

The Arrowhead Brigade

ON POINT



NOTE FROM ARROWHEAD 6 AND 7

“Any Nation that does not honor its heroes will not long endure.”
- Abraham Lincoln

Dear Family and Friends of the Arrowhead Brigade,

Happy Memorial Day! We hope this note finds you all enjoying a well-deserved break from the grind. More importantly, we hope you have taken an opportunity this Memorial Day to stop and honor the fallen heroes who once graced our ranks. We took such an opportunity just hours ago. More on that later...first the weather.

We told you last month we would see a dramatic rise in the temperature in May. Sometimes, being right isn't fun. The oven has been lit. Every day for the past several weeks has topped 100 degrees with a peak above 110 just recently. It only gets hotter in June. The tumultuous thunderstorms and rain of the recent past are long gone, now replaced by another formable foe – the dust storms; or as the locals call them, **the Shamals**. Over the next few months these dust storms coupled with the increased heat will make for some challenging times. Everything we plan and attempt to do in the coming months, from routine patrols to our travels home, will be affected by these phenomena. Wish us luck. Now on to the update.

Unit Returns: If you had told us 6 months ago we would begin our redeployment two-and-a-half months prior to the completion of a full year in Iraq, we couldn't have imagined it. But the overarching requirement to



reduce forces in Iraq from 95- to 50-thousand troops by the end of summer has led us to close some of our FOB's and begin the redeployment of selected units over the June and July period. The selected locations and units were of course driven by cold, hard requirements and not by choice.

Thus it is, we feel like we're losing a body part as we say farewell to the Patriots. They have accomplished so much here in one of the most volatile sections of Diyala. The heroes of 2-3 IN completed packing their equipment, closed FOB Normandy on the 25th of May, and moved their Stryker's to FOB Speicher just days ago. They are currently awaiting flights out of Iraq and will travel home during the month of June. We wish them good luck and God speed on their well-

deserved trip home. See you in a couple of months.

If that isn't painful enough, the 1-23 IN Tomahawks are also putting the finishing touches on packing their equipment. They will be closing FOB Grizzly in June. Their Soldiers and Leaders will be lining up for flights by mid June and most should be home by the end of the month. Like the Patriots, the Tommies have achieved immense success in their mission. We will sorely miss their expertise on the battlefield. Well done, Tommies; travel home safely.

Of course, the loss of units doesn't equate to a reduced mission, so we are asking the Sykes' Regulars of 5-20 IN to step up and expand their battlespace to mitigate these losses. Since they already had the biggest geo-

graphic area in the brigade, they are used to operating over large spaces. Their challenges are as immense their operating environment, but the Regulars have always been up to the task. The Regulars, Warhorse, Red Lions, and Frontline get the honor of staying with us to drive on with the mission and help our replacement unit transition into Iraq. We expect to conduct our respective transitions of authority sometime in late July, followed shortly thereafter by our flights home. Bottom line – The fight is not over simply because we are thinning our lines. Our commitment is to finish strong and leave the Province of Diyala, our Iraqi Partners, and our relieving unit in the best condition possible.

Continued Pressure on Violent Extremist Networks. Speaking of unfinished business, we told you last month that Iraqi Security Forces have shown impressive progress. That trend continues to manifest itself this month. As the nation slogs along in the frustratingly-slow formation of its new government, violent groups are seeking to take advantage of this “void” in authority to increase their attacks against the citizens



and security forces of Iraq. The ISF have struck back with large-scale security operations across all of Diyala. With our help, they are achieving remarkable progress in tracking down and detaining enemy fighters. We remain committed during this period of transition to the relentless pursuit of these extremist networks. Each of our battalions has made a real difference in the abilities of its partners. One example you can read about in this month's issue of “On Point” is the feature on Blackhawk Company from the Tomahawks, who recently conducted OPERATION CONDOR II, a combined Iraqi-US Forces Air Assault in the Udaim River Valley. It vividly illustrates the partnerships and successes we continue to see in our efforts all across the battlefield. Arrowhead! So while we are adjusting the size of our force during this period transition, rest assured our Soldiers are just as well-trained, armed, and ready as they were when we arrived. The enemy has discovered that the hard way recently.

We take seriously our obligation, not only to set the conditions for our safe and organized departure, but also to ensure 2-25 Stryker Brigade Combat Team (from Hawaii) is fully prepared to assume this mission when they arrive. Our Arrowhead Heroes have never let us down.

Memorial Day Ceremony. This Memorial Day we honored the memories of the Arrowhead Soldiers who have fallen during our deployments to Diyala. In doing so, we added some ad-

ditional names to the FOB Warhorse Memorial Wall. In addition to the five Fallen Soldiers from this rotation, we added the names of five other Arrowhead Soldiers who were killed in action in Baqubah during OIF 06-07, but whose names were not yet captured. In total, twenty two Arrowhead Soldiers are now memorialized on the wall. We also remembered four civilians killed in the Buqubah area in support of our brigade. In the bright sun of a Diyala morning on Monday the 31st, we laid a wreath at the wall, fired a 21 gun salute, and played Taps. It was a poignant and fitting way to pay honors to the American heroes who paid the last full measure for our freedoms. The Soldiers we honored, as well as the ones who still press the fight every day, have earned the titles: Hero, Patriot, and Arrowhead Soldier.

For those who are close to reuniting with your loved ones, congratulations! Enjoy your time together, love each other, and take care of each other. The rest of us are not far behind. We promise. Until then, thank you for your continued love and support. We can only do what we do because you all do what you do. Until next month, we are humbly...

Arrowhead 6 and 7

ARROWHEAD

SECOND TO NONE

AMERICA'S CORPS!

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Soldiers of Battle Company, 5/20 Inf., move upstairs to clear a house in Birtiz, Diyala province, Iraq, on May 3. The Iraqi Police planned and executed the mission to show citizens a continued presence within the community. (US Army photo by Pvt. Zachary Zuber)

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ON THE COVER

Private 1st Class Scott Farnsworth, a Gilbert, Ariz. native and assistant gunner for Blackhawk Company, 1/23 Inf., scans for security threats while waiting for a retrieval flight during an air assault mission in the Udaim River Valley on May 25. The operation brought Blackhawk Co. Soldiers and the 2nd Battalion, 19th Iraqi Army Brigade, to the area in search of warranted terror suspects. (US Army photo by Pvt. Zachary Zuber)

THE BACK COVER

Staff Sergeant Tony Springer, a team leader for Blackhorse Company, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, gives school supplies to a young girl in Al Aitha, Diyala province, Iraq, on May 7. Blackhorse Co. Soldiers often provide humanitarian aid during counter-indirect fire missions to increase community support. (US Army photo by Pvt. Zachary Zuber)

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Soldiers Take Flight to Support Iraqi Army

Story and Photos by
Pvt. Zachary Zuber
135th MPAD

DIYALA, Iraq — Shortly after sunrise, the typically peaceful farms of the Udaim River Valley were bustling with activity for three hours on May 25. While an Air Weapons Team (AWT) of two Kiowa helicopters circled overhead for security, nearly 100 Soldiers hustled out of Chinooks, then divided into three elements to search over 30 structures throughout the small community outside Udaim.

Organized by the 2nd Battalion, 19th Iraqi Army Brigade, this mission was conducted to locate and capture several warranted individuals responsible for criminal activity. They planned and coordinated the forces necessary to search several houses, fields, and even an abandoned school. These inspections led to confiscation of weapons but no official arrests were made.

The Soldiers of Blackhawk Company, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, aided the operation by arranging air assets for this mission and being present to offer advice and assistance if needed.

“We spent a month collecting the information from our sources to get warrants for terror suspects,” said Capt. Ahmed Mustafa Al Ali, the operations officer for 2/19th IA. “The final planning and rehearsals have gone on for the last three days to prepare.”

Although they did not apprehend the individuals they were after, they still had the opportunity to interact with community members and show their strong focus on a safe village for local citizens.

“An operation like this is extremely valuable if it removes warranted personnel from the area,” said Capt. J. M. Phillips, commander of Blackhawk Co. “It also has a public relations benefit because the population can see Iraqi forces leading the way, so it has a very positive effect.”

Although the IA led this mission, Blackhawk Co. has helped the 2/19th IA with a variety of other endeavors during their past eleven months at Forward Operating Base Grizzly. They have watched as their role in the execution and planning phases of an operation reduce over time while their Iraqi Army counterparts have taken full control of security measures in their region. Now the IA only request support in

acquiring certain assets, such as medical and air support.

“They [2/19th IA] have been conducting unilateral operations for quite some time now,” said Capt. Phillips, a native of Opelika, Ala. “They have only needed our help with special assets like this because they have had sustainment capabilities for troop leading, maintenance, and intelligence for months.”



Staff Sergeant Timothy Ehrhart, a Massillon, Ohio native and squad leader in 3rd Platoon, Blackhawk Co., 1/23 Inf., uses the help of an interpreter to verify vital locations for search with an Iraqi Army soldier. Blackhawk Co. Soldiers assisted the 2nd Battalion, 19th Iraqi Army Brigade to search for warranted terror suspects in the Udaim River Valley on May 25.

The IA has developed such strong capabilities that the only training Blackhawk Co. provided over the past several months has been medical courses and marksmanship training for new M-16 rifles they have received. This proficiency has allowed the 2/19th IA to conduct many patrols that are needed to gather intelligence and collect warrants for missions like this one, said Capt. Phillips.

Captain Ahmed said that the growing strength of his unit is in direct correlation with the strong relationships they have built with U.S. Forces over the course of many years.

Blackhawk Co., along with the rest of 1/23 Inf., is preparing to return home in the coming months. Though the air assault may not have resulted in arrests, they have confidence that the 2/19th IA will continue to work until these suspects are captured. They will also leave knowing that they will always have a second family with their counterparts here in Iraq.

“The phrase that has always been used is that they [U.S. Forces] always have our backs,” said Capt. Ahmed. “These people have become our friends and though it will be hard to see them leave, I will always remember the help they have provided us.”



Private 1st Class Scott Farnsworth, a Gilbert, Ariz. native and assistant gunner for Blackhawk Co., 1/23 Inf., scans for security threats while waiting for a retrieval flight during an air assault mission in the Udaim River Valley on May 25. The operation brought Blackhawk Co. Soldiers and the 2nd Battalion, 19th Iraqi Army Brigade, to the area in search of warranted terror suspects.

Blackhorse Soldiers Create Renewed Security

Story and Photos by
Pvt. Zachary Zuber
135th MPAD

DIYALA, Iraq – With all the things happening on Forward Operating Base Normandy, it would be easy for someone to miss a few bright lights in the night sky. Many who call the base home may not have a clue that each day citizens in the surrounding area are reminded of the U.S. presence and support in their communities. One company of Soldiers represents the entire force stationed there multiple times each day as they work to provide a safe, secure living environment.

Soldiers from Blackhorse Company, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, have been running daily counter-indirect fire operations in Al Aitha, Diyala province, Iraq, since the end of April.

As a response to rocket attacks and intelligence reports throughout April, they have initiated as many as three missions per day. These missions include patrols conducted in partnership with the Iraqi Army, and disturbance operations using illumination mortar fire at night. The hard work and long hours they have put in throughout the village and surrounding area has resulted in the absence of dangerous mortar fire that once threatened Forward Operating Base Normandy more frequently.

In order to achieve their goal of

keeping personnel on the FOB safe from indirect fire, the Soldiers have been actively involved with the citizens of the surrounding villages, even working to complete a roster of the families living there.

“During the day we will go to the main villages, and do what is almost like a census, marking down who lives there, what they drive, and what tribe they belong to,” said 1st Lt. James Higgins, a platoon leader for Blackhorse Co., 2/3 Inf. “It’s been beneficial to us because we can get the word out that we are there for their safety. When people hear that we are out there asking questions, it puts pressure on the enemy by making it harder for them to hide.”

Mortar teams from Blackhorse

Co., 2/3 Inf., also disrupt enemy movement by firing illumination rounds from selected locations throughout the area bordering FOB Normandy. The Soldiers are hoping to prevent rocket or mortar fire against the FOB by taking the cover of darkness from enemies who would use the lack of light to set up attacks.

“We fire the mortars to not only prevent them from moving to firing positions, but also to show that we are out there watching,” said Staff Sgt. Zachary Chappell, mortar team leader for Blackhorse Co., 2/3 Inf. “For us it’s all about keeping the FOB safe and keeping our guys safe.”

Though safety is the main concern, Blackhorse Co. also uses

these missions as a daily opportunity to support their Iraqi Army counterparts, including them on every patrol through the communities. By going on operations with the IA, they can show the community that their partnership is still strong.

“Obviously our role here [in Iraq] is to support the IA, so the first thing we do when we get out there is ask our counterparts what they would like to do that day,” said 1st Lt. Higgins. “Then with them we will do dismounted patrols, set up over watch on OPs [observation points], work checkpoints, or even perform some humanitarian aid patrols.”

The Soldiers have many different measures of their success from missions they have been on. On humanitarian missions they see smiles from children who have just been given new school supplies. On several other patrols, Blackhorse Co. Soldiers have found weapons, explosives, and enemy mortar sites.

“We have found a few old mortar rounds, a few caches, a few POO [point of origin] sites and identified areas of interest where we think other mortar firing points could be,” said 1st Lt. Higgins. “By taking these things off the streets, out of the hands of the violent extremists we gain the advantage,

which has made this a good mission overall.”

With the Soldiers of Blackhorse Co., 2/3 Inf., diligently working in the surrounding community, both the local citizens and the inhabitants of FOB Normandy can enjoy a little more safety and security each day.

Mortar team members from Blackhorse Company, 2/3 Inf., fire an illumination round during a disruption mission in Al Aitha, Diyala province, Iraq, on May 6. The mission is part of their counter-indirect fire operations which they have conducted over the last three weeks.



Soldiers from Blackhorse Company, 2/3 Inf., discuss mission plans with their Iraqi Army partners for a patrol through Al Aitha, Diyala province, Iraq, on May 7. The Soldiers conduct patrols through the community around FOB Normandy as part of their counter-indirect fire missions.



'CHOP SHOP' SOLDIERS

Story and Photos by
Pvt. Zachary Zuber
135th MPAD

DIYALA, Iraq – The sign out front may say 'Chop Shop', but inside the massive tin sheet metal building located at the south end of Forward Operating Base Warhorse, there are no stolen vehicles or illegal activities. Instead, with an ever-present aroma of engine oil and transmission fluid wafting in the air above an oil and grease stained floor; the Red Lion mechanics labor through both routine and complex maintenance puzzles.

Serving as a one stop repair shop for all motor-powered equipment of every shape and size, the Soldiers from Bravo Co. 296th Brigade Support Battalion, assigned to 1st Battalion, 37th Field Artillery Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, have perfected a wide variety of specialties and skills to fix any damaged piece of equipment or vehicle that enters their lair.

Although each Soldier may have a different technical expertise, all find fulfillment in their daily work. For Spc. Brandon Fulkert, a generator mechanic, this job enables new opportunities in his post-Army career.

"I had been working in sales pretty much since I got out of high school, and with the tough economy those jobs can be kind of up or down," said Spc. Fulkert, a native of Toledo, Ohio. "When I signed up I chose this job so that I could get a strong foothold in a

field that would provide a steady income for my family."

He has a deep appreciation for the job he chose because this trade not only allows him to take care of his wife and children but the generators he repairs power the radar towers that give Soldiers advanced warning of incoming fire. Every call is a test of his skills to repair those systems as quickly as possible.

"There are so many components to these engines that could cause a problem – it's like solving a puzzle – and fixing them is sat-

isfying because it shows me that I'm proficient and knowledgeable in my job," said Spc. Fulkert. "Getting sent out there to have to figure out what's wrong, having that challenge is actually what I love about this job."

The Red Lion mechanics are always prepared to perform preventative maintenance or diagnose a deficient generator or tweak an engine component that belongs to one of the Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles. However, most of them will tell you that it isn't always

easy being the person everyone relies on to fix equipment.

"To be a mechanic you have to have a good work ethic, because some jobs are long, some are easy and some can make you mad trying to figure out the problem," said Spc. Jeremy Johnson, a Gettysburg, Pa. native. "You also really can't care about getting filthy and sweaty; because pretty much any job you do makes you sweat or covers you in oil and grease."

They inspect and fix the largest and smallest parts of vehicles, whether changing axles or checking the switch that opens a hydraulic door.

"Every day we do QAQC [Quality Assurance, Quality Control] on trucks, minor or major repairs that come in, or try to get parts to fix the deadline trucks on our lot," said Spc. Johnson. "When there isn't a job for us to work on we are usually cleaning to help get us out of here for the day."

All of this hard work doesn't

stop the mechanics from having fun once in a while. During slow periods they have been able to create their own unique brand of entertainment by putting their special skill sets to work. The 'Chop Shop' Soldiers have built a go kart from parts that were discarded in the FOB junkyard.

"When it rained a couple weeks ago we actually took out the kart to run through the puddles around the shop," said Spc. Johnson.

The go kart isn't the only thing they have been able to work on when they don't have repair work to do. They also get the chance to improve their dance moves during down time.

"If there is enough dust to keep feet from sticking to the floor, a few of us can do a pretty good moon walk," said Spc. Fulkert. "We get pretty good at entertaining ourselves when we get down time."

Members of the Red Lions might occasionally be lucky

enough to see that moonwalk. Even if they don't, they can still be confident in the fact that there is a hard-working team ready to repair even the smallest of malfunctions in a quick, professional manner.



Specialist Calvin Hoffman, left, of Henderson, Minn., and Spc. Jeremy Johnson, of Gettysburg, Pa., stand with a go kart they constructed out of parts found in the junkyard at Forward Operating Base Warhorse. The Soldiers are mechanics with Bravo Co., 296th BSB, assigned to 1/37th FA, and built the vehicle over the past eight months during their down time.



Above: Specialist Jeremy Johnson, a mechanic for Bravo Co., 296th BSB, assigned to 1/37th FA, cuts sheet metal for repair work. The mechanics of HSB, 1/37th FA, work on generators, air conditioners, and vehicles every day in the 'Chop Shop' on Forward Operating Base Warhorse.

Left: Mechanics from Bravo Co., 296th BSB, assigned to 1/37th FA, prepare to remove the front bumper and hood from a Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle. The MRAPs are driven during every operation, making expedient repair work vital for the Red Lions to complete their missions.

18th EN Sharpen Their TALON Robot Skills

Story and Photos by
Pfc. Adrian Muehe
135th MPAD

DIYALA, Iraq — The sun beats down upon the Iraqi desert and the dry cracked earth is cluttered with debris and small isolated shrubberies, making this the ideal location to hide an Improvised Explosive Device (IED). Arriving into this potential kill zone is a miniature tank equipped with multiple cameras and a long arm capable of extending in the front with pincers that allow it to pick up items or cut wires.

A safe distance away stands a U.S. Soldier using a joystick on a laptop to dictate every move made by this TALON Explosive Ordinance Disposal (EOD) robot. Operated by Soldiers from 2nd Platoon, 18th Engineer Company, 296th Brigade Support Battalion, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, this machine is able to locate and identify IEDs and other unexploded ordnance hazards in Diyala province, Iraq.

Proven to be a valuable tool used by the 18th Engineer Company, the TALON EOD Robot has been in military service since 2000 and plays a vital role in keeping roads safe during operations in Afghanistan and Iraq.

“The robot was originally meant for EOD Teams,” said Staff Sgt. Jeff Heilman, a squad leader for 2nd platoon. “The engineers adopted it just for the route clearance mission and engineers are being taught how to use this robot to ensure EOD teams aren’t called out to ever single IED out on the road.”

The primary mission of these combat engineers in Iraq is to perform route clearance operations. When they roll out to inspect the roads that are driven

every day by U.S. Forces and Iraqi citizens, this robot always has a seat in the convoy. If they come across an area showing signs of suspicious activity, or an item of interest, they will send out the TALON instead of risking a Soldier’s life.

“It’s a great interrogation [investigation] tool that allows us to stay a ways back and just push out a piece of mechanical equipment that doesn’t endanger anyone’s life,” said Sgt. Kevin Ames, of Boone, Iowa, and the training course instructor from 2nd platoon. “It can also go through smaller spaces than our vehicles can.”

The small size of the robot, outfitted with four cameras allowing the operator to have 360 degree of the ground enables for easier identification of planted IED’s. Watching the live-video feed, the operator can move a

camera close in to inspect for thin, camouflaged wires or small portions of explosives sticking out of the ground that are near impossible to be seen by a patrolling Soldier or someone from a vehicle.

“It gets us right up on the object to get a better look on it,” said Sgt. Ames.

Most engineers are demolition qualified, and have experience in dealing with explosives. This allows them to safely eliminate small IEDs they may encounter on route clearance, or if they are called out when an EOD team isn’t available. The robot can use its pincher to place charges to perform a controlled detonation to neutralize the threat.

“Sappers that are R2C2 (Route Reconnaissance and Clearance Operator) qualified can blow up shells size 155 and below and rockets size 122 and

below,” said Staff Sgt. Heilman.

When Soldiers are apprehensive about a specific object, an R2C2 trained squad member will then use the robot to place the materials needed for a controlled detonation.

“Already prepared C4 [plastic explosive] charges tied to an initiating system are placed next to the object by the robot, not on it,” said Staff Sgt. Nicholas Bigham, a squad leader for 2nd platoon, about how engineers detonate IEDs. “The robot is then driven back, and the blast is initiated.”

Although not every Engineer is qualified to blow IEDs found along the road, everyone in 2nd Platoon has some experience with the robot. Some may be more comfortable with using it than others, but these Soldiers are experts on locating and identify-

ing IEDs. Just knowing how to move this device will allow them to do their job in a way that’s a lot safer than unknowingly walking into a kill zone.

“If we come upon something that looks suspicious we can just send the TALON out,” said Spc. Andres Rivera, of Melrose Park, Ill., and a combat engineer with 2nd platoon. “We can maneuver around safely without personally setting an IED off or tripping command wire.”

Without this device, these Soldiers would have to rely solely on their Buffalo, a specially designed vehicle with an extension in the front, to identify and locate IEDs. This vehicle also doesn’t have the capabilities to detonate, so they would have to rely on EOD Teams, who are not always readily available, to complete

route clearance missions.

“Without this robot, we would spend countless hours waiting on them [EOD Teams] to arrive,” said Sgt. Heilman. “This robot allows us to do our job quicker, and more proficient.”

Sergeant Kevin Ames, of Boone, Iowa, and a team leader for 2nd platoon, 18th EN, 296th BSB, shows Soldiers of his platoon the components of the TALON Explosive Ordinance Disposal (EOD) Robot during a class he gave at Forward Operating Base Warhorse, Iraq, on May 27. Many of the Soldiers of 2nd Platoon have minimal experience with this equipment so they were given a refresher course to re-familiarize them with the device.



Specialist Richard Berryman, of Vicksburg, Miss., and a combat engineer with 2nd platoon, 18th EN, 296th BSB, walks alongside a TALON EOD Robot as a driver guides it through a training course at FOB Warhorse, Iraq, on May 27. Specialist Berryman had just used this device for the first time and was walking alongside to see the differences between how a human and this equipment view an area.



Iraqi Police and Sykes' Regulars Get Hot on Missions in Abu Sayda

Story and Photos by
Pfc. Adrian Muehe
135th MPAD

DIYALA, Iraq — The morning of May 28 proved to be a sweltering one throughout all of Diyala province, Iraq. This was especially true for the palm groves of the area, which provided a canopy that trapped humidity making the heat index underneath at 115 degrees Fahrenheit as Gen. Khalis, the division headquarters Iraqi Police commander for Abu Sayda, led his men through on the hunt for weapon caches.

Advising and assisting Gen. Khalis and his men was Company C, 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, along with military working dogs, an Explosive Ordnance Disposal Team, and scout weapon teams from the U.S. Forces.

“We were there because history has shown us that Abu Sayda and the surrounding areas are littered with caches,” said Capt. Preston Aaron, commander of Company C, 5/20 Inf.

According to Capt. Aaron, three weeks prior to this mission, a wild fire devastated the palm groves in the area. As the fire spread, three weapon caches exploded, contributing to the rapidly

growing flames as they went on to destroy crops, homes and personal property of Iraqi civilians. This, along with a rise in Improvised Explosive Device (IED) attacks in the area prompted Capt. Aaron to do a clearing operation in the area.

“I brought up the idea to General Khalis,” said Capt. Aaron. “He was very energetic about the idea and wanted to do it right away. We did it literally two days after initial planning.”

The movement plan through the groves and how to utilize assets was done by Gen. Khalis. Everywhere he went Capt. Aaron

was two steps away, there by his side to give him advice or assistance if needed.

“We’re really starting to transition to an advise and assist role with them,” said Capt. Aaron. “We’re stepping back, seeing how they want to do these missions, and coach, teach and mentor them. So far, it’s working well.”

No weapon caches were found in the particular palm groves they searched, but Capt. Aaron does not view this as a failure because he believes this has helped to strengthen his partnership with the policemen and show a presence in the area.



General Khalis, the Iraqi Police division headquarter commander in Abu Sayda, plans out movement of troops as Capt. Preston Aaron, commander of Company C., 5/20 Inf., listens during a clearing operation through the palm groves of Abu Sayda, Iraq, on May 28.



“It was a huge step in the right direction,” said Capt. Aaron. “It was a success because our number one task of continuing intelligence driven missions in the area was achieved.”

As U.S. Forces move into this advise and assist role, many Iraqi Security Forces in the area are going a step further and operating completely independently during unilateral operations.

“Many of the units in this area are doing so many missions, so many raids, that unless we keep up with them on a daily basis, we lose track of what they’re doing,”

said Capt. Aaron. “They’re starting to get ahead of us.”

The Sykes Regulars of C Co. plan on assisting Gen. Khalis and his men with missions coming up to make Abu Sayda a safer place. Even though there is more work to be done to rid the area of weapons and criminals, Gen. Khalis has seen what the work done in the past has done for this place.

“The situation here is very good, it has improved greatly in the past months,” said Gen. Khalis. “I credit this not only to us, but to our strong relationship with U.S. Forces.”

Soldiers of Company C., 5/20 Inf., wait on line in the shade for the word to move forward from Iraqi Police during a clearing operation through palm groves in Abu Sayda, Iraq, on May 28. U.S. Forces were assisting the Iraqi Police on a mission looking for weapons caches in the area.

Joint Focus Instills Hope for Future

Story and Photos by
Pvt. Zachary Zuber
135th MPAD

DIYALA, Iraq — “People who aren’t here don’t see that if one soldier, whether IA [Iraqi Army] or Peshmerga, does one thing wrong it could start an all-out war,” said Sgt. Asa Bourrie, a squad leader for Red platoon, Bronco Company, 1st Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division.

Pressure rests upon two cultures historically divided. On one side are the Kurdish, and on the other are Arabs. The future of their communities relies on their ability to resolve problems and move forward united.

Warhorse Soldiers from 1/14th Cav., are working to cool these flames by participating in tripartite operations intended to develop a relationship between the Kurdish and Iraqi armies. At times, also serving as mediators, the Warhorse Soldiers are responsible for helping foster a new era of cooperation between these two armies that allows them to focus on developing solutions to problems together.

A large component of this endeavor is the creation and operation of several traffic checkpoints. By combining the efforts of all three armies, the citizens in this region of Diyala province are able to see that it’s possible for Iraqi and Kurdish people to peacefully live and strive to reach a mutual goal side-by-side.

Putting aside the ethnic and cultural differences to work together sets the stage for progress in the region. Troops at these checkpoints are brought together by orders from their leaders.

Their loyalty, by following orders without regard to personal beliefs, has laid a foundation for a more friendly and successful working environment.

“We came to work here because our leaders gave us the order to come here, but now that

we have been here, we all like it,” said Salman Ahmed Ali, a soldier with 4th Battalion, 3rd Peshmerga Brigade. “We have learned new operations, and made friends with the others here.”

The checkpoints have provided a gateway not just for vehicles, but for those friendships that would never have been possible in the past. Basic bonds have been established, and they are solidified as both Iraqis and Peshmerga face threats from a common enemy.

“We have built strong relation-

ships here while working together because we all have the same purpose, to protect our people,” said 2nd Lt. Hassan Amir Muhammed, a platoon leader for 4th Battalion, 4th Brigade Iraqi Army. “If mortars come in and hurt anyone, it hurts us all because it hurts that purpose here.”

Even though the groups have come to an understanding and realized that they have to work together, there have still been arguments and disagreements that had to be worked through. The Peshmerga at each point rotate almost monthly, while the Iraqi soldiers are stationed there for longer periods of time. Each time new groups arrive, the rocky path

taken to build new friendships starts over again. Throughout this recurring process, U.S. Soldiers stationed at the checkpoints see both the ups and downs.

“Every few weeks we kind of have to start over and deal with tempers or arguments,” said Sgt. Bourrie, a Concord, N.H. native. “Once we get them to focus on the solutions they are making, it’s like flipping a switch when we see them focus on the task at hand.”

Both sides share a desire for safety and basic human rights for their communities in the future. Ensuring those are available will require their protecting forces to switch on more often and remember the partnership they are shar-

ing now.

“We have been working with the Pesh so that hopefully we can cooperate to do our job,” said 2nd Lt. Muhammed. “Hopefully this relationship is going to be stronger than before.”

A Peshmerga soldier inspects a vehicle at one of several checkpoints in Diyala province, Iraq. The checkpoints are part of tripartite operations assisted by the 1st Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, to encourage a peaceful future in this part of Iraq.



Sergeant Asa Bourrie, a squad leader for Red platoon, Bronco Company, 1st Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, directs vehicles through a traffic checkpoint in Diyala province, Iraq.



Memorial Day Celebrated, Fallen Comrades Remembered at FOB Warhorse

Story and Photos by
Pfc. Adrian Muehe
135th MPAD

DIYALA, Iraq — As Old Glory leads Memorial Day parades down the streets of small towns and large cities in the United States, U.S. Soldiers gather under the Iraqi sun to bow their heads during a solemn ceremony at Forward Operating Base Warhorse, Iraq.

In the morning, leaders and Soldiers of the 3rd Stryker Brigade Team, 2nd Infantry Division, assembled at the Never Forget Garden Memorial to dedicate a portion of the wall to the Arrowhead brigade which annotated the names of the service members who were killed in action while serving in Diyala province.

“As we stand in the land of Ancient Mesopotamia, it is fitting that we pause from the rigors of combat to pay tribute to our fallen comrades who have paid the ultimate cost for the cause of freedom,” said Col. Dave E. Funk, commander of the Arrowhead brigade. “We stand in solemn recognition today that their sacrifices were not in vain.”

The history of Memorial Day traces back to a holiday known as Decoration Day that was celebrated after the Civil War. On this day, the graves of Soldiers killed in the war were decorated with flowers and wreaths. General John A. Logan of the Grand Army of the Republic issued General Order No. 11, which declared that May 30 be a day to remember these fallen Soldiers. In 1971, the U.S. Congress declared Memorial Day a federal holiday in

remembrance of all fallen service members.

“I think it’s important to know the history of this day,” said Col. Funk. “Sadly, even as we have been once again a nation at war for the better part of nine years, Memorial Day seems to have lost its traditional meaning for too many Americans.”



Soldiers from 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division fire a 21-Gun Salute during a Memorial Day ceremony at Forward Operating Base Warhorse, Iraq, on May 31. The Arrowhead Brigade remembered its fallen Soldiers from Operation Iraqi Freedom deployments by inscribing their names on the wall at the FOB Warhorse Never Forget Garden Memorial.

Later that night, the Soldiers of 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, 3 SBCT, 2nd ID, gathered on the soccer field to pay respects to the 19 Sykes’ Regulars who have lost their lives throughout the battalion’s three deployments to Iraq with a 19 illuminating mortar round salute.

“This was to symbolize the Sol-

diers’ dream,” said Lt. Col. Mitch Rambin, commander of 5/20 Inf. “It was a way for all of us to look up there and see something to remember the Soldiers who lost their lives in this unit.”

Many of the Soldiers serving at FOB Warhorse are on the second or third deployment, and have known someone who was killed while serving in uniform far from home. For these men and women, Memorial Day holds a different meaning than it does to most Americans.

“Let us resolve to never forget,” said Col. Funk. “Nor allow others to forget that amidst the backyard barbecues and beer, there is a true and deep meaning to Memorial Day.”



Lisa Piascik team leader of Diyala Provincial Reconstruction Team, along with Col. David E. Funk, and Command Sgt. Maj. Alan Bjerke place a wreath at the Never Forget Garden Memorial at Forward Operating Base Warhorse during a Memorial Day ceremony on May 31. Names of fallen Soldiers who operated out of FOB Warhorse are inscribed into the wall of the memorial in honor of their sacrifice.

Soldiers from 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, pay tribute to fallen Soldiers as 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, 3 SBCT, 2nd ID, renders a 19 illumination mortar round salute to the 19 Soldiers who have died while serving with the battalion during a Memorial Day ceremony at Forward Operating Base Warhorse, Iraq, on May 31. Many Soldiers from 3 SBCT, 2nd ID have been present for more than one of the brigade’s deployments, and have friends that were honored during the memorial ceremonies.

Arrowhead Luau

In celebration of Asian Pacific American Heritage Month, 1/37th FA hosted a luau on FOB Warhorse on May 29.



Patriots' Parting Thoughts

During their final month at FOB Normandy before returning to Joint Base Lewis-McChord, we asked several of the Patriot Soldiers to reflect upon their best memories and biggest accomplishments from this deployment.



"My fondest memory, though there are lots of them, is the Thanksgiving Day Turkey Bowl football game with officers against non-commissioned officers. It was everything that embodies the Patriot Battalion spirit, the whole battalion was there on a special day, Thanksgiving, to observe this special event. Even though the officers lost, in the last 41 seconds of the game, it was a team effort across the board and we really just had good time enjoying the camaraderie."

-- Lt. Col. Adam Roche, 2/3 Inf. commander



"My best memory, as cheesy as it sounds is working with some of the best people on the planet. All the people that I roll outside the wire with are my battle brothers and I would go anywhere with them. I feel blessed I got the opportunity to roll with them."

-- Spc. Christopher Fraser, HHC

"I think one of our biggest accomplishments was that there weren't a whole lot of things we had to do for the elections. The fact that they went off without major stuff happening was good to know that Iraqi Forces had control of that."

-- Spc. Jay Purcell, Bravo Co.

"Early on in the deployment about three weeks after I took over as a platoon leader we went out and found a cache with AK-47s, RPG launchers, hand grenades, and wire for IEDs. That was a big win for us because the guys had been out looking for a while and hadn't found anything before that."

-- 1st Lt. Connor Wicklund, Charlie Co.

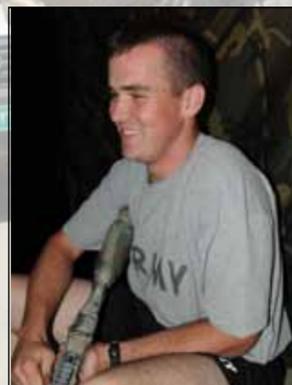


"Bringing all my guys home more than anything. You go into combat hearing all the horror stories and think about how you would handle my guy not coming home. This is my first deployment and that was the goal above everything else for me."

-- Sgt. Nicholas Glenn, Human Resources

"There was one day when we were sitting outside having a barbeque, and Sgt. Martinez and Spc. Fraser were doing their normal thing kind of joking back and forth and then all of a sudden everybody just started going at it. We just had a giant combatives match that ended in a big dog pile."

-- Pfc. Jerry Williamson, HHC



Chaplain's Corner

Laying the Foundation

-two-

Building the Walls of Faith and Marriage

Every building stands upon a carefully laid foundation. The material substances we use to lay our building's foundation determine its strength. Likewise our words are the material substances of our faith which gives us the strength to withstand the storms of life. Thus we must build our foundation on God's Word only. Then and only then will our faith be strong enough to hold our anchor firm when the seas rage.

When your faith is based upon Scripture, your foundation will outlast all attacks, because God's Word is eternal while all other things are temporary. When we build the walls to family relationships our first block should be to concentrate on your commitment to your marriage as God would intend.

The scriptures tell us that husbands are exhorted to love their wives "even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." In other words, a Biblical marriage is one rooted in God's love rather than human love.

God's love is **unconditional** because it's based upon God, who is always reliable and trustworthy and always has love for that other person, even when we don't; whereas, human love is conditional because it's always based upon us: how we

feel, what our circumstances are and how the other person responds to us.

God's love is **one-sided** because it doesn't have to be returned in order to be kept alive. In other words, it says, "I'll love you no matter what you do"; whereas, human love is a two-sided love because it always must be returned in order to be kept alive. It says, "If you stop loving me, I'll stop loving you."

God's love is a **freeing** love because it frees the lover from expectations and presumptions and allows the one being loved to respond from their heart, not their defenses; whereas, human love is a bondage love because it puts the one loving in bondage to their expectations and feelings, forcing the one being loved to respond from their defenses and not their heart.

And finally, God's love is **other-centered** love because it always puts the other's interests above its own; whereas human love is a self-centered love because it puts its own interests above the interests of others.

C.S. Lewis cuts through all of these things and gives us a very simple definition of the two types of loves: God's love is a "Gift of Love" whereas, human love is a "need love."

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

**MAY THOSE
FALLEN NEVER
BE FORGOTTEN**

Sgt. Keith Adam Coe
1st Battalion,
37th Field Artillery Regiment
March 18, 1980 - April 27, 2010



CHAPLAIN (MAJ.)
PATRICK BASAL

Marriage is one of God's greatest inventions, offering us partners in the battle through life, to encourage us in times of discouragement, to help us up when we fall and to brave every raging storm. Marriage offers us a constant friend and companion, a second head in trying to solve problems and a second set of hands in doing the work that needs to be done. Marriage is the walls of our home and the foundational structure of a whole, happy family, where children can be raised in security and love. Henceforth, we need to do our utmost to protect and strengthen our own marriages, and the institution of marriage in the Army community at large.

**PAX DOMINE
(The Peace of the Lord)**

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

Pfc. Erin McLyman
296th Brigade Support
Battalion
May 10, 1983 - March 13, 2010



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

