

The Arrowhead Brigade

ON POINT



NOTES FROM ARROWHEAD 6 AND 7

Dear Family and Friends of the Arrowhead Brigade,

Greetings, and a belated Happy Valentine's Day to all our Sweethearts. Even if we couldn't be home with you during this romantic holiday, know that our hearts were. Lots of things going on in the Diyala Province this month. As of this writing, we are less than two weeks from the national elections – a critical time in the history of this new democracy. More on that later, but before we forget, let us proudly announce that the Arrowhead Brigade has officially entered the 21st Century. That's right; we have a Facebook page. To access it, go to www.facebook.com (if you don't yet have an account you will need to sign up; it's free). Once there, type "3Rd Stryker Brigade" into the search bar. We should be the first option that pops up. We regularly post pictures, videos, and stories of your Soldiers and the great things they are doing over here. If you choose to become a fan, you will automatically be notified though your Facebook page when we put anything new on ours. We already have more than 1500 fans, so please join up.

The weather continues to be mostly dry, although we did recently have a few winter storms to wet things up a bit. Our most vexing weather challenge lately has been the massive dust storms that are typical this time of year. When one of these storms hits us full-tilt (typically from Syria),

there is a tan-colored fog that hangs over everything, blocking out the sun, and reducing visibility to a few hundred meters. Naturally, this fine dust manages to find its way into every nook and cranny of every building, wreaking havoc with all our electronics. Temperature wise, we've



Col. David Funk

had a few days already reach into the 80s, but a typical day is peaks out in the 70s. By this time next month, we expect to be well into the 90s, and we may even flirt with triple digits.

So, here we stand once again the precipice of history in Iraq. We have said such things often during the past 7 years. From the initial invasion, to the several elections already conducted here, to the sectarian violence that gripped the nation, and finally, to the "surge" of US forces to help defeat Al Qaeda (led in part by your Arrowhead Soldiers), we

have been accused of engaging in "historic hyperbole" in the past. In truth, each of these events was historic in its own right.

Yet somehow this national election – scheduled for March 7th – is different. First, it is truly being planned and executed by Iraqis. While we are standing by in the ready blocks to assist where needed, the government and its security forces have clearly taken the lead. Perhaps no event characterizes the nature of a government more clearly than the manner in which it changes leadership. In that regard, the extent to which these elections are perceived as a safe, credible, and legitimate, represents a major test for this fledgling democracy.

Secondly, we expect broad participation from the Sunni minority population in this election. While recent political posturing has resulted in threats of a Sunni boycott (similar to the 2005 elections), most Sunnis we talk to acknowledge that sitting the last one out was a mistake. They generally recognize they don't have the numbers to win majority control of the government, but they can be represented fairly if they vote. This recognition is important, because absent some legitimate voice in their own government, the Sunnis may feel they have little choice but to return to violence... which leads to the third reason this election is historic.

This election comes on the eve of a significant drawdown of US

forces here. By summer's end, we will have 50,000 US Soldiers remaining in Iraq, the fewest by far since the 2003 invasion. Whether history judges this drawdown, so soon after the elections, to have been well-timed or premature will depend largely on how peacefully the Iraqis transition to their new government.

While we can't predict how things will turn out, there is much cause for optimism. We see progress every day in the Government Center of Baquba, the street markets of Muqdadiya, the schools in Khalis, the irrigation canals of Balad Ruz, and the Kurd-Arab fault line in Khanikan. This progress is sometimes frustratingly slow, often beset by corruption and political maneuvering, and always plagued by the prospect of violence. But it is progress nonetheless, real and measurable. And it's made possible each and every day by your Arrowhead Soldiers.

It is an amazing sight to watch your heroes in action. The same Soldiers who on Tuesday are helping to refurbish a local elementary school, transition easily on Thursday to a combined US-Iraqi, battalion-level air assault to capture terrorists. Our Soldiers are equally adept at providing escort security for the US Ambassador, and disrupting enemy mortar and rocket fire aimed at our FOBs. They can do a Humanitarian Assistance mission one day and help local security

forces find a weapons cache the next. Across the width and depth of Diyala, Arrowhead Soldiers are teaching, coaching, training, and leading our Iraqi partners to success. In short, they are making a difference. That is why we are optimistic about the future here.

Let's transition to rumor con-



Command Sgt. Maj. Alan Bjerke

trol for a moment. Many of you have "heard it through the grapevine" that one of our battalions may be returning early from Iraq. There is potential truth to that rumor, but we don't know for sure, we don't know precisely when, and most importantly, we don't know which battalion it might be. There is an option presented to our Division headquarters that would result in one of our maneuver battalions returning up to a month early (late June/early July). The reason for this option is that we have to reduce the force in Iraq to 50,000 by the end of Au-

gust. Given that the current force is nearly twice that, the theater must start thinning the lines a few months earlier.

Rest assured that when we get a definite answer, we will let you all know, either directly from here or through our Rear Detachment Command. Anything you hear from a different (non-command) source is not reliable. Please be patient and understand our Army is trying to do something new and different here - a responsible drawdown from a 7+ year war.

In the mean time, also rest assured your Soldiers are doing everything in their power to continue making a difference here. Know too that we draw strength from your love and support. The cards and letters, the e-mails, the care packages – all these gestures mean the world to us. It is the protection of our loved ones back home that drives us to do what we do. It is the love and prayers from our loved ones that help us do it so well. Thanks for all you do. Next month's update will include a report of the wildly successful elections we are about to witness. Until then we are humbly...

Arrowhead 6 and 7

ARROWHEAD

SECOND TO NONE

AMERICA'S CORPS!

CONTENTS

Soldiers of Comanche Co., 1/23 Inf. move through fields on their way to a village with their Iraqi partners. The village was being searched as part of a joint air assault mission on February 17. (US Army photo by Pvt. Zachary Zuber)

Arrowhead 6 and 7 Sends.....	Page 2	New Career Opportunity.....	Page 16
Operation Tomahawk Condor.....	Page 6	Much Needed Medical Care....	Page 18
Iraq, Then and Now.....	Page 8	New Face for a School.....	Page 20
A Gift to a Girl in Need.....	Page 10	Unique Opportunities.....	Page 22
Tripartite Security.....	Page 12	Chaplain's Corner.....	Page 23
Support for Iraqi Elections.....	Page 14		

ON THE COVER

While a nearby village is searched, Soldiers from Apache Co., 1/23 Inf. provide security in the outskirts. The search was part of an air assault mission performed in partnership with the Iraqi Army. (US Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Eileen Kelly Fors)

THE BACK COVER

Corporal Eduardo Salazaar, a radio telephone operator for 3rd Platoon, Crazyhorse Troop, 1/14th Cav., hugs an Iraqi girl during a presence patrol through As'Sadiyah, Iraq, on Feb. 7. Third Platoon has been working with Iraqi Army counterparts to patrol this area and get to know the local populace. (US Army photo by Pfc. Adrian Muehe)

3-2 SBCT Commander
Col. David Funk

3-2 SBCT Command Sgt. Maj.
Command Sgt. Maj. Alan Bjerke
3-2 SBCT Public Affairs Office

1st Lt. Jennifer Palmeri.....Public Affairs Officer
Sgt. 1st Class JD Phippen.....NCOIC/Broadcast Journalist
Pvt. Zachary Zuber.....Print Journalist/Layout and Design
Pfc. Adrian Muehe.....Print Journalist
MC1 Eileen Fors, Spc. Anderson Savoy.....Contributors

The ON POINT is a command information magazine authorized for members of the U.S. Army and the 3/2 SBCT community. Contents of the ON POINT are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense or Department of the Army. The editorial content of the magazine is the responsibility of the 3/2 SBCT Public Affairs Office. ON POINT is prepared monthly by the 3/2 SBCT Public Affairs Office, which includes Soldiers of the 135th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment. Any story or photo submission should be forwarded to the editor at jennifer.palmeri@sbct1.army.mil.

Assaulting by Air Proves Successful for Partnered Forces

Story and Photos by
Pvt. Zachary Zuber
135th MPAD

DIYALA, Iraq – Helicopters hovering overhead may be a common sight for Soldiers in Iraq these days, but for those in 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, and their Iraqi Army partners, watching the skies on February 17 provided an interesting sight.

In a rare occurrence, a massive air assault mission was carried out that morning to clear three small villages to which there was no other access. The cooperative effort required extensive planning, but with the partnership of both forces, it ended a success.

“Impeccable planning, hard work, and excellent rehearsals were essential to our success,” said 2nd Lt. William Horan, a planning officer for the 1/23 Inf. “It was an exhaustive effort to coordinate even just the air assets required for the missions.”

Providing enough helicopters was a major concern because of the nature of the operation. It required three Chinooks to provide transport for the Soldiers that completed the clearing, and four Blackhawks for the troops creating the security cordon. In addition, a team of two Apaches provided air security if needed.

“Once that part of the plan was figured out, we had to build a gigantic terrain model so we could do proper rehearsals,” said

2nd Lt. Horan, a Wethersfield, Conn. native. “During rehearsals, the Iraqi commanders showed an immense knowledge of the plan and were a direct factor in the success of this mission.”

The Iraqi soldiers, from the 2nd Battalion, 19th Brigade, 5th Iraqi Army Division, played integral role in the overall mission by memorizing locations and roles of U.S. Soldiers as well as their own.

“I learned from the training to try and make more active examples in rehearsals to provide a better understanding,” said Sgt. Abbas Abraham Jassam, a non-commissioned officer with the 2/19 IA. “Those things made us able to work together better to complete this operation.”

All of the thorough planning proved fruitful at the end of the

day, as the mission resulted in three arrests and the confiscation of a small weapons cache. It also improved the relationship between the U.S. and Iraqi forces.

“Our time with them was like being with one of our tribes,” said Sgt. Jassam. “They took care of us like family, providing food and a place to stay during training and before the mission.”

Working together to accomplish such a positive result left a lasting impression on the Iraqi soldiers, building their confidence for unilateral operations in the future.

“This is the first time I have been on a mission like this, flying in with U.S. Soldiers instead of driving like usual,” said Sgt. Jassam. “It has been a great experience and I hope I can do it again soon.”



Comanche Company, 1/23 Inf. Soldiers provide security during a search of a small secluded village in the Diyala province of Iraq on February 17. In cooperation with Iraqi Army forces, the mission was a large scale air assault.



Left: Soldiers of Comanche Company, 1/23 Inf. take cover from debris as the first flight of Blackhawks for an air assault mission lift off. The first flight dropped off security teams outside a secluded village in the Diyala province of Iraq. Right: After being dropped off by a Chinook, Tomahawk Soldiers work their way through a field to a small village in the Diyala province on February 17. They were part of a large scale air assault operation, partnered with the Iraqi Army.



Making final preparations before landing, Tomahawk Soldiers watch for their cue to jump off their transport flight to a small village in the Diyala province, Iraq. Their flight was part of a massive air assault mission in partnership with the Iraqi Army on February 17.

A Second Time Around in the New Iraq

Story and Photos by
Pfc. Adrian Muehe
135th MPAD

DIYALA, Iraq – “This is way easier than my last deployment,” said Sgt. George Applegate, from Evergreen, Colo., a fire team leader for 2nd Platoon, Company C, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, while pulling security beside his Stryker vehicle that was staged next to the headquarters of the Iraqi Police’s 7th Battalion Emergency Reaction Force in Muqdadiyah, Iraq, on the night of Jan. 31.

Applegate, and the rest of 2nd Platoon, conducted a night patrol in Muqdadiyah, searching for possible improvised explosive devices.

A couple years ago, Applegate wouldn’t have been engaged in such a casual conversation while pulling security, because the threat of violence was much more prominent.

“This country differs greatly,” said Sgt. Applegate, who was last deployed to Iraq from Aug., 2006 to Nov. 2007, with the 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, and was stationed just south of Baghdad.

On his last deployment, Applegate operated as part of a



Sgt. George Applegate, a fire team leader for 2nd Platoon, Company B, 2/3 Inf., poses for a photo by his assigned Stryker vehicle on Feb. 2. Applegate is enjoying his second deployment to Iraq, finding it a more stable country than when he left in 2007.

combat force in a light infantry unit, encountering violence on a regular basis. There were no combined operations back in those days.

“We were basically a quick reaction force for the entire country,” said Applegate. “We were able to be deployed anywhere in a heartbeat.”

Moving around quite a bit, and going out on continuous missions, Applegate found himself living in quarters that are unheard of in today’s Iraq. He has repeatedly slept in storage containers placed at strategic locations or set

up camp in empty houses, whose original occupants evacuated to escape sectarian violence.

“It’s a much better Iraq now,” Applegate said.

Currently, Applegate is temporarily living at Forward Operating Base Normandy. Instead of travelling around, laying his head wherever he found shelter from attacks, he sleeps in his own room filled with a mini refrigerator and a wall locker covered with photos of his wife and 1-year-old daughter.

Not only is Applegate finding this deployment more comfort-

able, he has also noticed a significant change in the performance of Iraqi forces.

At the tail end of his first trip to Iraq, Applegate started to see the Iraqi army and Iraqi police take form. They weren’t equipped with the best weaponry or tactics, but they were willing to make a difference.

“After the Iraqi Security Forces started taking action, it was like flipping a light switch,” said Applegate. “The violence seemed to immediately stop, shops opened back up, and people started to live normal lives.”

Now, he finds himself as part of an assistance team with 2nd Platoon, conducting joint operations and training with the IP and the IA. The fire team leader is working as a teacher and mentor as opposed to kicking down doors.

“We’re doing a lot of training with these guys, we’re even doing PT [physical training] with them,” Applegate said.

During this deployment, 2nd Platoon has worked a lot with their primary partners in the ERF, conducting training and combined operations with them at least twice a week. When they first started working together, the ERF were inexperienced. After the partnership started, the U.S. Soldiers noticed an instant difference.

“Seeing their improvement in

the first two weeks was impressive,” exclaimed Applegate.

Gearing up for this deployment, Applegate was nervous. With the last deployment fresh on his mind, he expected the same for this adventure.

“Everyone that had a previous deployment was pretty uptight,” said Applegate while talking about getting ready to deploy with 2/3 Inf., 3SBCT.

When Applegate and the Soldiers of 2nd Platoon set boots on the ground, they started conducting operations that involved working more with the people of

Iraq than he had before.

“We started to get used to the people in the area. The interaction with children and people in the area is much better,” Applegate said with a smile.

Throughout his experience in the Army, Applegate has seen Iraq change so much that he finds it hard to believe it’s the same place. To him, it’s like he has been deployed to two different countries. He left an Iraq that was ravaged with violence, and came back to find a nation finding its feet, with a much more competent infrastructure. 🇮🇶



Sgt. George Applegate, a fire team leader for 2nd Platoon, Company C, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, searches a hole in a cinder block for a possible improvised explosive device during a combined patrol in Muqdadiyah, Jan. 31. The hole was empty, but on Applegate’s previous deployment to Iraq, it would have more than likely had an IED in it.

Small Gift Creates Hope for a Better Future

Story and Photos by
Pvt. Zachary Zuber
135th MPAD

DIYALA, Iraq – The village of Karbul, in the Diyala province, is a small community which faces many challenges as it builds toward the future. Of its approximately 600 residents, a large number are currently unemployed. For children going to school, a journey to a village about a mile away is required. Trips for medical treatment usually take at least one day if not two.

With these kinds of issues, it would be easy to overlook some of the individual challenges each citizen faces. While on a routine patrol, the Soldiers of Attack Company, 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, saw a 12 year old girl that was able to grab their attention.

“We went through the town to check security of the area when we first saw her,” said 1st Lt. Nicholas Davis, a platoon leader with 5/20 Inf. “She doesn’t have use of her legs so she had to drag herself through the courtyard just to see what was going on.”

The Soldiers talked to her parents to discover what caused

the situation and how they could best improve her daily life. They were told that from birth Fatem Halm Sieyd had no use of her legs, which is believed to be a result of spina bifida. Attack Company’s desire to help the girl was cemented after hearing her father tell Fatem’s story.

“My daughter has to be carried everywhere, or she drags herself,” said Hamit Seiyd, her father.

“Most of the time she never gets



Hamit Sieyd looks over a wheelchair given to him for his daughter by Soldiers from Attack Company, 5/20 Inf. They decided to give her the chair after watching her drag herself around when they were patrolling through the town.

to go outside of our courtyard, and is stuck here watching the other children play.”

“She is not able to go to school, even though she loves reading and math, but because she cannot do anything the rest of the children do, most nights she just cries all night,” said Hamit.

After hearing her story, the Soldiers looked for some way that they could provide her with a wheel chair to allow her more freedom of movement and make it easier for people to take her places.

“Myself and other platoon leaders went through our chain of command to try to find out how we could get her a wheel chair,” said 1st Lt. Davis. “We ended up finding one through the medical center at [Forward Operating Base] Warhorse.”

Once they received the chair, the 5/20 Inf. Soldiers personalized it for Fatem by cleaning it and putting on a bow with an attachment for her country’s flag.

On February 10, when they went out to give Fatem her wheel chair, her mother had taken her to see the doctor because she had the flu. Even though she was not there to accept the wheel chair in person, her father was more than happy to see the gift, as proven by his bright smile.

“He seemed so happy to have something that was a small gift from us,” said 1st Lt. Davis. “It made me feel that if all we did during our deployment was to improve this one girl’s life, then I will go home happy.”

The Soldiers were happy to see something good done, but it also gave Fatem’s father hope for his daughter’s future.

“This chair will help us so much,” said Hamit. “Now we can try to get her to school, and hopefully this will make it so that she will not cry anymore.” 🇮🇶



At Left: Unable to hide his smile, Hamit Sieyd moves the wheelchair given to him for his daughter by Attack Company, 5/20 Inf. Soldiers. The plan to provide the chair came after she was seen by a patrol, dragging herself around with no other transportation. Below: Hamit Sieyd smiles while discussing with Attack Company, 5/20 Inf. Soldiers the effect a wheelchair they provided for his daughter will have. While on patrol, they saw the girl dragging herself around and decided they needed to help her in any way possible.



Unity Amongst Forces Allows Strong Security Presence

Story and Photos by
Pfc. Adrian Muehe
135th MPAD

DIYALA, Iraq – “Being combined gives us more strength and more authority,” said 2nd Lt. Khild Sabah, 3rd Battalion, 4th Brigade, 1st Iraqi Army Division. United by a black arm-band worn on their sleeve featuring a lion’s head, Soldiers from 1st Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, Iraqi Army, and Peshmerga are operating tripartite checkpoints in the mountainous region of As’Sadiyah, Diyala, Iraq.

The tripartite checkpoints are located in the northern region of Diyala, Iraq. Historically, this area has been a friction point as it sits along the boundary when ISF au-

thority ends and the Peshmerga’s responsibility for security begins.

Just a couple months ago, the IA and Peshmerga ran their own checkpoints separately in this region and at times they were located a few miles, or a few feet apart. This enabled harmful threats to the nascent security gains because the land that lay between these checkpoints was not being patrolled by either security force. This allowed violent extremist and criminals to take advantage of the lack of security presence.

“Some of these checkpoints were literally 50 feet from each other,” said Capt. Ken Quail, Charlie Troop commander, 1/14 Cav. Brought together by a common goal to protect the population of northern Diyala province, Iraqi and Kurdish soldiers in collabora-

tion with U.S. Soldiers identified key locations to establish tripartite checkpoints.

“Over 100 years ago, my country had a civil war,” said Capt. Quail while addressing IA and Peshmerga leaders. “Those tensions are still there, but they have been able to put aside their differences for the better of our nation. I am glad your men are doing the same.”

With U.S. Forces getting ready to end their service in Iraq, Iraqi forces have been fixing their own problems, with a little help from U.S. Forces.

During the past few weeks, Iraqi, Kurdish and U.S. Soldiers have focused not only on training and conducting tripartite operations but they are making great strides in developing a positive relationship.

“This is a great thing, we should have done this a long time ago,” said 2nd Lt. Sabah.

Checkpoints are not the only tripartite operation going on the region. The black arm-band has been spotted on security patrols, humanitarian aid drops and at medical clinics throughout the area.

“I really like working with IA and U.S. Forces, we are becoming really united,” said Warrant Officer Ahmad Hama, 3rd Company, 1st Battalion, 34th Peshmerga Brigade.

“We believe things will work out for our country.”

What is happening right now in Diyala province will hold the key

to Iraq’s future. Alone, these forces can only do so much, but together, they are stronger than ever, and can secure a peaceful future for both Kurdish and Arab Iraqis.

“This will give a foundation for a stable Iraq,” said 2nd Lt. Brandon Frei.

While the Peshmerga and Iraqi Army forces cooperate on these checkpoints. The world watches with anticipation. Waiting to see if people, with a tenuous past, can accomplish a mission to not only secure the peace of Diyala, but all of Iraq.

“A couple years ago, we were told that checkpoints would never work. Now we’re here, operating a checkpoint that is working,” said Capt. Quail. 🇺🇸



A white car drives through a tripartite checkpoint in Diyala province, Iraq, as a passenger waves at a Peshmerga soldier, on Feb 11. Depending on the time of day, 40 to 60 vehicles pass through the checkpoint every hour.



A Soldier from Charlie Troop, 1/14 Cav. drops a board on a pile of wood in the living area of a tripartite checkpoint in Diyala, Iraq, on Feb. 11. This wood will be used to construct beds for tripartite Soldiers to sleep in while working at the checkpoint.

Second Lieutenant Khild Sabah, 3rd Battalion, 4th Brigade, 1st Iraqi Army Division, converses with one of his soldiers at a tripartite checkpoint, in Diyala province, Iraq, while U.S. Soldiers observe, on Feb. 11. These two forces have been working together along with the Peshmerga to make the Diyala province a safer place.

CAPTAIN KUHLMAN DISCUSSES ELECTION SUPPORT

Story by
Sgt. 1st Class J.D. Phippen
135th MPAD

DIYALA, Iraq - Prior to the March 7 Iraqi elections, Capt. Matt Kuhlman, former projects officer for 1st Battalion, 37th Field Artillery Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, now commander of Charlie Battery, 1/37 FA, sat down with Sgt. 1st Class JD Phippen from Arrowhead Public Affairs to discuss the support that U.S. forces are providing.

Arrowhead PA: What type of support is going to be provided by US forces in this area?

Cpt. Kuhlman: For us in this area, support mainly generates from movement support to international observer teams. We have two U.S. Embassy teams from Baghdad and one observer team from United Nations Aid Mission in Iraq (UNAMI).

Arrowhead PA: What are U.S. soldiers doing to assist these observer teams and how does it help?

Capt Kuhlman: We are providing movement support. Observer teams will be going into

polling centers to observe and insure legitimacy, transparency, and openness of the election process to validate everything the government of Iraq is doing to ensure that it's legitimate. They are also going to observe the special needs voting on the March 4 which involves prison inmates, hospital workers, and Iraqi Security Forces voting, to observe the transparency there. And of course on March 8 to ensure that all the ballots are consolidated at the right place, the right location, to minimize any possible corruption in the system.

Arrowhead PA: What are some of the concerns for the elections in [Diyala] province and what is being done to alleviate these concerns?

Cpt. Kuhlman: One of them is voter turnout. Addressing that, we have 22 different NGOs (non government offices) in this province itself working on voter education. Another concern in the area is possible violence on election day. And of course with the coordination that has been done with ISF, whether through rehearsals, engagements, meetings, over the past several months, we've been trying to mitigate, as much as possible, the threat of

violence at the polling sites.

Arrowhead PA: Explain the NGO's and voter education a little bit more.

Capt Kuhlman: USAID (United States Agency for International Development) is a big proponent for this. They were a main funding source for the NGO's. They have hired local Iraqi organic NGOs to do all the training and voter education. For voter education, they talk about the election system, the process of it, the relevance of it, the importance of the election process, how to vote, where to go, and distribute that to as many people as possible in the province to increase voter turnout.

Arrowhead PA: What other types of preparation have been going on to get ready for the elections?

Capt. Kuhlman: As I mentioned, the coordination with the Iraqi Security Forces. This varies from strengthening polling site locations, hardening them, making them more secure as well as training IP forces both on the FOB and with the land-owning units, and of course with the countless numbers of meetings and engagements they have had

to coordinate efforts and timelines and logistics that go into election day.

Arrowhead PA: How are the military and the PRT (Provincial Reconstruction Team) working together in regards to elections?

Capt. Kuhlman: 3-2 Stryker Brigade has assigned 1/37 FA to be partnered with PRT for the duration of the tour. Election specific, we facilitate their movement support across the province, as well as ensuring all of the reporting requirements are done, whether it is for PRT reporting, providing equipment, or military reporting.

Arrowhead PA: How will the military provide support in the days following the elections?

Capt. Kuhlman: Movement support for observer teams. Following the elections on March 7, all of the ballots will be consolidated in a couple of locations. The primary location in Diyala province will be at the Public Distribution System warehouse. That is where all of the ballots will be located on March 8. Beyond March 8, it rests in the hands of the Iraqi government.

Arrowhead PA: Do you

think they would be able to pull off these elections without US support?

Capt. Kuhlman: I think that this being only the second election that the country of Iraq has ever had democratically, I think they have done an impressive job in handling it all themselves. We have been there to make sure they stay on the right track and make sure they address the proper issues and questions that have come up. We have been fairly hands-off, to keep an Iraqi face on it, and ensure that they take it all into their own hands, because [U.S. forces] will be out of here soon, and this is their country. They understand the urgency and the need to make sure it is legitimate and transparent.

Arrowhead PA: Is this your second or third deployment?

Capt. Kuhlman: Second.

Arrowhead PA: Have you seen any differences in ISF, since your last tour, in their capabilities and how they conduct operations? Have they improved?

Capt. Kuhlman: That's an easy question- I see a definite improvement. The last time I was here, about a year and a half ago, we were partnered with an

IA company, when I was at the company level, we did patrols with them and they followed our lead. We would teach them and train them in the basics, step by step, how to do everything. Now they are out there doing their own patrols, their own missions, handling it all themselves, their own intelligence. They have done an impressive job compared to the last time I was here. I am proud to see the great change.

Arrowhead PA: Will all the time and effort to help the Iraqis be worth it?

Capt. Kuhlman: A lot of that relies on the end state of the elections and how it turns out. If they come off successful with great voter turnout, and the government is established, with little violence and sectarianism shown, as painful as it is to say, it is definitely worth the sacrifice. It has gone from a repressive regime where one man rules and controls everything, to a democratic system with representation by the people, for the people. It is a huge improvement and great progress is shown in such a little amount of time, for the steps they have taken here in Iraq. 🇮🇶

Sparks Fly As Iraqis Ignite Their Future

Story and Photos by
Pfc. Adrian Muehe
135th MPAD

DIYALA, Iraq – Thirty new welders and electricians accepted their diplomas after successfully completing the Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) and Welding Course at Forward Operating Base Normandy on Feb. 22.

The students came from a variety of backgrounds. Most were Iraqi citizens, a few of whom serve as policemen and Soldiers, looking to pursue education in these particular trades. Some of them are militiamen who are part of the Sons of Iraq (SOIZ), a predominantly Sunni organization committed to protecting their communities.

With Iraq being a much safer place to live, the need for an organized militia such as the SOIZ is dwindling. These men are paid by the Government of Iraq (GOI) to counter the forces of terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), but with violence among Iraqis becoming a thing of the past, these men are looking for another way to lead their lives.

“This class is a chance to give local militiamen career opportunities to get jobs as opposed to finding other avenues of income,” said Sgt. Samuel Ulrich, of Yakima, Wash., the senior utility equipment repair instructor for Company B, 296th Brigade Support Battalion, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division.

In a more peaceful, stable Iraq, these men will soon be able to lay down their arms for good, and lead normal lives by providing non-violent services to their communities.

This was the third HVAC and welding class held at FOB Normandy. Three previous courses have been held at FOB Warhorse.

“We want to take this class to the people, because most can’t afford the trip to Baquba to take it at (FOB) Warhorse,” said Chief Warrant Officer Fred Delany, from Port Orchard, Wash., officer in charge of the Iraqi Business Initiative (IBIZ), Company B, 296th BSB.

The two week course instills the basics of the trade in these young men, many of whom are in

their early twenties. The skills they learned on FOB Normandy will set the foundation for their careers.

The welding students were taught by Spc. Joseph Allen, a native of Coal City, Ill. He serves as a metal worker for Company B.

“I teach them three to four basic joints applied to any kind of welding,” said Spc. Allen. “I go over the welding process. I teach them what goes on, and show them how to identify and correct flaws.”

The HVAC portion was taught with the same concept.

“I break it down to the very basics,” said Sgt. Ulrich. “I teach them to know what general mechanics will be able to fix. These skills can be applied to generators,

lights, and other things of the same principal.”

This course doesn’t just set the foundation for a fresh start in a brand new career field, it solidifies it. The diplomas these men receive hold high value in Diyala province.

“Their certificates are noticed by the Diyala Vocational School,” said Spc. Allen. “Their professionals came out to inspect our program and review our curriculum.”

The Diyala Vocational School gave their approval of the course. Throughout the region, these certificates are as good as a diploma from the school, which many of the students cannot afford.

The students who decided to

take this course came for a variety of reasons. For one student, this class is the door to a better life.

Riadh Abarham Mahmood has been a member of the SOIZ since Aug. 2008.

“U.S. Forces came to my village and asked young men to help protect the area,” said Mahmood. “I volunteered to go.”

Mahmood graduated from the welding class and is looking forward to his new career. He plans on continuing his service in the SOIZ until he is no longer needed. Afterwards he will continue on to be a full time welder.

“My cousin is a welder,” said Mahmood. “I chose this because this is a good career and I’ll be

able to open a shop in my village.”

Another student, Modafar Salman, already has a good career. He is a mortar man for the Iraqi Police, but elected to take the HVAC course.

Salman plans on pursuing more education in electricity and air conditioning repair, as recommended by the instructors. In addition to starting his own business, he will be able to save the Baquba police station money by being able to fix their air conditioning and electrical systems.

“I hope to open a shop in Baquba while working as a policeman,” said Salman. “I hope to make some extra income.”

In addition to gaining skills in an exciting new career field, these graduates are able to apply for micro-grants, said Sgt. Ulrich. Micro-grants are funds used to help Iraqis start their own business.

“This gives them an added incentive to strive to do better in the course,” said Sgt. Ulrich.

With the third class at FOB Normandy complete, a chapter closes in the HVAC and welding class story. In their efforts to reach out to the citizens of Diyala, the next class will move into the heart of Kurdistan, and will be taught around the area of FOB Edge, along the Iranian border.

“We will actually be teaching this class off the FOB,” said Spc. Allen. “We will be loading up our equipment, and taking the class to them.”



An Iraqi student welds two pieces of metal together during the Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) and Welding Course. The two week course is instructed by Soldiers of Company B, 296th BSB, to give these men skills they can take back to their communities.



Specialist Joseph Allen, from Coal City, Ill., the welding instructor for the Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioner (HVAC) and Welding course, Company B, 296th BSB, shows students how to grind down metal as part of the welding process. Specialist Allen has taught the basics of welding and metal work to these Iraqi civilians during the two week course.

Albu Gaed Receives First Tripartite MEDCAP

Story and Photos by
Pfc. Adrian Muehe
135th MPAD

DIYALA, Iraq – Patients trickled into a makeshift compound for medical care during the first tripartite medical civil action program (MEDCAP) in the small village of Albu Gaed, Iraq, outside the city of Tibaj, on Feb. 9.

Taking place in a local school, Soldiers from Charlie Troop, 1st Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, in cooperation with the Peshmerga and the Iraqi Army provided security while medical professionals treated patients.

“We came to this small village to establish an acute care clinic,” said Captain Jason Collins, from Dupont, Wash., the 1/14 Cav. physician assistant. “This is our first time working with both Kurdish and Arabic doctors.”

Five classrooms of the small school were turned into four exam rooms, and one waiting room, each with an assigned medical provider to treat and evaluate the women, children and men from the community.

One station was aimed primarily at females and was run by Capt. Rachel Villacorta-Lyew, of Morgan Hill, Calif., 296th Brigade Support

Battalion surgeon.

“We want to encourage the women to seek medical care and education,” said Capt. Villacorta-Lyew. “It’s less intimidating having a female medic, interpreter, and provider.”

Promoting personal health, Capt. Mary Nolan, from Lewiston, Minn., the 3-2 SBCT preventive medicine officer, managed the waiting room as she instructed self-care health to young boys and girls such as the importance of



Dr. Sami Faadel, a Kurdish Pharmacist, looks over pill bottles in the first tripartite medical civil action project (MEDCAP) in Albu Gaed, Iraq, on Feb. 9. American, Iraqi, and Kurdish Soldiers and doctors worked together to make this MEDCAP a success.

brushing teeth. Instead of playing with toys, the children congregated around Capt. Nolan as she demonstrated hand washing and tooth brushing techniques.

“They are the rising generation of Iraq,” said Capt. Nolan. “We gain a lot of rapport with the community if we do well with the children.”

It is important to instill healthy habits in children while they are young, because these practices will eventually become a part of their daily routine.

As well as U.S. Army doctors and medics, civilian doctors from nearby areas volunteered to participate in this event to bring treatment to their own people.

“The presence of the Kurdish and Iraqi doctors helped the patients feel more welcome,” said Capt. Nolan.

One of these local specialists was Dr. Sami Faadel, a Kurdish pharmacist who gave treatment and assisted with issuing out prescription medicines to those in need.

“This is my first time working with Iraqi Security Forces, I usually work in a hospital, so it was nice to get out and come to the patients” said Dr. Faadel. “I alone saw almost 50 patients.”

Out of the estimated 200 residents of Albu Gaed, approximately 100 visited the school to seek

treatment, proving that adequate medical care is of great value to the community.

At the end of the day, the operation was a success as Arab and Kurdish soldiers continued to forge a bond with the local community and each other.

“This is more than just giving something to the locals, this is a clear message to the people that the U.S. can work with the Iraqi Army and the Peshmerga to better their lives,” said Capt. Ken Quail, a native of Jersey City, N.J., Charlie Troop commander, 1/14 Cav. 🇺🇸



At Left: Two Peshmerga soldiers secure a small school for the first tripartite medical civil action project (MEDCAP) in Albu Gaed, Iraq, on Feb. 9. The soldiers wear a black band on their sleeves featuring a lion’s head to symbolize unity between the Iraqi Army, Peshmerga, and U.S. Forces. Below: Captain Mary Nolan, from Lewiston, Minn., the 3-2 SBCT preventive medical officer, gives a toothbrush and toothpaste to an Iraqi child while an interpreter explains proper brushing techniques. Captain Nolan was giving a public health class during the first tripartite medical civil action program in Albu Gaed, Iraq, on Feb. 9.



Tomahawks' Hard Work Provides Bright Future For Iraqi Children

Story and Photos by
Pvt. Zachary Zuber
135th MPAD

DIYALA, Iraq – Classrooms in the Khalis Secondary School have been a bustling place during the first two weeks of February. The traffic is not what most people would expect for the school, but rather a dedicated team of about 40 Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 23 Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division.

Members of the 1/23 Inf., the Tomahawks, have been working with great fervor to perform a makeover modeled after the Extreme Makeover: Home Edition television program that is popular among many American families. The project, deemed the Extreme Tomahawk School Makeover, was created to refurbish a school that

has lived through its share of strife during the past few years and to provide hope and opportunity to children of the community.

Soldiers worked for at least nine hours a day, with the final stretch carrying through the night, to complete the overhaul of every foot of the school. They assembled new desks, painted the walls, installed windows and air conditioners, and provided new textbooks and bags to the students.

“This was a huge challenge for us to get done on time,” said Spc. William Chanda of Bridgeton, Maine, a forward observer for 1/23 Inf. “I am still catching up on sleep from the last push, but it was definitely worth it.”

Lack of sleep wasn't the only difficulty the Tomahawks had to overcome, but each obstacle was taken in stride during the construction process. They did not have all

the equipment and tools they may have wanted, but through perseverance the job was completed.

“We had to make do with the few tools we had available,” said Spc. Chanda. “There weren't enough hammers to go around, but everyone just passed stuff around to work with.”

Although many of the Tomahawks, who are trained in combat arms specialties, did not have much experience in the construction of buildings, those that did stepped up to play vital roles.

“I had done framing all life, working construction,” said Pfc. Wesley Loria, an anti-sniper specialist and Frisco, Tex. native. “With my experience I was put in charge of all the framing in the building.”

According to Pfc. Loria, another challenge was the degeneration of the existing foundations. Along with general construction, Soldiers were

able to provide some basic amenities for students and teachers such as rewiring the school's electricity and providing air conditioning to keep comfortable during the warmer times of the year.

As the school was unveiled to community members by driving back one of the Tomahawk Strykers from in front of the school, students rushed in to see all of the new improvements

“My favorite part of this is the desks and the new air conditioning,” said Ausama Adel, a 15-year-old student at the school. “With all these new things it will be much easier to perform our studies.” His sentiments about the improvements seemed to radiate from his classmates through their smiles.

The school's headmaster saw it as a wonderful display of the opportunities opened for the future.

“Every part of this school was completely damaged before the Soldiers started working here,” said Qasem Mohammed Al-Qasi, school headmaster. “With all these improvements we can really push toward hard work and a better future for our students.”

Their goals are now that much closer to being achieved, and the students of the Khalis Secondary School have a fresh set of possibilities for their future. Even though this project is finished however, there are still more that the Tomahawks have in their sights.

“This is the first of several schools that we are planning to overhaul,” said Spc. Chanda. “Never in a million years did I think this is what I would be doing in the Army, but it really felt good to make a difference in these kids' lives.” 🇺🇸



Above: Soldiers of 1/23 Inf., work simultaneously on several classrooms in the Khalis Secondary School. The remodeling effort was part of the Extreme Tomahawk School Makeover project that was completed on February 14. At Left: Soldiers of 1/23 Inf. work to move supplies for the reconstruction of the Khalis Secondary School. The mission, dubbed the Extreme Tomahawk School Makeover, renovated the entire school from top to bottom and was completed on February 14. (US Army photo by 1st Lt. Jesse Ryan)



Left: Lieutenant Colonel Chuck Hodges, commander, 1/23 Inf., explores the newly remodeled art room at the Khalis Secondary School with city council members. Above: Teachers and administrators at the Khalis Secondary School are overjoyed as they walk through the newly remodeled halls.

Signal Soldiers Have Unique Opportunity

Story and Photos by
Pvt. Zachary Zuber
135th MPAD

DIYALA, Iraq – Soldiers in the 334th Signal Company, 296th Brigade Support Battalion, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, have a fairly typical daily routine. Usually it involves missions, workouts, and in downtime, video games or other activities with their comrades.

No matter what each day brings two female drivers and one .50 caliber gunner in the platoon 2nd Platoon, 334th Sig. Co. have different daily activities than most female Soldiers.

“There aren’t many female drivers in the Army,” said Spc. Diana Hildebrand, a driver for 2nd Platoon, and a signal support specialist, “but it’s just a job and anyone can do it.”

“I don’t segregate myself because I’m a female,” said Spc. Martha Montes, remote weapon system operator for her Stryker. “A Soldier is just Soldier, and I try to do my job the better than anyone else.”

Both are a prime example of how Soldiers, undaunted by challenges, can accomplish any task given to them. They work hard every day to take care of everyone in their platoon.

“Being a driver can be rough on anyone, your only concern is everyone else in your truck,” said Spc. Hildebrand. “They depend on me to get them where they are going safely.”

They start their days early, ensuring everything on a vehicle

works properly to ensure the platoon can complete their mission.

“We do maintenance before every mission, checking radio equipment to make sure it is operational, and I check to make sure the weapons system is working,” said Spc. Montes.

They don’t just work on the vehicles, they also use time off to improve on a personal level. Specialist Montes is currently completing correspondence courses and studying for her board to become a non-commissioned officer.

“I try to always be the best at what I do,” said Spc. Montes. “When I meet someone better than me I try to learn as much from them as possible.” 🙏

Below: Specialist Diana Hildebrand, 2nd Platoon, 334th Signal Company, 296th BSB, programs radio frequencies for her Stryker. She has been the vehicle driver since her arrival with the unit in August.



Above: Specialist Martha Montes, 2nd Platoon, 334th Signal Company, 296th BSB, scans the road from the remote weapon system in her Stryker. She has had this job full-time since the unit deployed to Iraq.

Chaplain's Corner

A Study On Character: The Life of David

-five-

The Well Placed Stone

Goliath, the famous giant of Gath, a Philistine and an enemy of Israel, openly defied the armies of Israel with threats that made every Israeli soldier tremble! He was finally slain by a young shepherd who used nothing but a *sling and a stone* to bring down this eleven-foot-tall monster!

According to Scripture, David cut off the head of Goliath with the giant’s *own sword* and this became the turning point in the life of this son of Jesse, who eventually became the king over all of Israel!

It was not the *stone* that killed Goliath, it was merely the instrument used to bring him down. The giant’s *own sword* was the instrument of his demise.

However, David’s *faith* was well placed in God who orchestrated the *sling and stone* for His purpose to show that it is “*Not by might nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord*” which will accomplish all things.

When faced with *overwhelming* problems, we may be tempted to run and hide! Our *difficulties* can *overshadow* us like Goliath overshadowed

the soldiers of Israel and we may become afraid and tremble!

The Italian painter Caravaggio captured this victory of David over Goliath in a painted masterpiece that portrays a young David holding the severed head of the giant in one hand, with the extended sword of Goliath in the other!

Caravaggio was himself a man plagued with problems from an early age. Orphaned at age 11, he later had many encounters with the law. While in a dispute, he *killed a man* and began the life of a *fugitive*! He fled from city to city and kept moving between hiding places to avoid arrest.

Over the years, intercessions on his behalf were made to secure the Pope’s pardon. A document finally granting him clemency arrived from Rome. But it arrived *three days after his death*!

Some years later, it was discovered that the head and face of Goliath in the painting, *so huge* in the hands of David, was actually that of *Caravaggio* himself! Caravaggio had given



CHAPLAIN (MAJ.)
PATRICK BASAL

the giant his *own* face!

Sometimes our problems are *the giants* we ourselves create! Because of bad decision making, poor judgments or a lack of discipline, we can be the cause of our own worst difficulties!

But problems, *like* giants, can be brought down through the *sling and stone of faith*, when we’re willing to confront the issues. Then, we often discover that *the very sword* that threatened us can be *used* to behead the problem and render it lifeless!

Let’s *confront* the real problems that face us with faith *and* action!

PAX DOMINE
(The Peace of the Lord)

MAY THOSE FALLEN NEVER BE FORGOTTEN

Staff Sgt. Todd W. Selge
Company A, 5th Battalion, 20th
Infantry Regiment
June 22, 1984 ~ September 3,
2009

Sgt. Jordan M. Shay
Company A, 5th Battalion, 20th
Infantry Regiment
April 3, 1987 ~ September 3,
2009

Staff Sgt. Amy C. Tirador
209th Military Intelligence
Company
July 18, 1980 - November 04,
2009



SALAZAR

3

3RD STRYKER BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM
2ND INFANTRY DIVISION
"AMERICA'S FIRST STRYKER BRIGADE"