their Soldiers.

The cavalry spur can be traced to before the Civil War, when Soldiers in the

U.S. Army were involved in keeping the “Wild West” safe.

During these times, a severe shortage in funds was experienced throughout the Army, and the most hard-hit were often the cavalry troopers on the frontier.

“It became tradition in the cavalry in the early 1800s to award the most deserving Soldiers in the unit with the best equipment,” explained Sgt. 1st Class Fernanda Redwine, the personnel office noncommissioned officer in-charge with 15th BSB. “This was done to promote morale and increase the troopers’ desire to perform well. It was the best of these Soldiers who were issued a very ornate set of spurs.”

Today, these cavalry Soldiers received their gold spurs.

“It shows that everybody saw what they were doing and appreciated what they were doing,” said Sgt. 1st Class Kenneth Robinson, a Bossier, La., native and a medical planner with the 15th BSB.

For the Soldiers of 15th BSB, the spurs were presented in a rather unique manner.

Soldiers climbed on top of a custom-made metal horse and were presented their spurs by their battalion commander, Lt. Col. Whittaker.

“You climb on top of the ‘horse’, and you get your spurs for proficiency, because you’ve earned them,” said Sgt. 1st Class Robinson.

After receiving these spurs, the Soldiers take away a piece of cavalry history with them.

A cavalryman’s spurs remain a constant reminder of the responsibility a Soldier has assumed by joining the cavalry, said Sgt. 1st Class Redwine.



Lt. Col. Whittaker climbs on top of a custom-made “horse” during a ceremony and is presented with a pair of gold spurs for his time spent with the 2nd BCT during this deployment.

PROJECT PROVIDES MEDICAL SUPPLIES TO IRAQI VETERINARIANS

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Jason Douglas



Captain Kimi Damassia, a Huntington, N.Y. native and liaison officer with the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, delivers a micro grant to Dr. Ameera, an Iraqi veterinarian, at the Department of Agriculture in Kirkuk, Iraq, Nov. 17. In an effort to improve veterinary services and increase agricultural production, micro-grants were used to purchase medical supplies, including antibiotics and vaccinations, to Iraqi veterinarians from around the province.

Agriculture, agribusiness and related industries comprise the majority of the economic activity in the province of Kirkuk, according to the Kirkuk Provincial Reconstruction Team. In an effort to improve veterinary services and increase agricultural production, representatives from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, distributed medical supplies to Iraqi veterinarians in Kirkuk, Iraq, Nov. 17.

According to Capt. Kimi Damassia, from Huntington, N.Y., and a liaison officer with 2nd BCT, northern Iraq relies heavily on the success of its agriculture, specifically, cattle, sheep and poultry products.

“In Iraq, there is a shortage of veterinary medicine,” Capt. Damassia explained. “In northern Iraq, farming is a way of life with 80 percent of the economy in Kirkuk province relying on agriculture.”

Captain Damassia, who led the supply effort, said the delivery consisted of refrigerators for newly established clinics and antibiotics to treat infections and vaccinations against viral diseases like foot and mouth disease, a highly contagious disease that can be fatal to cattle and sheep.

The head of the provincial Veterinary Association and Capt. Damassia identified the need for additional medical supplies following a visit to one of Kirkuk’s animal processing facilities.



An Iraqi veterinarian carries recently acquired medical supplies to her vehicle at the Kirkuk Agricultural Department in Kirkuk, Iraq, Nov. 17

The project distributed micro-grants to 17 veterinarians from around Kirkuk province and was funded through the Commander's Emergency Relief Program which invests money in the local community.

"Each micro-grant was approximately \$2,500, which was used to purchase the necessary supplies from local vendors and distributed to the veterinarians," Capt. Damassia said.

Doctor Ameera, an Iraqi veterinarian who owns a clinic in Hawijah, Iraq, said the supplies were a welcome addition to what she already had.

"This medicine will help to prevent disease in cows and sheep, and even though it is in addition to the supplies I have, it will help me to treat more animals and increase business," Ameera said.

According to Ameera, the supplies will also mean economic development. Increased business at the clinics will provide additional income for families, and the treatment and vaccination of livestock will lead to a higher quality of food which sells at a higher cost at the markets.



An Iraqi veterinarian carries recently acquired medical supplies to his vehicle at the Kirkuk Agricultural Department in Kirkuk, Iraq.. In an effort to improve veterinary services and increase agricultural production.



**SP4 CARMEL BERNON
HARVEY JR.**

**B Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment
21 Jun 1967
Posthumous Award**

Rank and organization: Specialist Fourth Class, U.S. Army, Company B, 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry, 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile). Place and date: Binh Dinh Province, Republic of Vietnam, 21 June 1967. Entered service at: Chicago, Ill. Born: 6 October 1946, Montgomery, W. Va. Citation: For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. SPC4 Harvey distinguished himself as a fire team leader with Company B, during combat operations. Ordered to secure a downed helicopter, his platoon established a defensive perimeter around the aircraft, but shortly thereafter a large enemy force attacked the position from 3 sides. SPC4 Harvey and 2 members of his squad were in a position directly in the path of the enemy onslaught, and their location received the brunt of the fire from an enemy machine gun. In short order, both of his companions were wounded, but SPC4 Harvey covered this loss by increasing his deliberate rifle fire at the foe. The enemy machine gun seemed to concentrate on him and the bullets struck the ground all around his position. One round hit and armed a grenade attached to his belt. Quickly, he tried to remove the grenade but was unsuccessful. Realizing the danger to his comrades if he remained and despite the hail of enemy fire, he jumped to his feet, shouted a challenge at the enemy, and raced toward the deadly machine gun. He nearly reached the enemy position when the grenade on his belt exploded, mortally wounding SPC4 Harvey, and stunning the enemy machine gun crew. His final act caused a pause in the enemy fire, and the wounded men were moved from the danger area. SPC4 Harvey's dedication to duty, high sense of responsibility, and heroic actions inspired the others in his platoon to decisively beat back the enemy attack. His acts are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself and the U.S. Army.

