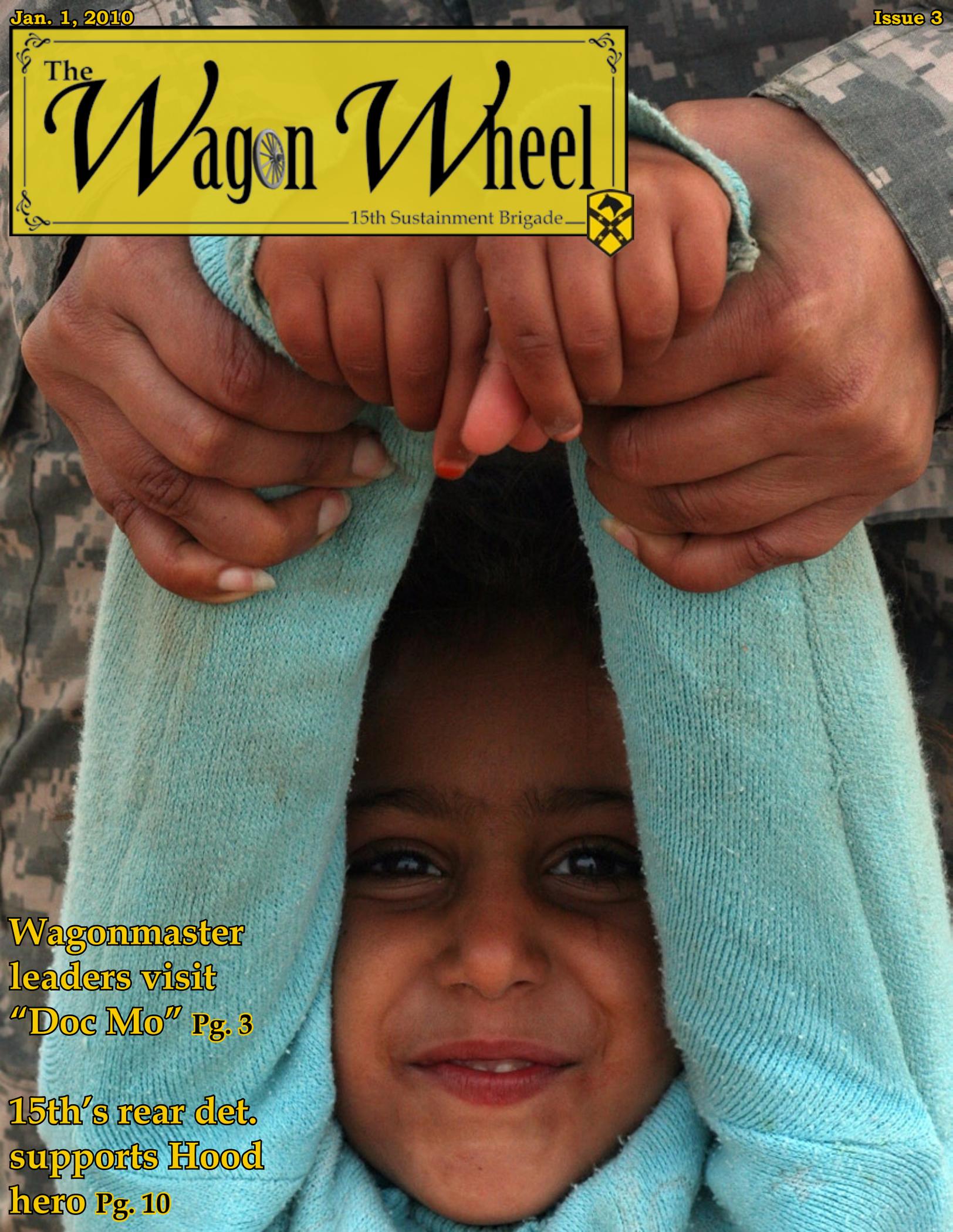


The  
**Wagon Wheel**  
—15th Sustainment Brigade—



**Wagonmaster  
leaders visit  
"Doc Mo" Pg. 3**

**15th's rear det.  
supports Hood  
hero Pg. 10**



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## Wagonmaster 6 Sends ...

Could it be the Holidays already? I look at my calendar and see it's already the 23rd of December, and I wonder where the time has flown!

I know you all stay in touch with your Troopers and you realize how busy they have been recently. Perhaps that's why the time is flying by so fast! In the last 79 days, since we have assumed authority for this mission, we have already set several records in support. We have increased our convoy miles, pumped more fuel, pushed more supplies, reorganized Q-West ... and countless other missions and tasks. You can be very proud of your Soldiers ... they are doing great, and they are accomplishing this workload safely!

In the past few weeks, we have taken on several additional units and responsibilities, and have expanded our support area Southward. And, in the next couple of weeks, we will expand again, and take on responsibility for 3 additional Battalions and a support area about the size of the State of Minnesota. That will give Task Force Wagonmaster direct oversight of 7 support battalions, and administrative oversight of an eighth battalion. Our ranks will swell to over 7,200 Soldiers, making us far and away the largest Brigade in Iraq (or probably anywhere, for that matter!) And throughout all of these changes, your Soldiers have done a superb job. They have taken it all in stride, and are focused on their missions. I am proud of them!

And I am proud of our "home

team" as well!

LTC  
Eva Saiz, SGM  
Wallace, and  
the entire WM  
Rear Detachment  
have done and  
continue to do a  
great job, and I  
urge you to use  
them if you need



anything. They are there for you all the time, especially in this holiday period.

I am also very proud of and thankful to our wonderful Central Texas Family. I cannot tell you how many cards, letters, emails, and support packages we get weekly. It is simple incredible. Thank you for your continued outpouring of support...we feel your support daily!

So, as we approach a new year with even greater responsibilities and missions, I want you all to know that your Troopers are doing great, they are very busy, and time is simply flying by. While we miss you all very much, we know you have us in your prayers. Our Holiday wish is that each of you has a great holiday season, and happy New Year, and we will all be reunited in 2010. It's going to be a great New Year. Thank you all for what you do every day. You are our "Power behind the power", and you and our Troopers are making history. We love and miss you very much!

*Wagonmaster 6*

# Wagon Wheel

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On the cover: A local girl plays with Soldiers during a visit to Jedellah Sofla, Iraq by 15th Sust. Bde. leaders Dec. 16. (Master Sgt. Celia Feller, 15th Sust. Bde.)

# "Wagonmasters" visit "Doc Mo", Bring gifts to children

Story and photos by Sgt. Matthew C. Cooley  
Photos by Master Sgt. Celia Feller  
15th Sust. Bde.

JEDELLAH SOFLA, Iraq – Near the southeast corner of Contingency Operating Location Q-West was a small farming village surrounded by arid desert.

Concrete buildings, lit only by sunlight through windows, were strewn about the area separated by cinderblock and mud walls from sheep, dogs, chickens, cows, and rabbits. Large sand-filled barriers surrounded everything, separating it from the flat, sandy landscape. The bleat of sheep, voices of children playing, and sound of conversations in Arabic and English were the only audible sounds.

Just outside, a line of heavily armored Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles waited as Soldiers intermingled with dozens of children and men in traditional Iraqi clothing.

Leaders of the 15th Sustainment Brigade "Wagonmasters," 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), met with local leaders at the home of Doctor Mohammad, the shaykh, or leader, of Jedellah Sofla, for introductions and to give gifts to the village children here Dec. 16.

Other locals in attendance included Hussien Ismaiel Ahnd, another Jedellah Sofla leader known as a mukhtar, and Hawas Naif, a local leader from Al Hader, Iraq, as well as some of Mohammad's brothers.

The male Soldiers sat with the local leaders telling stories and briefly discussing the situation in the area while the two

*Continued on 4*

A local girl holds up a Wagonmaster patch that she got from one of the 15th Sust. Bde. Soldiers during a visit here by 15th Sust. Bde. leaders Dec. 16. (Cooley)



Dr. Mohammad, the shaykh of Jedellah Sofla, makes the introductions between Col. Larry Phelps, 15th Sust. Bde. Commander, and local Iraqi leaders during a visit here by 15th Sust. Bde. leaders Dec. 16. (Feller)



Chavo, the 15th Sust. Bde.'s local Iraqi linguist, holds a local girl wearing his hat during a visit here by 15th Sust. Bde. leaders Dec. 16. (Cooley)



Capt. Elaina Hill, a Fairbanks, Alaska, native, and the 15th Sust. Bde. adjutant, gives toys to village children during a visit here by 15th Sust. Bde. leaders Dec. 16. (Cooley)



A local girl hugs a lamb during a visit here by 15th Sust. Bde. leaders Dec. 16. (Feller)



A boy tries to hide his face behind his mother during a visit here by 15th Sust. Bde. leaders Dec. 16. (Feller)

*Continued from "Doc Mo"*

female Soldiers visited with the village women in a separate house, as is customary in Iraq.

Mohammad, or "Doc Mo", as he is known to U.S. Soldiers, had a large dinner of kebabs prepared for the group which they ate with their hands while standing at a long table.

"My children would love to eat with us today because they love to eat with their hands," Col. Larry Phelps, the 15th Sust. Bde. commander and Greenville, Ala., native, said.

In addition to being shaykh, Doc Mo runs a small clinic, has a construction contract with Q-West providing frontend loader and dump truck services, and supports coalition forces by helping maintain security in the area and acting as intermediary between local leaders and coalition forces, Maj. Roger Jackson, 15th Sust. Bde.'s construction officer and Barbourville, Ky., native, said.

Chavo, the 15th Sust. Bde.'s local Iraqi linguist, started working with the U.S. Army as a result of Doc Mo's work.

In 2003, Mohammad helped Q-West leadership to set up a civil-military operations center, CMOC, outside of Q-West to help the local population find work and get the labor forces that the military needed.

At 11-years-old, Chavo went to the CMOC.

"I met Doc Mo, he was a community leader. He started helping me a lot ... he found me a job," Chavo said.

"He started as a labor worker on the FOB ... he started learning English step-by-step." Mohammad explained.

Eventually after learning some English, Doc Mo helped him to get work inside the base.

"[When] I brought him, he [was] still very small," Mohammad remembered with a smile.

Helping coalition forces has not always been easy for the doctor.

"In December 2007 is when he hit an IED on his way to Q-West ... causing him to lose both legs and almost his life," Jackson, who was nearly finished with the third year of his voluntarily extended tour, said.

U.S. forces were able to get to Mo-

hammad fast enough to save his life, but not his legs.

"He's almost like a brother that I never had," Jackson said.

"I was very upset about it."

Ahnd said that it wasn't right that Mohammad helped people only to end up a victim of a roadside bomb.

"He try to do good ... they give him a gift. They cut his legs," he said.

After his recovery and learning to walk around on prosthetic legs with the help of crutches, Doc Mo continued to take care of his village and support coalition forces.

He began working with the governor of the Ninawa province to secure government funding for the village's school, whose teachers were previously paid through a charitable program started by a U.S. Soldier in 2007, Jackson explained.

"Now they're paid by the government," he said.

Mohammad is working with the Iraqi government to attain medical supplies for his clinic which used to be supplied by the U.S. Army, but is no longer able to be.

"Since 2006, nobody gave us [anything] ... all the villages around here need this clinic," Ahnd explained.

After dinner, some of the Wagon-master Soldiers talked while others wandered around with their hosts and dozens of curious children.

"Give me! Give me!" they yelled pulling at the Soldiers' exposed ink pens and sunglasses, hoping to get some kind of memorable trinket.

Lt. Col. Mark Paget, 15th Sust. Bde.'s deputy commander and Orange, Calif., native, gave his watch to one of the children who asked for it as a sign of goodwill.

"Mark, that may be the best investment you've ever made," Phelps later told him on the ride back to base.

Ahnd gave some of the Soldiers a tour of livestock accompanied by a group of smiling children who pulled at the Soldiers' clothing and vied for their attention.

"Missus! Missus! Let me see!" They called to Master Sgt. Celia Feller, the night operations noncommissioned officer in charge for 15th Sust. Bde., wanting to play with her camera.

Even though there was a language barrier, many of the Soldiers found a way to deal with it.

"You could still understand what they were asking," Capt. Elaina Hill, a Fairbanks, Alaska, native and the 15th Sust. Bde. adjutant, said, explaining how body language helped communication.

The children posed for photos with



Master Sgt. Celia Feller, night operations NCO for 15th Sust. Bde. and Farmington, N.M., native, photographs and plays with local children during a visit here by 15th Sust. Bde. leaders Dec. 16. (Cooley)

Soldiers and livestock, played with some of the Soldiers, and led them around to show them different things.

Phelps told Doc Mo that the biggest reason he enjoyed visiting was all of the children.

Other Soldiers agreed that it was a good experience.

"I'm glad I went to actually get out there and mingle with the culture," Hill said smiling.

"I definitely want to go back."

At the end of the visit, Soldiers brought bags and boxes full of stuffed animals, candy, and toys to give to the children gathered in front of the village. They laughed and yelled as they scrambled for the toys.

Phelps said that he wanted to return to bring school supplies to the children in the future and that the village children reminded him of his own.

"I miss my kids," he said.



A village boy hugs his new toys brought by Wagon-master Soldiers during a visit here by 15th Sust. Bde. leaders Dec. 16. (Cooley)

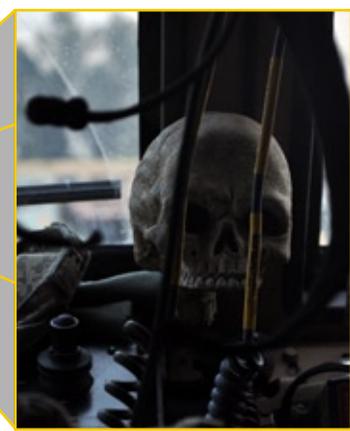
Spc. Zach Painter, a 15th Sust. Bde. personal security detachment dismount Soldier gives a thumbs-up as he guards the area around the pump house on the Tigris River in Al Qayyarah, Iraq, during a mission Dec. 1.



A 15th Sust. Bde. personal security detachment mine-resistant ambush protected vehicle is staged for a morning mission on Contingency Operating Location Diamondback, Iraq, Nov. 26.

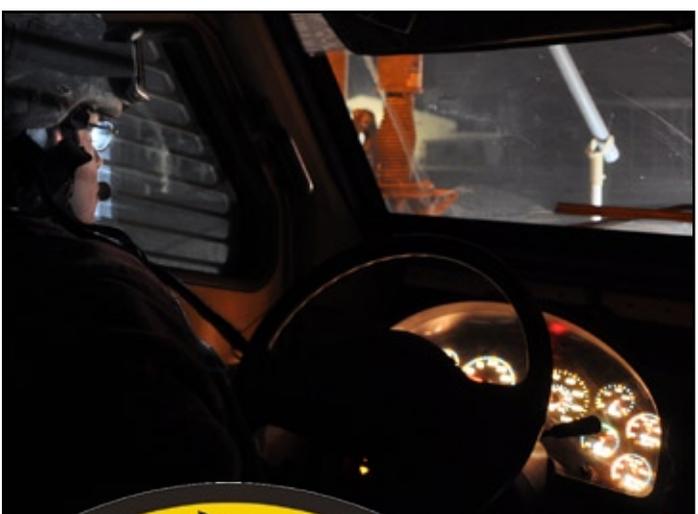


Spc. Richard Muniz, a Killeen, Texas, native and personal security detachment gunner for 15th Sust. Bde., watches the area during a mission to the Al Qayyarah water pump, in Al Qayyarah, Iraq, Dec. 1.



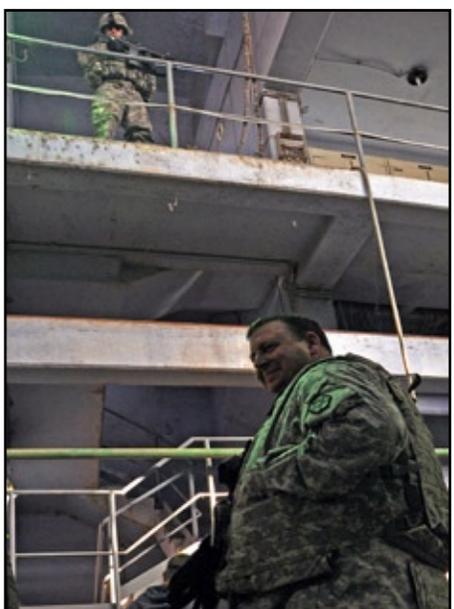
"Ed", a 15th Sust. Bde. personal security detachment mine-resistant ambush protected vehicle decoration sits in an MRAP before a mission on Contingency Operating Location Diamondback, Iraq, Nov. 26.

Spc. Marvin Robles, the 15th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), platoon leader driver for the personal security detachment drives his mine-resistant ambush protected vehicle to a staging area for an early morning mission on Contingency Operating Location Diamondback, Iraq, Nov. 26.



A 15th Sust. Bde. personal security detachment mine-resistant ambush protected vehicle is staged for a morning mission on Contingency Operating Location Diamondback, Iraq, Nov. 26.

Col. Larry Phelps, 15th Sust. Bde. commander looks at the machinery in the pump house on the Tigris River at Al Qayyarah, Dec. 1, as his body guard, Staff Sgt. Stuart Gimble, a Washington, D.C., native and 15th's personal security detachment platoon sergeant, watches from above



**Wagonmaster Security**  
Sgt. Matthew C. Cooley

# Soldiers Rest, Learn From Locals at Habur Gate

Story and Photo by Sgt. Ryan Twist  
13th ESC PAO

HABUR GATE, Iraq – As convoys escort trucks across the border between Turkey and Iraq, Soldiers take advantage of one of Iraq's most accommodating cities to rest between missions.

Service members and local nationals at Habur Gate operate a former hotel building, converted into a place where Soldiers eat, sleep, relax and recover while they wait for their next convoy mission.

"[Our] mission is to provide communication for the convoys coming in and out of [Contingency Operating Location] Q-West and other parts of Iraq ... [give Soldiers] a resting home for overnight stays and make sure everybody gets supplies," said Pfc. Andre R. Taylor, a central processing mode operator with the 15th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), out of Fort Hood, Texas. "Convoys stop here to pick up their trucks from the [Movement Control Team] yard and head back to where they came from."

Capt. Estan N. Davis, commander of the Logistical Task Force 15, with Headquarter and Headquarters Company 15th Special Troops Battalion attached to the 15th Sustainment Brigade out of Fort Hood, Texas, said the building operates on a 24-hour schedule.

"We are here to provide a safe, secure, stable environment for the Soldiers that are coming in from the road," said Davis, a Waterford, Vt., native. "We provide a secure place that they can remain overnight, refit, refuel, re-supply and then head back out."

Spc. James L. Prince, a convoy driver with 2nd Brigade, 114th B Battery out of Kosciusko, Miss., with the 155th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 13th ESC, said he escorts trucks to ensure their secure arrival to their destination.

"Everybody is somewhat excited to come up here," said Prince, a Madison, Miss., native. "Basically, it is a place where we can chill, hangout and lay low."

Davis said the building the Soldiers stay in has a 24-hour dining facility, a Morale, Welfare and Recreation center, a Post Exchange and a gym. The MWR has a TV to watch movies rented from the PX, a pool table, a foosball table, and board games. There are also places



Capt. Estan N. Davis, commander of the Logistical Task Force 15 with Headquarter and Headquarters Company 15th Special Troops Battalion attached to the 15th Sustainment Brigade out of Fort Hood, Texas, watches his Soldier drive a fork lift to pick up cargo from inside the truck. Davis, a Waterford, Vt., native, helps run a former hotel building, which was converted into a place where Soldiers eat, sleep, relax and recover while they wait for their next convoy mission.

to sleep and shower, as well as 24-hour Internet access.

Outside, service members have access to a basketball court and soccer field, on which they challenge the local nationals to play, he said.

The Soldiers running the building try to make it feel as close to home as they can, he said.

Davis said they run a facility sick call twice a day, and 24-hour communications support out of the building as well.

The Soldiers also get opportunities to go outside Habur Gate occasionally, said Taylor, a Killeen, Texas, native.

"We get opportunities like once a month to get out and see the actual city of Zakho," he said.

Taylor said the morale of the Soldiers is high and the stress is low at Habur Gate because Kurdistan is a low-key area.

Stress also stays low because the

Soldiers did not have to train on new jobs like other service members aiding in the drawdown, he said.

"For most of the Soldiers, this is the first time they've interacted with anybody outside of the United States on a daily basis," said Davis. "For the local nationals, some have been here five or six years working here in this building. They have been around Americans and our culture. They understand it and it is easier for them to help the Soldiers relate to being in a foreign country."

Davis said the Soldiers and local nationals interact well because they both want to learn from each other and make the rotation a success.

"They are mentoring and coaching youngsters that haven't been here to experience a deployment before," he said.

"It's really easy to see the kind of impacts that we make here, working in such a tight-knit group."



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# 15th Sust. Bde. gives Iraqi Army 26th Inf. Bde. helping hand

Story by Sgt. Matthew C. Cooley  
Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Seth Dow  
15th Sust. Bde.

CONTINGENCY OPERATING LOCATION Q-WEST, Iraq - Mechanics of the 15th Special Troops Battalion, 15th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), helped the 26th Brigade Military Transition Team train mechanics of the Iraqi Army's 26th Infantry Brigade in the 15th's motorpool here throughout November.

The four-week-long training was part of the Army's ongoing effort to build up the Iraqi military's growing capacities as more U.S. troops prepare to leave Iraq.

Sgt. Jason Chlarson, a Murrayville, Ill., native, and Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 15th STB, motor sergeant, took on the training of four Iraqi mechanics and five Iraqi army operators on the Army's level-two maintenance program.

"The course was designed to prepare the Iraqi army mechanics to fully assume their maintenance operation and improve their unit's maintenance readiness," Sgt. 1st Class Seth Dow, 15th STB maintenance sergeant and Florida, N.Y., native, said. "The training consisted of how to properly [do preventative maintenance checks and services], and conduct semiannual and annual services on the M1114 up-armored [humvee]."

"The Iraqi Army mechanics also received classroom instructions and hands on training on how to troubleshoot and replace major components like an engine, transfer case, and the turbo charger on their M1114s as well as many other organizational level parts such as brakes, rotors, batteries, and lights," Dow explained.

Chief Warrant Officer 3 Derwin Gibson, the 15th's brigade logistics training and assistance team coordinator, assisted the IA mechanics practice ordering parts through their supply chain.

"The ability to receive requested parts increased their confidence in the requisition system," Dow said.

Chief Warrant Officer 3 Diogenes Acosta, an Enterprise, Ala., native and 15th STB maintenance officer was pleased that the mechanics were eager to improve their skills.

"The five members of the Iraqi Army mechanics, in spite of not have experience working with the M1114, demonstrated to be very skilled mechanics and eager to improve their mechanic skills," Acosta said.

Dow agreed.

"The experience was rewarding for both the Soldiers of 15th STB and the Soldiers of 26th IA Brigade.

"They both learned a little bit more about each other, and the Soldiers of 15th STB were able to pass on some technical knowledge to help improve the readiness and future of the Iraqi Army."



U.S. Army mechanics train Iraqi Army mechanics during a four week training exercise designed to help the Iraqi Soldiers increase their knowledge and abilities.

"The course was designed to prepare the Iraqi army mechanics to fully assume their maintenance operation and improve their unit's maintenance readiness."

-- Dow



Lenny got caught passing sensitive information on a NIPR phone! Oh, no!

Lenny should have used SIPR. Using unclassified mediums to transmit classified data puts us all at risk and is PUNISHABLE under the UCMJ.

# "Team Wagonmasters" supports hero of Hood shootings



Pvt. Nathaniel Gopaul, a transportation management coordinator and a South Jamaica, N.Y., native, with the 15th Sust. Bde., loads cinder blocks on to a forklift for the wheelchair ramp and deck project at the home of Sgt. Kimberly Munley, the civilian officer who was injured during the Nov. 5 shootings.

Story and Photos by Cpl. Jessica Hampton

FORT HOOD, Texas – Soldiers of the 15th Sustainment Brigade's "Team Wagonmasters" rear detachment, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) volunteered during Phantom family time Dec. 3 to build something together with members of the "Lowe's Heroes" program and the Knights of Columbus at the home of Sgt. Kimberly Munley, the civilian military police officer who was injured during the Nov. 5 shootings here.

"Our biggest hero right now is Kim and Sgt. [Mark] Todd. And so we're building a wheelchair ramp and deck for her, so she can be in the backyard with her kids and not be confined to the house," Annjeanette Kuczenski, the project manager and community liaison for Lowe's in Killeen, said.

"Team Wagonmasters" became involved when a fellow Soldier heard about the project from her husband, who works with Kuczenski, and brought it to the attention of the Soldiers and asked for volunteers.

Soldiers worked alongside employees and retired engineers to build a wheelchair ramp, deck and gazebo for Munley and her family, but the project was shut down due to rain.

"We [Soldiers] decided that was not enough.

"We wanted to finish what we started, so after [3 p.m.] formation on Thursday, we piled in a car and did what we had to do," Pvt. Nathaniel Gopaul, a transportation management coordinator and a South Jamaica, N.Y., native, with the 15th Sust. Bde., said.

Sgt. Destony Troy, a legal liaison and command finance specialist for the 15th Sust. Bde., also volunteered to give up her family

time on Dec. 3 and again on Dec. 7 to help put the finishing touches on the deck and gazebo.

"When I heard what and where the project was, I had to step in and do something," Troy, an Odessa, Texas, native, said.

Troy, the mother of a 6-month-old boy who lives two blocks from the Munley home said that she walked by that house a million times while she was pregnant and didn't even imagine how her family would one day be effected.

"It was a great honor to do this for someone in my very own neighborhood who did so much for a lot of Soldiers that day," Troy said.

"There's really six degrees of separation here," Kuczenski, whose husband works with Munley, said.

"We're all family," she added.

"It was fun using power tools, swinging a hammer and working for a good cause," Gopaul said.

Gopaul, who works at the 15th SB headquarters building located about less than a half of a mile from the Soldier Readiness Processing Center, added that he believes a Soldier's job is to protect everyone, the American way

of life and not ask for anything in return.

"She not only protected the Soldiers in the center that day, but me and my battle buddies, too.

"He [Maj. Nadal Malik Hasan] could have easily came down there, busted through the buildings glass doors and did a lot more damage, but she stopped him and for that I am honored to do this for her and her family"

"This is sort of a little bit, a payback for what she did for us that day," said Ron Strasser, a retired engineer with the Knights of Columbus.

Kuczenski said that the community came out in "full force".

"I'm really pleased with the finished product and the community response," said Kuczenski.

"It was awesome that the 15th was able to come out and I look forward to working with them on other community projects."

Munley was not available for an interview due to the on-going investigation, but did speak with Kuczenski.

"I talked to her at the dedication. She said she really appreciated everyone's support and expressed how grateful she was for the 15th Sustainment Brigade being there to help out."

## Trainers return to Marez

Story by Pfc. John G. King  
515th CSSB

### CONTINGENCY OPERATING SITE

MAREZ, Iraq – The 515th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 15th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), Logistical Training and Advisory Team returned here after four months in Al Kasik, Iraq.

Capt. Edward Gonzales, Sgt. 1st Class Salomon Trujillo and Sgt. Ernest Archuleta, all with the 515th CSSB, rejoined their fellow New Mexico National Guardsmen in early December at Contingency Operating Site Marez.

The Al Kasik base is controlled by the Iraqi Army and part of their mission is to provide vehicle maintenance services for the 2nd and 3rd Iraqi Armed Forces Divisions, Gonzales said.

The purpose of the Logistical Training and Advisory Team, or LTAT, is to help train and assist the Iraqi Armed Forces to become independent as U.S. troops withdraw.

The primary training conducted by the LTAT was repairing military vehicles and ordering the proper maintenance supplies from the Class IX warehouse, Gonzales explained.

Gonzales, who supervised the LTAT operations on Al Kasik and had previous work experience with foreign military groups, enjoyed his time with the Iraqi Army.

"The Iraqis are hard workers who make sure to complete their mission," said Gonzales.

He also enjoyed the chance to be a part of daily Iraqi life by eating, having chai tea, living next to, and sharing jokes with them.

In addition to training the Iraqi person-

nel with vehicle maintenance, Archuleta trained the dining facility workers on proper sanitation and cleanliness of the workspace.

Trujillo served as the maintenance shop supervisor and ensured that the Iraqi armed forces had everything they needed to complete their jobs properly.

He received help from their team of translators to create numerous binders that listed vehicle parts and their stock numbers as visual aids and ordering references.

Al Kasik is the first Iraqi armed forces base to go into an over-watch phase, and will have only occasional visits from U.S. troops to ensure that they are progressing as an independent force.

"[In] the position they are in now I believe they have a better than average chance to stand on their own when Coalition Forces finally leave Iraq," Archuleta said.

# Q-West celebrates Christmas

Story and photos by Sgt. Matthew C. Cooley

CONTINGENCY OPERATING LOCATION Q-WEST, Iraq – Soldiers and civilians were treated to a special meal, decorations, and performances during lunch at the main dining facility here operated by 15th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), Dec. 25, in celebration of Christmas.

Soldiers and civilian workers volunteered to create the decorations and entertain the DFAC's patrons to help boost morale during what may be a difficult time of year for some as they are far away from loved ones.

"No one wants to be away from their family [during the Holidays] but being here is like having a second family," Capt. Mariam



Q-West Soldiers carol during lunch at the main dining facility here, Dec. 25.

Sewell, a Chester, Pa., native and the 15th Sust. Bde. deputy supply officer, said.

The day's special meal included prime rib, turkey, dressing, Cornish hens, ham, cookies, cakes, and non-alcoholic wines and eggnog.

Soldiers dressed as reindeer and elves entertained by dancing to country, hip-hop, and Latin music.

The Soldiers dressed as reindeer all wore antlers and shirts with one of the nine reindeer names on it, including Rudolph with a flashing red nose.

"You have fun, plenty of food to eat [and can] still be in the Christmas spirit," Sewell said.

The building was also adorned with a variety of winter and Christmas decorations. Hundreds of handmade paper snowflakes hung from the ceiling, a full-size sleigh with reindeer flying over a house was on display, and many large decorative cakes set in a neat row near the entrance.

Utpal D. Costa, a Dhaka, Bangladesh native and a DFAC salad chef, created a nativity scene out of aluminum foil, decorations for a Christmas tree with aluminum foil, a donkey stuffed with newspapers, a large paper flower and large decorative paper balls for the celebration.



A large gingerbread village created by Sixto Jimenez, a San Jose Del Monte, Philippines, native and head baker for the dining facility here, with help from other civilian workers and Soldiers, decorates the front of the DFAC during lunch Dec. 25.

Costa said he has made decorations from recycled material since he was a boy and has continued to make large pieces for special occasions on Q-West. Costa made the decorations in his small room.

"God always helped me," he said, explaining how he was able to create his art. "[I am] God gifted."

Sixto Jimenez, a San Jose Del Monte, Philippines, native and head baker for the dining facility here, made decorative cakes and a large gingerbread village with the help of the baking staff as well as civilian and Army DFAC workers.

Pfc. Daniel Rivera, a 15th Sust. Bde. cook and Apple Valley, Calif., native, carved an entire train out of blocks of ice which was displayed near the front entrance of the dining facility.

## 15th Sust. Bde. hosts personnel conference

Story by Staff Sgt. Rob Strain

CONTINGENCY OPERATING LOCATION Q-WEST, Iraq – The 15th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), personnel section hosted a daylong conference here at Contingency Operating Location Q-West Dec. 19.

The conference, which included 45 adjutant general officers, noncommissioned officers, and Soldiers from across the brigade, served as a way for the Soldiers to come together for a joint training session, said Maj. Victor Herbin, the 15th Sust. Bde.'s personnel officer.

"We wanted to make sure everyone is on the same page," Herbin, a San Diego, native said. "Make sure they know what is required, so nothing is lost in the upcoming mission."

The conference was broken down into interactive sessions, covering topics such as personnel support, training to streamline processes and tactics, techniques and procedures to be successful, Herbin explained.

The interactive sessions allowed everyone to give feedback and ask questions, rather than having a more traditional class with the instructor talking to the audience, said Capt. Elaina Hill, the 15th Sust. Bde. adjutant and former battalion personnel officer.

"It was a joint effort," Hill, a Fairbanks, Alaska, native said. "A lot of questions were answered; [we] got a better understanding of the processes."

Another benefit of the conference was the ability to get the brigade's personnel Soldiers in one place, so they have the opportunity to meet one another and associate a face with a name, Herbin said.

"We do so much over the Internet," Herbin said. "It was a good opportunity to meet and exchange ideas."

For Hill, who is not currently working in a personnel office, the conference was a good refresher on the skills needed to be successful when she goes back to one.

"It really helped, getting the feedback from those with experience," Hill said.

Hill explained that it is important for the personnel section to keep their skills sharp, because without them, units wouldn't receive new Soldiers, mail or the proper pay.

The brigade plans to hold the conference quarterly, incorporating new units and procedures each time, Herbin said.



The 15th Sust. Bde. personnel Soldiers, noncommissioned officers, and officers gather for a group photo Dec. 19 at the dining facility here. (Courtesy Photo)

# Staying sharp

## Q-West quick reaction force

Story and photos by Capt. Murray Shugars  
2-198th CAB

**CONTINGENCY OPERATING LOCATION Q-WEST, Iraq** — Members of a Mississippi Army National Guard unit conducted a routine presence patrol around Contingency Operating Location Q-West Dec. 15, demonstrating their strategies for combating complacency.

Soldiers with 1st Platoon, A Company, 2nd Battalion, 198th Combined Arms, 155th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, a mechanized infantry unit out of Hernando, Miss., serving as COL Q-West's force protection company, conducted the mounted patrol as part of their daily battle rhythm.

"The biggest risk we face is complacency," said Staff Sgt. Stephen S. Poff, the first squad leader and native of Ashland, Miss. "This mission is the same thing, over and over. We look for ways to keep it fresh. We conduct battle drills for events like indirect fire or vehicle recovery. We vary our route."

Poff said that each platoon in the company spends two weeks as the quick reaction force, which conducts the presence patrol, then spends two weeks performing battle space missions, such as supporting operation and maintenance missions to the pump house or securing convoys as needed.

"The platoon rotates QRF duty every 48 hours between the squads," said Poff. "A squad makes up to three two-hour patrols every 24 hours. Then another squad rotates in, and the one rotating out conducts vehicle maintenance and, when possible, gets a day off."

Sgt. Patrick A. Martin, a truck commander, said uneventful patrols and a repetitious battle rhythm contribute to the risk of complacency.

"Not much happens on this mission, so we vary our routes to stay fresh," said Martin, a resident of Southaven, Miss. "Once, we found an unexploded mortar round, but otherwise the weather is our biggest challenge, rain and fog. Mostly, we encounter dogs, dust and fog. Lately, the winter rain makes the desert muddy, and it can get very foggy at night."

Spc. Timothy D. Millican, a gunner from Southaven, Miss., agreed that the mission has been peaceful.

"QRF is probably the least exciting thing we do," said Millican. "When we're not on a perimeter patrol, we pretty much sit and

wait for something to happen, and this has been a quiet area of Iraq."

Sgt. Jeremy L. Sapp, a truck commander from Blue Springs, Miss., uses patrols to share experiences he gained during the unit's previous deployment in 2005.

"During patrols, I try to use some of the stuff I learned in the last deployment to teach the younger guys who haven't deployed

"In 2005, it was kicking in doors and a lot of shooting, but now we are doing a totally different mission."  
- Jackson

before," said Sapp. "I tell them about things that could happen in different situations. Those things haven't happened, but they could and these younger guys need to keep that in mind."

Spc. Chance W. Jeffress, II, Sapp's gunner, said these stories were educational and kept him alert.

"I like listening to sergeant Sapp's stories," said Jeffress, a native of Horn Lake, Miss. "When we're on a patrol, he will point

out situations that we're going through and talk about how they dealt with them during the last deployment. Those stories are interesting and give me a better perspective on our mission."

The vehicles' internal communications – the intercom system to which all crew members are connected with head phones – helps Soldiers stay focused, said Spc. William B. Waldrop, a gun truck driver.

"Talking to each other is a big part of patrolling," said Waldrop, a native of Senatobia, Miss. "We constantly talk about everything we're seeing, and that keeps my mind on the mission. The other thing that keeps me focused is when my vehicle commander yells at me to stay focused."

Millican said the presence patrols help maintain cordial relations with the local Iraqis.

"I like the presence patrols because they give us a chance to experience the local community," said Millican. "We get to know the people who live in the local villages."

When interacting with the local population, the QRF members take care to follow the U.S.-Iraq Status of Forces Agreement, said Sapp.

"We adhere to the Status of Forces Agreement and don't go through populated areas, but we pass near some small villages," said Sapp. "The people know us, and they often come out to greet us, especially the children. We share water and sometimes give the kids candy."

Sgt. Jeffrey J. Jackson, platoon medic, said it was important for the local community to see the presence patrol.

*Continued on 11*



Sgt. Patrick A. Martin, a force protection company truck commander for A Co, 2-198 CAB and Southaven, Miss., native, reconnoiters buildings in an abandoned village near the base here during a presence patrol, Dec. 15.



Continued from "Purple Heart"

Phelps also said that people in support jobs, like Taylor and the rest of the 15th Sust. Bde., do most of the work but get the least amount of recognition.

"What don't get the 'at-a-boys' ... we get the miles," he said.

Phelps said that he wanted Taylor's to be the last Purple Heart he awarded.

Though this was Taylor's first time to be seriously injured in an explosion, it was not the first time that a convoy he was in was hit by a roadside bomb or attacked, he said.

"Third time's the charm. It took three IEDs to finally get me," Taylor explained with a smirk.

Taylor said he was on his second deployment when he received the injury that gained him the Purple Heart, but during his first tour in Iraq in 2003 he had to deal with roadside bombs twice.

During the first attack,

Taylor said his convoy was driving palletized loading systems, a kind of cargo vehicle, carrying washers and driers for his unit that they needed.

"We were washing our clothes with washboards ... we

"All he wanted to do was see his son again." - Taylor

were so excited," he said.

None of the washers or driers made it intact as a chain of roadside bombs destroyed them and Taylor's truck, he said.

"I had just gotten my truck out of the shop too!" Taylor remembered, shaking his head.

The second attack wasn't directed at Taylor's convoy, but a convoy driving not far in front of his, he said. They were near a long bridge when they saw smoke on the other side from a convoy that was hit by a roadside bomb and

then attacked by insurgents with small-arms fire. When Taylor's convoy arrived, they returned fire and the enemy quickly scattered.

When Taylor got out of his vehicle to help the injured, he saw multiple dead bodies around a Humvee that was hit, one of which he didn't recognize at first to even be human, he said.

"I thought it was a sack of potatoes or something."

He recalled hearing a corporal screaming for help nearby. When he went to investigate he came upon a major whose arm was gone.

"I did CPR till I had muscle failure," Taylor said.

He said that a medic tried to get him to stop as the major was dead, but he refused.

"I had a pulse at first ... but there was nothing I could really do," he said solemnly.

Of the humvee's four passengers only one was not thrown from the vehicle and survived the explosion.

"He was the only one with a seatbelt on," Taylor said. "I don't remember his name, but he had some great tattoos ... all he wanted to do was see his son again."

For his actions that day, Taylor was awarded the bronze star.

Though Taylor was awarded the bronze star, Purple Heart, and received other commendations, he did not consider himself a hero.

"You want to look at a hero? Go see my wife first. My wife's a hero," he said, because of the hardship she endured over the years as a result of her husband's military service.

Taylor, who said his family had a strong military tradition dating back to the Revolutionary War, said that in spite of everything, he plans to reenlist here and finish the six years he needs to reach retirement.

"I might as well finish what I started."

## 1083rd Transportation Company Bears the Load

Story by 1st Lt. Maria E. Schmitz 264th CSSB

Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Benoit 1083rd Trans. Co.

CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE SPEICHER, Iraq – The transportation corps' creed reads: "I am transportation, the spearhead of logistics ... and nothing happens, until something moves."

As operational tempo increases to support the responsible drawdown of forces, transportation Soldiers are relied upon heavily to move equipment throughout the Iraqi theater, according to 1st Lt. Reginald Davis, the 1083rd Transportation Company, 264th Combat Sustainment

Support Battalion, 15th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), executive officer from Shreveport, La.

Spc. Jamie Gryder, a Shreveport, La., native, operates an enormous sand-colored truck, and she realizes the significance of her efforts to remain mission-focused.

"The highway is extremely dangerous and we are subject to attack at any given time," she said.

This is the story for many Soldiers of the 1083rd Trans. Co. These Soldiers follow a constant rotation of missions out on the road. The 1083rd Trans. Co. recently supported an operational move for the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, hauling more than 50 M1A2 Abrams tanks along with other assets. Operations in Iraq depend on military transportation assets during operational moves just like this one.

"The significance of their efforts becomes more apparent as time draws closer for troops and equipment to be out of the country," said Davis.

The 1083rd Trans. Co., whose motto is "The House of the Warrior," spends anywhere from two to ten days out on the road to complete a mission. They drive all night and cycle between work and rest cycles during the day at various camp locations along the route.

Sgt. 1st Class Joseph Levesque, a platoon sergeant from Bossier City, LA had a very different experience on his previous deployment.

"Back in 2003, during the initial push, we could not drive after dark in Iraq," Levesque said.

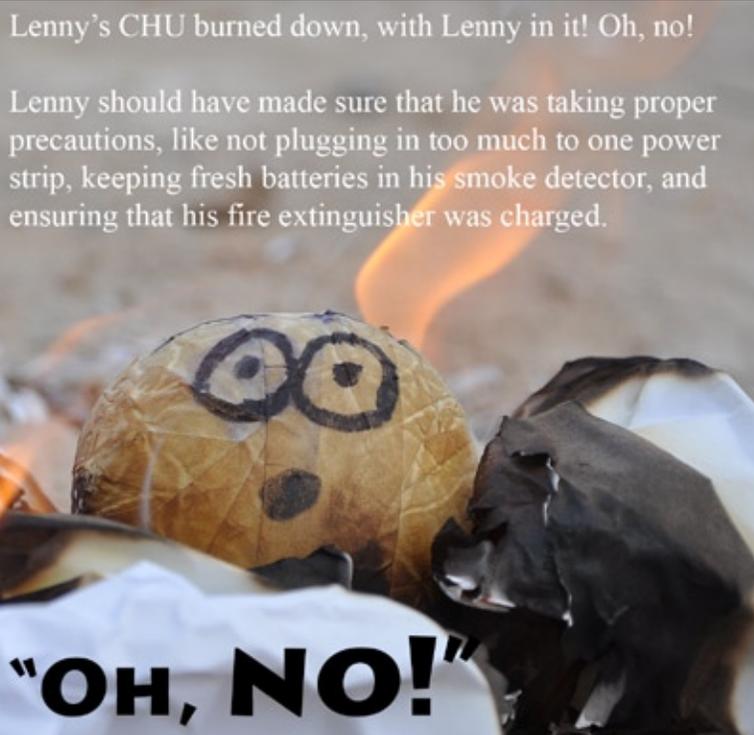
The routine for these Soldiers has changed dramatically, and Soldiers like Levesque have to be versatile and flexible. As the unit adapts to the constant change in pace it also continues to support the responsible drawdown of forces.



Sgt. 1st Class Joseph Levesque, a platoon sergeant with the 1083rd Transportation Company, from Bossier City, La., oversees progress in the loading of tanks during a recent operational move.



CONTINGENCY OPERATING LOCATION Q-WEST, Iraq — Sgt. 1st Class Kenneth E. Guess, a provost marshal from Nettleton, Miss., clocks a toy car speeding 22 mph here, Dec. 24. Guess issued a warning to Capt. Christopher Wilton, a communications officer from Olive Branch, Miss., that the maximum speed limit was 15 miles per hour. Both Soldiers serve with Headquarters, and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 198th Combined Arms, out of Seno-  
bia, Miss. (Capt. Murray Shugars, 2-198th CAB)



Lenny's CHU burned down, with Lenny in it! Oh, no!

Lenny should have made sure that he was taking proper precautions, like not plugging in too much to one power strip, keeping fresh batteries in his smoke detector, and ensuring that his fire extinguisher was charged.

**"OH, NO!"**

## Q-West military dog fetches NCO induction

Story and photo by  
Sgt. Matthew C. Cooley

CONTINGENCY OPERATING LOCATION Q-WEST, Iraq – Most dogs aren't required to do more than eat, sleep, and occasionally play fetch, but Rex isn't a normal German Shepherd.

15th Special Troops Battalion, 15th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), inducted Sgt. 1st Class Rex, a patrol explosive

detector dog for the 178th Military Police Detachment into the Corps of Noncommissioned Officers Dec. 12, at a ceremony in the Morale, Welfare and Recreation tent here.

The ceremony, which is normally for newly promoted NCOs, inducted 32 human Soldiers and Airmen along with Rex, who was the highest ranking NCO to be inducted, welcoming them to the "time honored corps."

Military working dogs are given a rank one higher than their handlers, so it's normal to have canine NCOs, but very rare to have one officially inducted into the corps, said Staff Sgt. Cully Parr, a McBride, Mich., native and Rex's military police dog handler for 178th MP Det.

"It's probably the first time they've ever done this for dogs," he said.

The duo paired up in July after Rex, a two-year-old, finished the military's dog version of basic training at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Parr said.

"He doesn't work without me – I don't work without him," Parr explained.

"He's like any other Soldier."

Rex's primary job, explo-

sives detection, is only awarded to dogs that meet very strict special requirements determined by thorough testing, Parr said.

Parr began his career as an Army dog handler in late 2005 because he enjoys working with dogs and believes he can use the skills he's learned in a civilian career someday.

"It's one of the best jobs in the Army," he said.

Parr said that having Rex inducted was good for the other Soldiers' morale and showed that military working dogs are Soldiers too.

"People just light up when they see him," Parr said.

After the ceremony, dozens of Soldiers went to Rex to pet him and have their pictures taken together.

Parr cautioned that not all military working dogs are as well socialized as Rex though, and that one should ask the handler before petting one.

According to Parr, the Army tries to pair working dogs and handlers with similar personalities as it helps them work together better as a team.

He also said that he enjoys taking Rex to such events because it might get Soldiers interested in the program.

All of the NCOs inducted into

the corps were presented with a certificate and presented by name to the audience as they stood, one by one, under crossed sabers.

"Being an NCO is more than acquiring skills, passing boards or completing courses ..." Sgt. Elizabeth Whitehead, 15th STB personnel NCO said during the ceremony.

"... It is a change in the mentality of how we conduct our day-to-day business."

Prisoners of war and Soldiers missing in action were honored at the ceremony by the presence of the Fallen Soldier's Table, a small empty dining table set for one.

Master Sgt. Terry Moten, a Dallas native and 15th STB training and schools NCO in charge, was the ceremony's guest speaker. 1st Sgt. Willie Johnson, A Company, 15th STB, first sergeant and 1st Sgt. Jeanette Short, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 15th STB, first sergeant, administered the Oath of the United States Army Noncommissioned Officer and Charge of the Noncommissioned Officer respectively.

Although Rex could not take the oath, he barked excitedly after the ceremony.

"He is also a Soldier," Parr said.



Command Sgt. Maj. Nathaniel Barteo, 15th Sust. Bde. senior NCO, shakes the paw of Sgt. 1st Class Rex, a patrol explosive detector dog for the 178th MP Det., at a ceremony in which Rex was inducted into the NCO Corps at the Morale Welfare and Recreation tent here Dec. 12.

# 264th CSSB celebrates the holidays

Story by 1st Lt. Maria Schmitz  
Photo by Capt. Myron Johnson  
264th CSSB

CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE SPEICHER, Iraq – The Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 264th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion from Fort Bragg, N.C., celebrated the holiday season here with a number of events.

Santa Claus made an appearance in the battalion headquarters on Christmas Eve, and Soldiers had the opportunity to take pictures with Santa to send back to family and friends. Lt. Col. Steven Debusk, the 264th CSSB's commander, handed out gifts sent from his hometown of Elkton, Md.

Pvt. Edward Shaw, a radio transmitter operator from San Francisco, dressed up as Santa Claus.

“[Private] Shaw added his own twist as Santa Claus and added to the morale of the unit,” said Pfc. Lee Phillips, a human resource specialist from Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.

Additional stockings were delivered to each Soldier of the company from a Soldier's family and friends from St. Louis. The stockings were stuffed with everything from toothpaste and toothbrushes, to candy, lotion and hand sanitizer.

“Even though we are away from our families, we can still enjoy the holidays with our co-workers. Getting the stockings made me



Lt. Col. Steven Debusk, the 264th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion commander, poses with Santa during the battalion's holiday party.

see how much the people we work with and their families back home care about me,” said Spc. Brittney Sanlin, a human resource specialist from Belleville, Ill. “It really meant a lot.”

The Headquarters Company ended the day with a holiday party with an abundance of food and treats.

# Helping Soldiers Stay Connected

Story and photo by 1st Lt. Michael Anderson

CONTINGENCY OPERATING LOCATION Q-WEST, Iraq - Soldiers from A Company, Special Troops Battalion, 15th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) help man a 24-hour local computer lab here at Contingency Operating Location Q-West, to keep up Soldier morale and enable Soldiers to communicate with others anywhere in the world.

The computer lab consists of 18 computers and 8 phones. These services are provided at no cost to the Soldiers, according to Spc. Edward Sauls, a technician at the center and Missouri, Texas, native.

Spc. Brandon Charles, a communications technician with A Company, also works in and helps maintain the computer center.



The interior of the 15th Sustainment Brigade computer lab at Contingency Operating Location Q-West, Iraq. The lab is run and maintained by Soldiers of A Company, 15th STB, 15th Sust. Bde.

“It is a really relaxing environment, good use of personal time, and helps keep up morale,” Charles, a Harvey, La., native, said.

The center helps serve 50 to 100 Soldiers on a daily basis. Many 15th SB Soldiers frequently visit the center due to it being in close proximity to the 15th SB buildings. The facility is open to any unit on the COL, said Sauls.

Recently, upon becoming tasked with maintaining the computer lab, A Company made rigorous improvements to the inside and outside of the center. This included painting the desks, cleaning the general area, and installing a new walkway in front of the center, explained Charles.

“We have a lot of pride in our unit,” said Sauls. “We couldn't put up our patch until it was sufficiently cleaned.”

Recently, the Multi-National Force-Iraq senior noncommissioned officer, Command Sgt. Maj. Lawrence Wilson visited the center, and 1st Sgt. Willie Johnson, A Company's senior noncommissioned officer, gave him a tour of the center.

“CSM Wilson was very impressed with our facility and the services we provide to the Soldiers,” said Johnson, a New Orleans, native.

A Company continues to operate the center, and the center itself has proven to be an extremely valuable asset in keeping Soldiers morale up by providing a way to contact family members and friends, said 2nd Lt. Robert Longhauser, a platoon leader with A Company.

The facility also serves as an alternative method for Soldiers to complete on-line course to continue their education while they are unable to attend a conventional college classroom, Longhauser, a Cincinnati, native, explained.

This facility and our current status of communications technology have come a long way since the days of the Vietnam War era. Soldiers of that time period had to rely on mail handler carrier method, and there was no standardized method for tracking your correspondence, and there was no way you could complete college or on-line courses that way in such a harsh battlefield, Longhauser said.

“We are truly lucky to have such capabilities of technology and communications at our fingertips during these times of deployment,” Longhauser added.

# Wagonmaster Fun

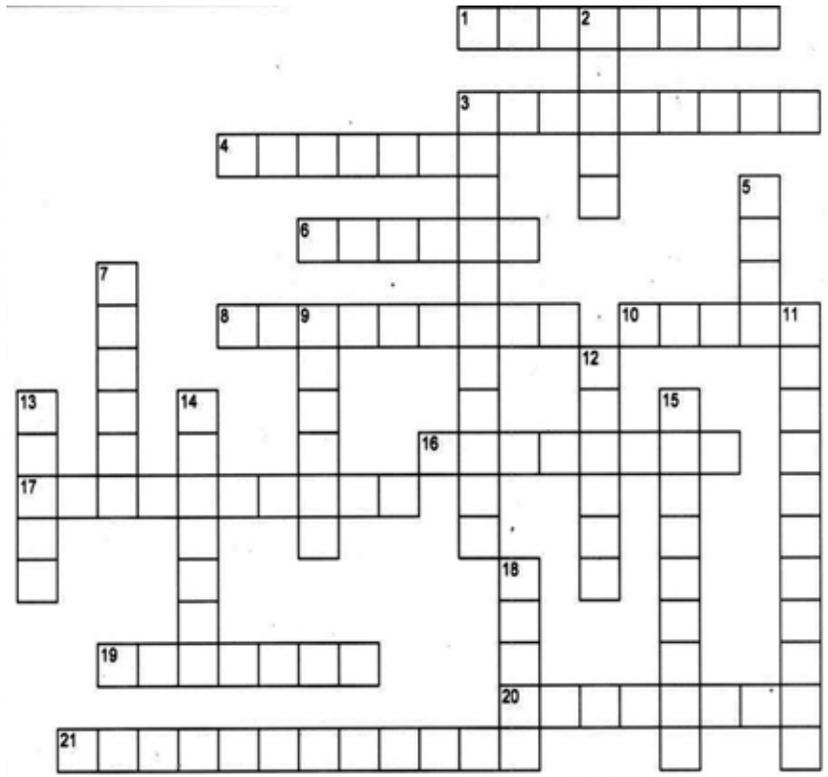
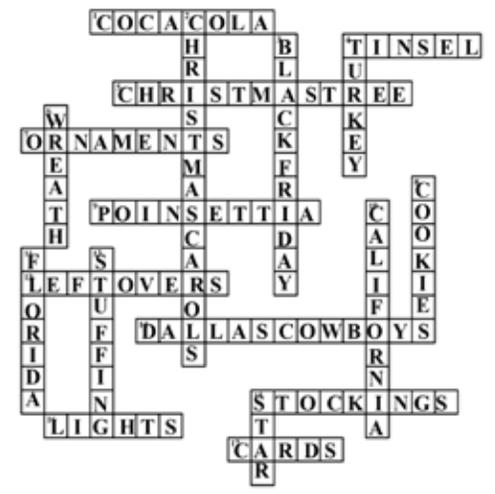


Answers to puzzles available in next month's issue.

7	2	4	5	3	1	9	8	6
1	6	9	8	4	2	5	7	3
3	8	5	9	6	7	1	4	2
8	7	1	2	9	3	4	6	5
4	5	6	7	1	8	3	2	9
9	3	2	4	5	6	8	1	7
5	9	7	1	2	4	6	3	8
2	4	3	6	8	5	7	9	1
6	1	8	3	7	9	2	5	4

		4						9
3				1				
				8	2			
		7	3		6			4
4		9					2	1
						6		
1			2					
	8		9					1
	5		6	3	1	4	7	

### Holiday Crossword Puzzle



N.B. There are no spaces between words.

- | Across                         | Down                               |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 new year in Scotland         | 2 there are 12 in the year         |
| 3 enumeration of final moments | 3 festivity to mark an event       |
| 4 greet warmly                 | 5 couples do this at midnight      |
| 6 famous London clock          | 7 expression of goodwill           |
| 8 explosion of lights          | 9 celebrate the arrival            |
| 10 day of new year             | 11 where crowds gather in New York |
| 12 12 o'clock at night         | 12 noise produced by clock         |
| 17 promise you make            | 13 get-together to celebrate       |
| 19 new year month              | 14 used for decoration at parties  |
| 20 shows the date              | 15 celebration drink               |
| 21 traditional New Year song   | 18 move to music                   |

