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VOL. 1, NO. 9   MULTI-NATIONAL DIVISION – BAGHDAD   “STEADFAST AND LOYAL”   MAY 14, 2006

Soldiers, Iraqis launch effort to revitalize Iraq’s date palm industry

Shadow Soldiers
Investigation agents work to uncover crime

Secretary of the Army meets with MND-B leadership, Iraqi soldiers

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RUMSFELD VISITS IRAQ
Secretary of Defense sees progress of Iraqi soldiers, attends luncheon with MND-B Soldiers

The Honorable Donald H. Rumsfeld, the Secretary of Defense met with Brig. Gen. Mohammed Wassif, commander, 5th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Division at the Iraqi army’s Forward Operating Base Honor, which is located in Baghdad’s International Zone. Rumsfeld also observed Iraqi army training and met with Multi-National Division - Baghdad Soldiers responsible for training Iraqi Security Forces.

RUMSFELD VISITS IRAQ
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COMMENTARY

One Americans Opinion: “Dedication and Danger in Iraq”

By Joseph E. Robert, Jr.
Chairman and chief executive of J.E. Robert Company

I’ve had the opportunity to travel to Iraq three times, most recently last month, courtesy of the nonpartisan Business Executives for National Security. On every trip I’m struck by the difference between the Iraq I hear and read about back home and the Iraq I see in person. Iraq defies expectations and easy definitions.

For me as a business executive, these visits provide a first-hand look at the largest U.S. reconstruction effort since the Marshall Plan. As the father of a Marine who recently returned from a tour in Iraq, I find that these trips also offer a glimpse of our frontline troops that few military families ever see. Among my general impressions:

First, U.S. forces in Iraq remain focused on their mission. Talking with soldiers and Marines over dinner in their mess halls, it’s easy to see why reenlistment rates among U.S. troops in Iraq are the highest in the military. These men and women understand their mission and believe they are making a difference. Like my son, Joe III, women understand their mission in the military. These men and troops in Iraq are the highest in military families ever see. Among Marine who recently returned from a tough mission in Fallujah, the Marines believe they are making a difference, despite the Iraqis’ urgent need for help in developing a functioning judicial system. American troops like my son describe risking their lives to arrest suspected insurgents, testifying in Iraq courts and then watching in frustration as the offenders are tossed back on the streets. In government, as in business, refusing to devote the resources and personnel to a strategic priority is a recipe for disaster.

Unlike the military, civilian agencies will never be able to forcibly deploy their personnel to foreign trouble spots. But through a combination of rewards (promotions) and punishments (less desirable assignments), agencies could more effectively support the critical political and economic efforts that will determine Iraq’s fate.

Back home, as the election-year debate over Iraq rages on, I think about that soldier’s sacrifice and recall a final impassioned plea from an Iraqi general named Aziz: “Iraqi troops will finish this job; we will kill this insurgency. But please tell the American people and President Bush that America cannot withdraw before the Iraqi troops are ready, or before the political and economic situation stabilizes – will condemn Iraq and the region to a future of chaos, destruction and death.

NEWS FROM THE FRONT

MND-B Soldiers detain 2 suspects in IED placement responsible in deaths of 2 Soldiers

BAGHDAD – Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers detained two men suspected of emplacing an improvised-explosive device that killed two MND-B Soldiers April 28 in Baghdad.

The two men were seen fleeing the scene of the IED attack and were caught by MND-B Soldiers and taken into custody.

(Courtesy of MND-B PAO)

Marines discover cache

BAGHDAD – During a cache excavation operation, Marines from 1st Battalion, 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, attached to Multi-National Division – Baghdad, discovered a large weapons cache April 30 in a village west of Baghdad.

The cache included 100 20mm anti-air rounds, 3,000 7.62 ball rounds, 1,000 7.62 armor piercing rounds, 65 mortar fuses, 24 grenades, 23 83mm mortar rounds, three 120mm mortar rounds and two 100mm mortar rounds. There were also three 115mm tank rounds, 12 57mm fragmentation rockets, seven 80mm fragmentation rockets, 13 rocket-propelled grenade’s, an improvised rocket launcher, two 107mm rockets, a 68mm rocket, three 155mm artillery rounds, five 130mm artillery shells, four 120mm projectiles, an anti-tank rocket launcher, a machine gun, three assault rifles and an Enfield sniper rifle. An Explosive Ordinance Disposal team was called in to destroy the cache.

(Courtesy of MND-B PAO)

MND-B Soldiers find weapons cache, detain suspected terrorists

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – A patrol from 7th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, responding to a small-arms attack, killed one terrorist, detained six suspected terrorists and found a weapons cache north of Baghdad at approximately 5:30 p.m. Wednesday.

The weapons captured included a 60mm mortar tube with 30 rounds, two rocket-propelled grenade launchers with three rounds, two RPG rifles with 500 rounds of ammunition, two Russian SVD rifles with 80 rounds.

There was also a Russian Moissien Nagant rifle with 20 rounds, five AK-47 rifles with five 47 rounds, two 240 rounds, an Albanian SKS carbine with 20 rounds, a Russian Suomi KP-31 submachine gun and an illumination star cluster.

(Courtesy of 1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.)
Soldiers thwart terrorist attempt to emplace IED on roadside in Baghdad April 14

Story by Capt. Douglas Herrmann
1st Bn., 87th Inf. Regt., 1st BCT, 10th Mtn. Div.

BAGHDAD – Soldiers from 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, thwarted an attempt by terrorists to place an improvised-explosive device on a roadside in Baghdad April 14.

The Soldiers were on patrol in western Baghdad when 1-87 Inf. scouts reported suspicious activities by maintenance workers allegedly conducting repairs on a sign hanging from a footbridge.

The Soldiers investigated the area. An initial assessment turned up a device that was later determined to be a bomb. An explosives ordnance disposal team was called in and detonated the device in a controlled explosion.

The 2nd Lt. James Rembert, member of the explosive ordnance disposal team that destroyed the device, said 2nd Lt. James Rembert, member of the explosive ordnance disposal team that destroyed the device.

“With the destruction record of these devices, you have to believe that you have saved someone’s life by safely destroying this bomb — and that is a good feeling for all of us,” said 2nd Lt. James Rembert, member of the explosive ordnance disposal team that destroyed the device.

“We spend hours each day searching for this type of activity, so it makes our whole team feel successful after accomplishments like the one today.”

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To control the progressive loss of the crop and regenerate the industry, the Iraqi Government’s Ministry of Agriculture and Coalition Forces have teamed up to combat the problem by conducting aerial spraying operations in April and May.

The Najaf, Karbala and Babil Provincial Operations Center, 4th Infantry Division, recognized the achievements of the newly elected permanent Iraqi government.

“We accomplished a huge achievement in writing the constitution and electing the new government, especially the three presidential posts,” Taqi said, to the Iraqi national media.

Beech also congratulated the Iraqi Assembly for electing its top leaders in the formation of its national unity government and promised to work with the elected officials “to bring security and prosperity to Iraq.”

Both leaders took the opportunity to address the successes of the local and national security forces in Iraq and their important role in the establishment of the new government.

Day and night, more than two-thir ds of security patrols in the Baghdad area are conducted by Iraqi Security Forces, said Beech.

“Iraqi army, national police and Iraqi police are manning more than 140 traffic control points within the 10 Beladiyahs, or neighborhoods, of Baghdad at any given time,” he said.

Due to recent operations, more than 100 weapons caches have been recovered and more than 1,000 suspected criminals and terrorists have been detained, he added. Both leaders also addressed future challenges facing the security of Iraq and the new national government.

Taqi strongly argued against the need for a society where only one authority has the power to carry arms.

“If we want to have a strong government, we have to combine those militias with the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Defense because only the government is authorized to have weapons, and we are working on this issue.”

The peace maintained by the Iraqi security, he said, will be the foundation for establishing trust between the new government and the Iraqi people as a whole.

“It is critical to the nation’s security that all Iraqis cooperate peacefully with Iraqi Security Forces,” Beech said, addressing the current need to eliminate the acts of violence in Baghdad and Iraq.

“If any Iraqi citizen sees or...
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Secretary of the Army visits MND-B Soldiers in Baghdad’s International Zone

By Staff Sgt. Brent Williams
4th BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

BAGHDAD —

The Department of the Army’s senior leader visited Baghdad’s International Zone to check on the progress of Iraqi Army forces and to visit with Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The Honorable Dr. Francis J. Harvey, the Secretary of the Army, met with leaders of the 4th Infantry Division’s 4th Brigade Combat Team and the Iraqi army’s 5th Brigade, 6th Division, during a visit to their forward operating bases May 11.

Harvey traveled to the Iraqi army’s FOB Honor to observe military training that demonstrated the progress Iraq’s Security Forces are making as they hone the skills of their jundi (soldiers) as they take an active role in providing Baghdad’s security.

“Our view is that the ISF secured this place,” Harvey said to Iraqi army Brig. Gen. Mohammed Wasif, commander, 5th Bde., 6th Div. “You did a great job on the national election. You also did a great job on the aftermath of the (Al Askari) Mosque bombing.”

Wasif assumed responsibility for FOB Honor back in January, taking over the mission of providing security for the International Zone and Karrada Peninsula, said Col. Michael Beech, commander, 4th BCT, 4th Inf. Div., while talking to Harvey.

“Since that time, his brigade has been operating independently,” Beech explained. “Although we are partner brigades and often assist each other in operations throughout central Baghdad, his jundi work with my Soldiers on all the entry control points.

“This is a great outfit – very well led, very well trained,” he said of his Iraqi counterparts.

Following demonstrations in first-aid training, small-unit infantry tactics and motorpool maintenance, the Secretary of the Army stopped at FOB Prosperity to meet with Soldiers of the 4th Brigade Combat Team.

Joining Harvey for lunch with a group of Soldiers selected by their units to attend the special function at the King Cobra Café were Maj. Gen. J.D. Thurman, commanding general, and Command Sgt. Maj. Ronald Riling, both of Multi-National Division – Baghdad, and Beech and Command Sgt. Maj. John Moody, Jr., both of 4th BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

Following the meal, the Soldiers introduced themselves to the Secretary of the Army, who then entertained a question and answer session, during which Soldiers asked a wide array of questions ranging from Iraq’s terrorist threat to the length of deployments for units abroad.

“Right now, the baseline that we are trying to get to for the active regular army is one year deployed for every three years in service,” Harvey responded to one Soldier’s question.

“We want to be able to do one year deployed with 24 months at a home station. That is part of the Army’s Force Generation Model.”

Harvey said he foresees units having to deploy for two six-month periods, one at the beginning of their unit’s three year life-cycle and one at the end.

“When the level of violence goes down,” he said, “the ISF who you are partnered with and train with, when they take the lead and increasingly take the lead, then I think we can really think about changing.”

“I know the American people, a vast majority of the people, have a great, high regard for the American Soldier.

“Because of you and your fellow Soldiers, peace freedom and the democratic way of life have been preserved.

Because of you, 50 million people in Iraq and Afghanistan have been liberated from oppressive regimes; and because of you, the cycle of terrorism in the Middle East is beginning to be broken.”

IRAQ, CONTINUED FROM PG. 3

Suspects an incident of terrorism or gangs wearing Iraqi police or army uniforms, they need to immediately contact their local Iraqi Security Forces, Coalition Forces or the TIPS hotline,” he said. “Coalition Forces will investigate immediately.”

Taji outlined the need to disband armed militias in Iraq as the most pressing issue challenging the security and prosperity of the government. Admitting the challenges are many, the spokesman for the United Iraqi Alliance political bloc emphasized the need to support the Iraqi Security Forces fighting to secure the future of Iraq.

“We need to mobilize, supply and train the “Iraqi’s,” Taji explained. “Iraq’s security forces have proven that they can handle the security and have made a lot of sacrifices in doing so.”

MND-B Soldiers, Iraqi army, police conduct combined patrol through streets of Tarmiyah

Story by Spc. Jason Thompson
4th Inf. Div. PAO

TARMIYAH, Iraq – Soldiers from Company A, 1st Battalion, 66th Armor Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, conducted a combined patrol with local Iraqi army soldiers and Iraqi policemen through the streets of Tarmiyah April 21.

Tarmiyah, formerly a hotbed of terrorist activity, became a relatively safe town once Co. A started monitoring the area near the end of March, said Capt. William Rodabaugh, commander, Co. A., 1-66th AR.

The Soldiers of Co. A. conduct multiple patrols through the town on a daily basis to help reassure the local citizens that both Coalition Forces and Iraqi Security Forces are working together to keep Tarmiyah secure.

“This town used to have a large problem with terrorists before we got here,” Rodabaugh said. “Our job now is to make sure the town remains secure for the people who live here. The citizens appreciate us being here. They are always greeting us in the streets and thanking for everything that we do.”

Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers have been monitoring Tarmiyah for only a short period of time, and they know the objective is to place the Iraqi Security Forces in the lead for securing the area as soon as possible. The daily combined patrols, now routine, move steadily toward achievement of that goal.

“It’s great to see the IP and IA get out with us on these patrols,” said Staff Sgt. Christopher Wright, squad leader, Co. A.

“They know the area better than any of us do, and the Tarmiyah residents seem to be more comfortable when they see us working together.”


The Secretary of the Army, the Hon. Dr. Frances J. Harvey (center), talks with Col. Michael Beech (left of Secretary), commander, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division. Col. Beech explained the role his Military Transition Teams play in observing and training the Iraqi army’s 5th Brigade, 6th Division, as the Iraqi security forces work to become self-reliant. The Hon. Dr. Harvey visited the Iraqi army’s Forward Operating Base Honor to observe Iraqi soldiers conducting first-aid and other training.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Brent Williams

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Because of you, 50 million people in Iraq and Afghanistan have been liberated from oppressive regimes; and because of you, the cycle of terrorism in the Middle East is beginning to be broken.”
Maj. Gen. J.D. Thurman, commanding general, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, greets Governor Aqeel Mahmoud Kareem Al Khac’al of Karbala, at a leadership meeting at the Falaniko House in the International Zone April 28. Leaders from Baghdad, Babil and Najaf were also in attendance at the meeting to discuss concerns and reaffirm their dedication to a peaceful Iraq.

Thurman met with the governors and provincial council chairmen of the four provinces in a series of meetings that involved each set of provincial leaders and their corresponding local Coalition Forces commanders. He stressed the importance of maintaining open communications to each of the governors and that “this was a decisive time for Iraq.” He also stated that he was committed to not allow terrorists to disrupt the formation of the new government.

“Central to civil control is the enforcement of civil and criminal statutes. ‘Adhering to the Rule of Law is fundamental to the provincial security transition process,’ he said.

“Every success we have marginalizes the terrorists,” added Mu’een Al-Majed, Baghdad Provincial council chairman. “When we succeed, the terrorists fail.”

Both sides expressed optimism about the recent political progress made. They also stated that, realistically, much work remains before Iraq can truly be free.

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Maj. Gen. J.D. Thurman
Commanding General, Multi-National Division – Baghdad

“The Iraqi people have sacrificed a lot to not have to live in fear and to have a future of freedom. We cannot allow the terrorists to steal the future.”

Maj. Gen. J.D. Thurman, commanding general, Multi-National Division – Baghdad met with four prominent Iraqi governors at the Falaniko House in the International Zone April 28 to reaffirm the leaders’ joint dedication to continue working together and to discuss concerns.

As Iraq returns to a state of normalcy, the people will begin to see a shift toward more civil authority control and less of a military presence and influence.

During the meeting, Iraqi provincial government leaders from Karbala, Babil, Najaf and Baghdad provinces and Coalition officials met in Baghdad to discuss and assess security in each of the provinces as part of a long-term goal of transferring security from Coalition Forces to the Iraqi provincial governments.

“This is a decisive moment in the history of Iraq,” said Maj. Gen. J.D. Thurman, commanding general, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

“The positive steps we have made with the last three elections, and with the formation of the new government, are very important.”

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The over-arching theme of each of the meetings was one of cooperation and the desire to ensure that each of the provinces was fully prepared before taking on the task of provincial security.

The Iraqi governors in attendance wholeheartedly expressed their desire to continue to work together with Coalition Forces to defeat the terrorists and to end violence in their country.

Only when working as one team can they accomplish their goals, said Assad Aftaee Abu Gaulal, governor of Najaf.

Thurman focused on the need to improve coordination between Iraqi and Coalition Forces, stressing the importance of an overall “rule of law” as a key to peace. He also stressed the need to continue to restore the essential services all Iraqis need to carry on with their lives.

“My number-one concern is to not let the terrorists or anyone else disrupt the formation of this new government,” said Thurman.

The Iraqi leaders agreed.

“We want to work with Coalition Forces to honestly assess our ability to take over security,” stated Dr. Aqil, the governor of Karbala.

“When we work as a team, it drives Zarqawi mad, and anything that drives him mad is a good thing,” added Mueen Hameed Abd Al Majed, the Baghdad Provincial Council Chairman.

Thurman stated that he believes that “everyday Iraqi citizens” can perform a key part in helping stop the terrorists.

“We need to let the people know that they play an important role in the security of Iraq,” said Thurman.

He pointed to the successes of the “national tip hotline” as a just cause for the governors to push for more civilian support.

“Our tip line helps us to stop terrorists every day, said Thurman. “Approximately 80 percent of the tips we receive are actionable.”

One area of concern that leaders on both sides agreed on was the necessity to reintegrate all of the armed militias back into Iraqi society.

“There are simply too many guns in this country right now,” said Thurman. “There is no room for these armed militias on the streets. If they want to fight for Iraq, they need to pledge their allegiance to Iraq.”

The Iraqi governors brought several ideas to the table on how to more effectively deal with violence in Iraq. These included the formation of neighborhood watch organizations and a governmental “weapon buy-back program.”

Thurman agreed that both ideas deserved further discussion.

The leaders ended the day in agreement that the meeting helped each of them in knowing where each others stood on many key issues – and also with the knowledge that both groups are totally dedicated to the future of Iraq.

“Only when we work together can we achieve our goals,” said Thurman. “It allows us to better see our shortcomings and helps us to more easily solve them.”

Soldier makes triumphant return to duty after 6-month hospital recovery

Story by Cpt. Douglas Hermann

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq –

When he went on patrol last September on the 4th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, he had no idea that the events of that day would separate him from his unit for more than six months.

“I never thought that day that I wouldn’t be back,” said Staff Sgt. Willie Hall, who recently returned to his unit, Company B, 1st Battalion, 87th Infantry Regiment, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

“I even had plans to finish watching a movie with my buddies when our patrol was over.”

Hall’s disembowled patrol came under attack in Ghazaliya September 11 from a vehicle-borne improvised-explosive device followed by small-arms fire.

According to members of his unit, he provided first aid to his fellow Soldiers before realizing he himself was significantly wounded in both the neck and arm.

After forcing their attackers to flee, Hall’s unit evacuated him to receive treatment for his injuries. He was transported to Walter Reed Army Medical Center for further treatment and recovery. From there, he commenced on a six-month journey of treatment and physical therapy he hoped would bring him back to full health.

“As soon as I was feeling close to 100 percent, I knew I had to get back to my platoon,” said Hall. “That is where I belong.”

Hall’s efforts to recover were met with his unit’s excitement when he made his return to action.

“After I found out how bad he was hurt, I wondered what would happen to our unit,” said Spc. Thomas Neumann, Co. B, 1-87 Inf. Regt. “He really showed us that he stands by his men. We were all very excited.”

“It was really good to have him back in the platoon,” added Spc. Daniel Morris, Company B, 1-87 Inf. Regt. “His return from a six month hospital recovery inspired all of us. It was a great example of leadership to everyone.”
Driving the Iraqi army forward

2nd BCT Soldiers teach Iraqi army basic soldier skills, conduct physical fitness training

Story by
1st Lt. Winfield Pinkstaff
704th Support Bn.
4th BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

Support battalion displays adaptability in service, recovery mission

Story by
4th BCT, 4th Inf. Div.
704th Support Bn.

FOB KALISU, Iraq –

Soldiers from Company B, 2nd Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, trained Iraqi soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 4th Brigade, 8th Iraqi Army Division, in basic Soldier skills here April 24-30.

“The training was a weeklong mission for each company in its battalion,” said Capt. Colin Brooks, commander, Co. B, 2-8 Inf. Regt. “They will rotate companies each week; another company going through the training will be taught by Iraqi soldiers who took the training in the previous weeks.”

One of the skills taught in the training involves clearing rooms. Soldiers from 2-8 Inf. constructed “rooms,” lining designated areas with engineering tape, so Iraqi soldiers could simulate entering and clearing them.

“This part of the training is teaching the IA soldiers techniques when entering and clearing rooms,” said Staff Sgt. Steven Pena, infantryman, Co. B, 2-8 Inf. Regt.

“We want them to understand that to clear a room, you have to do it as a team. We are trying to teach them that communication between the team members is vital.”

During the training, the Soldiers of 2-8 Inf. Regt. conducted physical training with Iraqi soldiers, which included several two-and-a-half-mile runs around the perimeter of Kalsu while carrying litters and water jugs.

“The purpose of the physical training is to push them past their physical threshold and increase their mental toughness,” said Brooks.

Iraqi soldiers waited patiently for their chance to train with the American Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 4th Brigade, 8th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, during a weeklong training course here April 25.

Soldiers during the reflexive fire portion of the training. This training taught Iraqi soldiers the proper stance for firing weapons at close-range and trigger discipline to decrease the chances of accidentally firing a weapon without intent.

“When I see the American Soldiers training us, I feel more confident in my ability to fight terrorists,” said Pvt. Muhammed, 2nd Bn., 4th Bde., 8th IAD.

“This training is a good opportunity to improve our abilities to fight,” said Capt. Majed, commander, 2nd Bn., 4th Bde., 8th IAD.

“It is also a good opportunity to learn what helps the American Army defeat terrorists successfully. My sergeants are learning more and more from the American sergeants.”

“The main goal of this training is for the IA soldiers to become proficient in these critical tasks so they can provide their own security in the future,” concluded Brooks.

“Support battalion displays adaptability in service, recovery mission”

Story by
4th BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

I s not only the growing heat of the upcoming summer making the tin-roofed open bay of the 4th Brigade Combat Team’s 704th Support Battalion Service and Recovery section hot.

Inside the building, the S&R section of Company C, “starts fires for a living,” or welds, and is constantly on the go to provide recovery and fabrication assets for the brigade.

The section has the task of supporting the battalion as well as the forward support companies working with the 4th BCT in its mission to secure and rebuild the nation of Iraq.

It supports units on Forward Operating Base Falcon, including the 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry, 4th Inf. Div.; 2nd Battalion, 506th Infantry Regiment; and 2nd Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment, 1st Armored Division.

Chief Warrant Officer-2 Robert Pruitt, an Allied Trades Technician, who has spent his military career, in his own words, “starting fires for a living,” heads the section.

Led by Pruitt, the S&R section is composed of three MOSs combined give the section the ability to remain adaptable to whatever mission may come their way.

With two wrecker trucks and one M 88 A 2 Hercules Tracked Recovery Vehicle at its disposal, the section has the ability to remove any piece of equipment from the field and the constant change of the terrorists’ techniques and procedures, the ability to adapt is extremely important.

1st Lt. Casey Newell, a gun truck platoon leader, with Company A, 704th Spt. Bde. Said he recognizes the necessity for a section such as the Blacksmith’s S&R.

“ar to be successful in this conflict means that you need to be able to adapt to an ever-changing enemy,” Newell said.

“The technical expertise offered by Chief Warrant Officer-2 Pruitt and his Soldiers provides us with that means of adaptation,” he said.

The S&R provides the means of adapting by fabricating devices such as the installation of the ballistic glass around the turret of the M1114 humvee, which allows gunners to have a greater field of view while remaining protected from enemy fire.

The Soldiers of S&R are learning to adapt as well by cross-training with the other MOSs of the section, said Staff Sgt. Gerald Williams, the section noncommissioned officer-in-charge and a wheeled vehicle mechanic.

“I thought there would be more of a mission for recovery than welding; however, with the higher demands for fabrication, it has allowed me the opportunity to cross train with chief and learn more about welding and develop a better understanding of what the 44Bs are capable.”

Williams’ positive outlooks are shared by the rest of the Soldiers of the sections.

“I am proud just to be a member of the section that helps make up the backbone of the battalion,” said Sgt. Eddie Corpuz.
CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – One of the life-giving sources that every Soldier depends on throughout their year-long tour in Iraq – especially during the summer months – will now be produced and bottled here.

The new 52,000 square-foot facility known simply as "Bottled Water Factory Six" is situated next to the "Z" Lake, between Camp Liberty and Camp Victory, and will produce 200,000 to 450,000 one-liter bottles of drinking water 24 hours-a-day, seven days-a-week, to meet the hydration needs of Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers and civilian workers.

The facility was built, paid for and is owned and operated by Al Morrell Development and Oasis International Waters, Inc. "The contract is to supply the military with bottled-water capability. The company supplies the water for a price. Our contract says that we supply and own all of the infrastructure, while the military gave us the land to put it on and the water source," said Tom Newell, Middle East general manager, AMD.

The "Z" Lake, which is supplied by the Tigris River, is the source of the water used in the purification and bottling process, said Newell, but the facility also has a backup of 150,000 gallons of source water on site. “The plant took about 90 days to build,” said Newell.

Water from the plant will save the U.S. government a substantial amount of money. "The (present) cost of a case of our water is $3.50 per case of one-liter bottles. The military was previously buying cases of 1.5-liter bottles for $12.50 a case," said Newell. The water produced here will have an added safety and welfare benefit for Soldiers.

"Currently, bottled water used by U.S. Forces comes from Kuwait. By producing our own water, it ensures better force health protection and quality control," said Maj. William Argo, MND-B environmental science officer, 4th Infantry Division. "In addition, it will reduce the number of trucks (military and civilian) on the road delivering water across Iraq."

"This is some of the safest water around. It’s filtered four times before it enters the bottle," said Master Sgt. Dwanye Wooten, contracting officer representative, 18th Corps Support Battalion, Sustainment Brigade, 4th Inf. Div. "You’re getting pure water. We don’t re-introduce new minerals into the water.”

"We’re taking water to the ‘Aquafina’ level, which is totally pure water,” added Newell.

A multi-step process ensures that the water is safe, said Wooten. "Basically, Reverse Oxomosis Water Purifying Unit systems can take virtually any water source and make it drinkable where other filtering processes cannot," said Argo. The final filtering process pushes the water through an ozonator, a system that kills any microorganisms that still may be present.

"Ozone is used in bottled-water production to essentially sanitize the water and is key in destroying any microbiological contamination,” said Argo.

"Environmentally, ozone leaves no harmful breakdown of products and it also increases bottled water shelf life,” said Argo.

The factory will be manned by at least 70 workers. Production will run on two 12-hour shifts, said Wooten.
Counter fire platoon keeps terrorists on toes

Story and photos by Spc. Kelly Kent McDowell
2nd BCT PAO, 101st Abn. Div.

BAGHDAD –

For 18 hours a day, the Soldiers work through the heat, wind and rain, waiting patienty for the two words that are music to a Field Artilleryman’s ears to be called over the radio. The platoon works throughout the day performing daily maintenance, reorganizing the ammunition bunker and completing daily tasks that range from guard duty to picking up mail as they wait, ready to react.

It is relatively quiet in the operations center. The sound of tapping on computer keys softly fills the air in the tent, but the silence is broken with those two words repeated over and over.

“Counter fire, counter fire, counter fire.”

Suddenly the dance begins. The door to the operations center flies open as a Soldier yells out to the gunners: “Counter Fire!”

The Soldiers drop their tools, grab their helmets and move in an organized fury to their positions. Measurements, degrees and azimuths are called from the radio operator and the Soldiers lift the Howitzer and rotate it to its ordered position.

In minutes, the rounds are ready to fire and the anticipation fogs the air as they await the final command to fire.

This is a normal day for the Soldiers of the Counter Battery Platoon of 1st Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment. The platoon, stationed at Forward Operating Base Mahmudiyah, supports the 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, and more recently, 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment.

“Some days are pretty boring,” said Sgt. Kevin Hoople, gunner for 1st Platoon, 1-320th FA. “We stand on call 24 hours-a-day, 7 days-a-week. As soon as we get a counter fire, the adrenaline starts pumping.”

In the past seven months, the Counter Battery Platoon has fired more than 100 missions to help deter terrorists. The platoon fires the most counter battery in the Baghdad area. Some days, the Soldiers have conducted up to five missions in an 18-hour period and fired as late, or as early, as 3 a.m.

“This is one of the hottest spots in Iraq right now,” he said. “Most of the artillery units are in Mosul, Striker and really big crowded cities. There are a lot more open spaces out here and more opportunity for the mortar guys to shoot – and a lot more opportunities for us to shoot.”

The Soldiers work tirelessly through 18-hour shifts and, even on their time off, stand ready to answer the call 24 hours-a-day. Throughout their shifts, they never know what to expect and when to expect the action. Because of this, they have to be on their toes.

“When we first started this mission, I wasn’t really sure how it was going to go,” said Hoople, who works in one of three sections with in the platoon.

“We were told we weren’t going to be doing a lot here. So far, it has turned out we actually have been doing a whole lot. We managed to shoot almost more rounds than our entire battalion did in the beginning of the war.”

He said since 1st Platoon arrived in Mahmudiyah, mortar attacks have decreased by 50 percent due to the counter fires and area-denial missions. The terrorists are not getting enough time to launch multiple rounds and are not as accurate due to the pressure the Counter Battery Platoon puts on its targets.

“I believe we have been making a difference through area denials,” said Staff Sgt. Jonathan Brown, platoon sergeant, 1st Platoon, 1-320th FA.

“There are a couple of areas out there that are heavy in insurgent activity. We have shot some area denials into that area and the activity ceases for a while. It slows (the terrorists) down and makes (terrorists) stop and think about attacking Coalition Forces because we know where they are.”

Area denial missions target known insurgent mortar sites, Brown said.

“What that is doing is limiting the terrorist’s advancement into that area,” he said.

“Our platoon shoots rounds into that area to let the terrorists know where they are. It lets the terrorists know we are here – and we are able to reach that area. It disrupts their movement.”

The Soldiers are doing great, Brown said. Every day, the platoon “tweaks” something. The Soldiers take a look at their counter-fire drills. They rehearse, and after every mission, the Howitzer Section conducts an after-action review to see if there is anything that can be done to make the team’s time faster and the drill more efficient.

“I think our platoon has done excellent,” Hoople said.

“This mission has been a godsend for these guys. This is the real dream of field artillery. You get the real effect of field artillery getting to shoot anywhere at anytime. This is what artillery is all about.”
Tarmiyah leaders discuss issues during Qada council

Story by Spc. Jason Thompson
4th Inf. Div. PAO

TARMIYAH, Iraq – Local tribal leaders of the town of Tarmiyah, located approximately 25 kilometers north of Baghdad, met at the post office here for a Qada council meeting April 22 to discuss issues and concerns within the community regarding safety, security and proposed community improvements.

Lt. Col. Rocky Kmiecik, commander, 1st Battalion, 66th Armor Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, has attended the weekly meetings since the beginning of February to discuss relevant topics with more than 25 sheiks from the Tarmiyah area.

“During the first few meetings, the leaders would constantly ask about security issues within the town,” he said.

“Recently, since we moved in and secured the town, the topics have focused more towards personal issues, such as helping the residents of Tarmiyah. Those issues are then discussed in the meeting so everyone can work together to try to solve the problems within the community, said Kmiecik.

“Among the issues discussed at the meeting were the securing and distribution of propane, fertilizers and school supply shipments, repaving of roads, reconstruction of the local Qada building and improvements for the medical clinic.

Other issues may be brought up to the U.S. Soldiers in the area, or to local leaders, by the government reestablish (itself) and making life easier for the people of Tarmiyah,” said Kmiecik.

“Working with the local leaders, it helps to instill trust in both the Coalition Forces and the government among the local Iraqis,” he continued.

“We are making impressive progress,” said Rumsfeld.

“It’s important to know that the people who are making the policies stand behind what they are trying to do – to know that they are pushing through with us, that they support us,” said Newell, a graduate of Illinois State University. Newell said that a visit from a dignitary like Rumsfeld also took the time to visit different tribes to meet in a peaceful manner to settle their own differences, said 2nd Lt. Timothy Middleton, platoon leader with Company A, 1st Bn., 66th Arm. Regt.

“(The Qada) is a group of individuals who have the community’s best interest at heart. We can learn from them what we can do to help the community get back on its feet,” he said.

RUMSFELD
CONTINUED FROM PG 1

Gen. J.D. Thurman, commanding general, MND-B, Rumsfeld also took advantage of an opportunity to observe U.S. forces training Iraqi soldiers.

“They are increasing in their capabilities every day. This is an exciting time to be here with the new permanent government of Iraq. They are making impressive progress,” said Rumsfeld.

“It was monumental to have the Honorable Mr. Rumsfeld here today to observe our Iraqi partner brigade honing their battle skills and to meet and eat with the fine Soldiers of the 4th BCT,” said Col. Michael Beech, commander, 4th BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

Rumsfeld also took the time to visit with Soldiers from 4th BCT to partake in a special luncheon at the King Cobra Dining Facility at FOB Prosperity. Command Sgt. Maj. John Moody, Jr., 4th BCT, hosted the luncheon for the brigade, allowing each of the battalions to select Soldiers to attend the special occasion.

“It is good for the Soldiers to see someone from Washington come down to show them that they appreciate what we do on a day-to-day basis here in Iraq,” Moody said.

Upon finishing his lunch with the Soldiers, who serve in south and central Baghdad, the Secretary of Defense energetically made his way from table to table, joining the variety of Soldiers, shaking their hands, posing for photographs and listening to their concerns. This time, he would ask the questions.

“How are you? Where are you from? What do you do?” he individually asked the more than 60 Soldiers, who joined him for lunch.

“It was interesting, very interesting,” said Pfc. Allah Johnson, a fuel specialist with Company C, 704th Support Battalion, a 22-year-old Detroit native. “I got a chance to see someone that you don’t usually see as a Soldier because we are out here doing our job.”

For 1st Lt. Casey Newell, platoon leader, Company A, 704th Spt. Bn., having the Secretary of Defense visit was an incredible boost to morale.

“It’s important to know that the people who are making the policies stand behind what they are trying to do – to know that they are pushing through with us, that they support us,” said Newell, a graduate of Illinois State University. Newell said that a visit from a dignitary like Rumsfeld reminds the Soldiers that they are all fighting for the same cause. “It’s nice to know that the leadership is behind us,” he said.

Operation Babil Perimeter

FOB KALSU, Iraq – Soldiers from an Explosive Ordnance Disposal team analyze artillery shells found in a cache near the town of Al-Hak during a raid led by the Iraqi army Friday. Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 8th Iraqi Army Division, took the lead, assisted by Soldiers from Company D, 2nd Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, and performed a raid in the town of Al-Hak during Operation Babil Perimeter early Friday morning. In total, IA and MND-B Soldiers discovered bomb-making materials, triggering devices, a 152mm round, a 132mm round, three 82mm rounds, two PKC machine guns, an RPG, a rocket-propelled grenade launcher with two RPG rockets, and a 57mm aerial rocket with an improvised launcher.
Soldiers sharpen marksmanship skills at Camp Liberty’s Caughman Range

Story and photo by Spc. Karl Johnson
363rd MPAD

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – The hard, flat ground braces him as he locks in on the small, dark figure in front of him. The early morning sun, already large in the sky, beats down on his position. As the slow, deliberate breaths entering and exiting his lungs relax his muscles, the front sight of his weapon steadies on his target. Gently, he begins to squeeze the trigger … and a resounding BANG! could be heard from miles around.

Soldiers from Company B, Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, spent a day sharpening their marksmanship skills April 17 at the Caughman Range here.

“We need to make sure all our Soldiers are qualified on their individual weapons per Army regulation,” said Chief Warrant Officer-2 Charles Conger, Company B, BSTB.

The Soldiers from the BSTB have a myriad of different types of military occupational specialties. The Company B Soldiers consist of intelligence analysts, unmanned aerial vehicle operators and several other combat support specialties.

“I would like to be helping the guys out there, but I consider myself lucky that haven’t had to fire my weapon while in country,” said Spc. James Weigl, military intelligence systems maintainer, Co. B.

Firing their weapons is not something these Soldiers do every day.

“The range provides Soldiers from throughout Camp Liberty the opportunity to zero and qualify with their weapons and gives them a chance to work on one of the most important basic Soldier skills. Rifle marksmanship has long been a deciding factor in the success of military units. An old military adage expresses that point explicitly: “There are only two types of people on the battlefield: marksmen and targets.”

For many Soldiers, a day at the range is a chance to train in an area they enjoy.

“One of the main concerns on the DAG representatives’ minds was the priority of spraying. Imad Lefta, Hillah mayor, voiced his concerns about the window of opportunity for the spraying to be most effective.

Due to the milder weather in southern Iraq, he said, the insects hatch sooner in some areas, requiring earlier spraying than in other areas. This is one of the considerations the team took into account as it developed the plan.

The group concluded the meeting by developing a prioritization of spraying by province and geographic area inside each province.

Date palm preservation is an economic opportunity for Iraq. The scheduled crop dusting is part of a larger Iraqi government program, which will provide jobs in farming, packaging and in the
Soldiers surprise students with free supplies

Children receive supplies, celebrate school opening with Iraqi army, MND-B Soldiers

Story and photos by Spc. Rodney Follette, 4th Inf. Div. PAO

BAGHDAD —

Soldiers from the Iraqi army and Multi-National Division – Baghdad surprised between 400-500 children of Al Hudaybiya Elementary School April 23 with free school supplies during a celebration to mark the completion of the school’s renovations in Bakaria, within the Gazaliyah neighborhood, located southwest of Baghdad.

Troops from 1st Battalion, 87th Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, visited the school they supported throughout the reconstruction project to distribute school supply packages.

Assisting them were soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 1st Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, in addition to Soldiers from Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 1st BCT, 10th Mtn. Div., and from Company A, 448th Civil Affairs Battalion, which is attached to 4th Infantry Division.

“We’re doing this to provide for the educational welfare of the people of Gazaliyah and the children of Al Hudaybiyah School,” said Capt. Mark Taum, a Honolulu native and team leader with Co. A, 448th CA.

Education and academics is a key line of operation civil affairs Soldiers focus on, which helps to improve conditions for the Iraqi people, said Taum.

“This application shows the village and surrounding people of Bakaria that despite the Iraqi soldiers, telling a U.S. Soldier, “It’s good,” before receiving his supplies. The Iraqi soldier patted the boy on his shoulder and returned his smile.

“It helps to show that the Iraqi army cares about the local population, the children, their safety and well-being,” said Armstrong.

Such events reassure the locals and helps gain their support in cleaning up their neighborhoods and making them safer, added Taum. The students represent Iraq’s future and events like this help reassure them of their government and provide hope for a better tomorrow.

“I am very happy because you fix our school and our country,” said Ali, a fourth grader at the school, through a translator. He also proudly held up his new school supplies, pointing excitedly.

The children put on a loud and boisterous performance which included the singing of the Iraqi national anthem for the Soldiers, and engaged Soldiers in conversation, high-fives, antics, smiles and laughter.

“Seeing and hearing the Iraqi children sing and show their appreciation is a benefit of doing these missions,” said Taum. “Having an event where the school officials and the Iraqi army work together sets the conditions for future humanitarian missions and greater cooperation.”

Imenea, a teacher at the school, expressed her thanks to the Iraqi government and the American Soldiers, adding that the children and teachers have more hope for the future.

“I was very glad by what happened today,” said Ghanim. “The neighborhood is very pleased about the renovations done on this school. This project will strengthen our bonds.

“I entered education because of my love of teaching and of the children. Those kids will grow up and they will be the future.”
Criminal Investigation Division agents work behind the scenes to ‘do what has to be done’

Story by Sgt. 1st Class Mary Mott
363rd MPAD

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq

They are the “shadow Soldiers,” working mostly behind the scenes – a combination of police detectives, secret service agents and forensic investigators. Their skills include photography, writing, reporting and a keen sense of handling difficult and complex interpersonal relationships that rival that of any Ph.D. in psychology – and beyond all of that, of course, they are Soldiers first.

Their roles vary from investigating crimes of a felonious nature committed against Soldiers and civilians employed on military bases, to guarding visiting members of the Department of Defense. Criminal Investigation Division agents serve both in uniform and in civilian attire, depending upon the missions.

They are sworn to uphold the law as it affects the military and enforce it fairly and without prejudice – and they take that job seriously.

Soldiers of the 481st Military Police Detachment (CID), 10th Military Police Battalion, currently stationed in Iraq have a varied and all-encompassing role.

On Camp Liberty, Forward Operating Bases Falcon, Kalsu, Loyalty and Prosperity, and the international zone, the small unit serves as both an investigative and protective service. CID services on adjacent Camp Victory falls under the 76th MP Detachment, also under the 10th MP Bns.

Unlike their role back home in either Germany or the U.S., the unit also investigates civilian crimes as well as crimes involving military members.

The unit is made up of roughly 15 agent-Soldiers in addition to Sgt. 1st Class Robert Billingsley, detachment sergeant, serving in the role of first sergeant, a chief warrant officer-3 who serves as the special-agent-in-charge and one full-time vehicle mechanic.

This is a small career field, with only about 900 CID military agents and roughly 2,000 total in CID worldwide – if you throw in civilians working at forensic laboratories and related fields.

Billingsley is typical of the Soldiers in his unit who have chosen CID as a career. An intense and dedicated man, the native of Banner County, Neb., said he believes the work of the CID is a vital one to the defense of his fellow Soldiers and his nation. Billingsley said he realizes that for a Soldier who steps outside the law, the CID can be seen as a “villain,” but simply because the individual accused of crime is a fellow Soldier, the charge cannot be dropped.

“The cost of not conducting the investigations is much higher,” he said. “We create a layer of transparency so the public can’t say to the Army ‘oh, you’re just covering stuff up.’ That is why we exist.”

The Army’s version of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Soldiers do not investigate a crime unless it is in the felony category. Misdemeanor crimes are investigated by MP Investigators.

Chief Warrant Officer 2 Melanie Hacker, one of two female investigators in the unit, originally entered the Army 10 years ago as an MP, but “CID was always my goal,” she said. Hacker recalled being profoundly affected by a college professor who was a CID agent and inspired her to make law enforcement her career.

Hacker, who hailst from Athens, Tenn., has been an agent for five years now and is a “team leader.” She teaches and clarifies the CID’s role in dealing with rape and other sexual-assault cases to students in the Army’s new Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program classes that train unit victim advocates. She also serves as a liaison and subject-matter expert with the newly formed Iraqi police version of the CID and convoys weekly to Baghdad to meet with Iraqi officials to confer on cases.

A great deal of the agent’s responsibility lies in “writing a good report,” said Billingsley. The ability to separate fact from fiction, then put it down on paper in an unbiased, cohesive manner, is a big part of the job. It has to be fair, accurate, thorough and give the commander and trial counsel a clear idea of what the case is against the Soldier, reiterated Hacker.

“We are fact finders – we don’t work for either side. On our oath, we are ‘deterred by neither fear nor prejudice,’ and we take that oath very seriously,” she said.

“Do what has to be done,” is another tenant of the CID. Being an agent “can be a lot of fun and very rewarding, but it is in some ways a thankless job,” said Hacker. “You have to view your rewards on a personal level because you don’t always get a ‘thank you’ from everyone.”

Agents are encouraged to take advantage of the many educational opportunities afforded them. Hacker has been to courses in child abuse prevention and intervention, crisis negotiation, detective service training and sexual-assault response services.

Agents have the opportunity to become a polygraph examiner and can apply for a Masters degree program in forensic medicine offered by George Washington University. Opportunities also exist to attend the prestigious FBI Academy.

Those who would like to apply to become an agent, but do not have the requisite six months of law enforcement experience, can perform on-the-job-training with a CID unit for six months to “evaluate and make sure that this career field is the right thing for them,” explained Hacker.

The CID school, conducted at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., is a six-week course. A new agent serves a one-year apprenticeship period but is “fully credentialed as an agent” during that time, said Hacker.

The agents investigate economic crimes, including contract fraud, which can take years to resolve, computer crimes, sabotage, sex crimes, counter-drug activities, child abuse, murder, suicide, arson and any other of a variety of felony matters. They attend autopsies and interview countless people in the course of their investigations.

“You have to be an approachable person,” stressed Hacker, because the work of an agent is intensely personal. “We are all ‘Type-A’ personalities,” she laughed, “independent thinkers.”

The “glamour side of the job” is the opportunity agents have to guard high-ranking Department of Defense leaders, said Billingsley, but most is routine police investigative work. Agents also are called upon to give testimony at Court Martial trials and in federal and civilian courts. See story on qualifications and how to become a CID agent in the next issue of the Ivy Leaf.
Missing Soldier’s parents donate 90 computers to help deployed Soldiers stay in touch with families

Story by Spc. Spencer Case
207th MPAD

CAMP ANAconda, Iraq — Troops at Logistical Support Area Anaconda now have two 24-hour computer labs thanks to the family of Sgt. Keith “Matt” Maupin, the only Soldier still listed as captured in the war on terror.

Maupin’s parents, Keith and Carolyn Maupin, of Union Township, Ohio, near Cincinnati, donated 90 computers with Webcams to help deployed troops stay in touch with loved ones.

The computers are now being used in three Matt Maupin Computer labs, the first of which opened at the BlackJack Education Center in September.

The two newest labs are located at the east and west Morale, Welfare and Recreation facilities on LSA Anaconda.

“(The labs) bring Mr. and Mrs. Maupin’s dreams to fruition,” said Staff Sgt. Matthew Stegmann of Missouri’s 35th Area Support Group.

“Today, fullfillment is achieved by the friends and family of Sgt. Maupin because today Mr. and Mrs. Maupin are enabling service members, currently stationed at LSA Anaconda, to make communications with friends and family members,” Brig. Gen. Rebecca Halstead, the commander of 3rd Corps Support Command and LSA Anaconda, spoke at both dedications.

“With each strike of the key someone is sending someone else a message that ‘I’m OK, I’m safe, I’m alright’ or ‘I’m not OK and need support,’” she said.

“And we can thank Sgt. Maupin’s mom and dad for making that happen for a lot of soldiers in the way they wanted it to happen for their soldier.” Halstead added that she applauds Maupin’s parents for “never giving up” hope. She also said that she carries a photo of Maupin in her notebook, reminder him.

Maupin, from Batavia, Ohio, graduated from Glen Este High School in 2001 with a 3.85 grade-point average. He joined the Army Reserve and was assigned to the 724th Transportation Company from Bartonville, Ill. Maupin arrived in Iraq in February 2004 with the 724th in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, where his unit’s primary mission was transporting fuel.

During phone calls home he complained that the computers provided for soldiers to e-mail family members were inadequate.

Maupin’s combat logistics patrol came under attack by small-arms fire near Baghdad International Airport on April 9, 2004, the anniversary of the fall of Baghdad.

After the attack, his official status was listed as “whereabouts unknown.” A video broadcast April 16, 2004 on al-Jazeera showed Maupin alive, sitting on a floor surrounded by armed men. His official status then changed from “Whereabouts Unknown” to “captured.”

Maupin’s family, community and the Army still hope he will be found a year and a half to two years after his capture. He has received two promotions since his capture, first to specialist, then to sergeant.

The three computer centers, with photos of Maupin on each desktop computer, will help keep Maupin in the hearts and prayers of troops at LSA Anaconda.

“On behalf of all the soldiers, I know we all appreciate having these computers,” said Staff Sgt. Kathryn Mudd, a multimedia illustrator with the 35th ASG.

“Sgt. Robert Koelling, a truck driver for the 35th ASG said, ‘It’s a perfect tool for family, friends, anybody, just to let them know you’re OK.’”

On August 28, more than 250 supporters gathered at the American Legion Post 72 in Mount Carmel, Ohio, to support the

Babil farmers use voice democracy to concern to city council

Story and photo by Cpl. Michael Molinaro
2nd BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.
FOB KALSU, Iraq

Farmers from the northern Babil province met with members of the Nahia city council April 29 at the General Culture Center in Iskandariyah.

Democracy was in full swing as the local farming community requested the meeting to discuss ways of re-implementing a co-op program with farmers’ unions throughout the region.

“The unions will act as liaisons between farmers and the Nahia council and Ministry of Agriculture,” said Lt. Col. James Howard, commander, 2nd Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division.

Members of the MOA and Irrigation Department were on hand to hear the concerns and appeals of the community. The Nahia city council represents residents of Iskandariyah, Haswah, and Halteen Apartments.

Under the previous regime, the co-op program flourished between farmers’ unions, allowing farmers throughout southern Iraq to resource among themselves and produce significant profits, said Capt. Carlos Badillo, information officer, 2-8 Inf.

If one farmer was low on seed and another was in need of a combine, through the farmer's unions they would be able to help each other out.

Things changed after the fall of the regime, and there is a sense of urgency to get the program up and running once again.

“Coalition Forces handed out items to my villagers,” said Sheik Emad Mohammed Talli Al-Gurtani. “Where was the government? How come they haven’t helped yet? Our elected leaders need to start helping their own people before we are all out of work.”

Farmers are not asking for large projects from the MOA, just long-term support, said one sheik in attendance. Farmers expressed a desire to the MOA to sustain them in their quest for newer farm equipment, a program to spray insecticides, and alleviating the cost of fertilizer.

“The price of fertilizer has skyrocketed,” he said. “If we don’t get any help, then a lot of us will be out of business,” he said.

The union will happen, said Sebah Khafaji, city council president. Groundbreaking is scheduled very soon for a new union building and a new water pump to facilitate irrigation in the area.

The local government has been feverishly attempting to gain the attention of the MOA, he continued. He said he felt their presence at the meeting was a positive sign that the farmers had been heard and soon another step towards improving the economy of Iskandariyah and surrounding areas would transpire.

This was a good first step in the process, said Howard. Everybody is committed to standing up the agricultural co-ops and seeing the economy blossom. Soon, it will become reality.
Soldiers, firefighters launch unique mass casualty exercise at Al Faw Palace

Story and photos by
Sgt. Kristin Kemplin
3rd BCT MPAD

F

CAMP VICTORY, Iraq –

ire-Station-One, one of two stations run by the fire department on Camp Liberty, is primarily responsible for protecting Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers.

To better protect MND-B Soldiers, the department volunteered to work with Multi-National Corps – Iraq to further the department’s expertise in a unique setting, the Al Faw Palace.

The firefighters of Heavy Rescue 621, Fire Station-One, together with Engine Company 611 of Fire Station-Two on Camp Victory, participated in a mass-casualty scenario organized by MNC-I.

Touted as “the MASCAL to end all MASCALs” by palace staff, Soldiers of MNC-I, working with Camp Liberty’s Fire Station-One firefighters, launched the exercise April 14 to test the effectiveness of policies and procedures that military leadership had put in place for emergency situations.

After conducting an internal mass-casualty exercise in January at the palace, military leaders felt the scenarios should be more complex and involve more emergency responders, said Maj. Kevin Titus, operations officer, Special Troops Battalion, MNC-I.

“We realized we needed to go that next step and involve the fire department, the troop medical clinics, the military police, and all the outside agencies that would actually be there in a real emergency,” said Titus.

Although the fire department, operated by Wackenhut Services Inc.’s WSI Fire and Emergency Services – Iraq, participates in military mass-casualty exercises on a quarterly basis, the department likes “to do different scenarios each time to test our capabilities,” said Stan Cole, fire chief, WSI, which encompasses Camps Victory, Liberty, Striker, Dublin and Cropper.

For MNC-I’s exercise, the department was given just enough information about the scenario “that we know what to bring, but we don’t know all the details so we still have to be reactive,” said Cole, a native of Atlanta, Ga.

The exercise at the palace began with reports that the structure had received several direct mortar hits and suffered numerous casualties. Aid and litter teams inside the palace rushed into action, diligently searching each floor for wounded Soldiers. Once casualties were discovered and treated, they were evacuated to a nearby casualty collection point.

To make the exercise more realistic, some casualties were taken by ambulance to troop medical clinics, and a few were transported to the Mercy Landing Zone in preparation for medical evacuation by helicopter to the combat support hospital in Baghdad.

Adding complexity to the exercise was the fire department HR team’s evacuation of a casualty from the palace roof. Upon receiving the report of an injured worker on the roof, trapped under a fallen structural beam, HR-621 climbed the ornate staircases leading to the top of the palace.

Those spiral staircases are very steep and very slippery,” said Titus. “In my mind, I was thinking (the firefighters) were going to have to carry the casualty down the spiral staircase in a litter. As soon as we got up there, they were like ‘hey, we could rappel him off of the roof’!”

Maj. Kevin Titus
operations officer
Special Troops Battalion,
Multi-National Corps – Iraq

“I was thinking (the firefighters) were going to have to carry the casualty down the spiral staircase in a litter. As soon as we got up there, they were like ‘hey, we could rappel him off of the roof’!”

Lt. William Mitchum (left), a native of Islamorada, Fla., and Firefighter Jesse Walsh, of Portland, Ore., both of Heavy Rescue 621, carefully lower a litter cradling a casualty, represented by 200 pounds of rubber fire hose, off the roof of Al Faw Palace April 14. Walsh walked the litter down the 70-foot face of the building to waiting emergency personnel on the ground.

Joseph Harris (left) and Jason Lech, firefighters with Heavy Rescue 621, secure ropes during a rope-rescue mission at Al Faw Palace April 14. The mission was to lower a casualty from the roof of the palace to the ground, 70 feet below.
With retention bonuses topping $6 million for reenlistees, Combat Aviation Brigade proves it can ...  

Soar beyond expectations  

Story by Sgt. 1st Class Reginald Rogers Combat Avn. Bde. PAO  
CAMP TAJI, Iraq – After being given a mission to reenlist more than 400 Soldiers, the Combat Aviation Brigade Retention Office completed its mission in late April and is now focusing on its Fiscal Year 06-07 mission. The team of career counselors and battalion retention NCOs has retained a total of 469 Soldiers and secured more than $6 million in bonus money for these Soldiers to lead the 4th Infantry Division’s brigades in total dollars. According to CAB Career Counselor Staff Sgt. Roy Williams, closing out the deployment mission is a big accomplishment for the brigade, which received a mission that was twice the size of its garrison mission. “I think it’s very significant,” he said. “It shows the hard work and dedication of the career counselor team and the team of retention NCOs we have, to finish the mission halfway through the fiscal year. It is a very stellar performance.” Williams said the brigade had a mission of 401 Soldiers, many of who reenlisted to receive a tax-free bonus that in some cases amounted to more than $22,000. “Right now we’re at $6.1 million and counting,” he explained. “Our Soldiers are very happy. They’re happy with being able to do their jobs and having extra cash when they return home.” He pointed out that in addition to the bonuses all of the Soldiers’ entitlements received focusing on its Fiscal Year 06-07 mission. Freedom 2005-07 are also tax-free. He said that means many Soldiers could return home with thousands of dollars in the bank. Williams also added that the Eagle Brigade was the division’s first major brigade to close out its mission. He pointed out that the Special Troops Brigade had also finished it mission, which was significantly smaller than the CAB’s. “That shows the type of leadership and the Soldiers we have,” Sgt. 1st Class Jacynthia Hinton, the CAB’s senior career counselor said. “It also shows the enthusiasm of the reenlistment NCOs about completing the mission and the drive and initiative that the career counselors have.” Hinton said her office is now turning its focus to its fiscal year ’06 and fiscal year ’07 missions. For the Fiscal Year 2006-07 expiration of term of service mission, which is separate from the retention mission, the CAB has a requirement of reenlisting 140 more Soldiers. Those with ETS dates between October 1, 2005 and September 30, 2007 are targeted. It currently needs 35 Soldiers in the FY06 ETS category and 82 soldiers in the FY07 ETS category for overall mission completion. As for the bonuses, both career counselors agreed the additional bonus of $7,500 has ended as of April 30, but Soldiers are still eligible to receive the $15,000 that they are entitled to throughout the deployment. “The $15,000 will be here until December 31, 2006 or until the Army runs out of money to award for bonuses,” Williams said. 

A helicopter pilot communicates with a crew chief before taking off on a mission April 12. AH-64D Longbow Apache helicopter pilots from 4th Infantry Division’s Combat Aviation Brigade have flown more than 13,139 hours while conducting aerial security, recon and ground-support missions since arriving in Iraq. The brigade has reenlisted 469 Soldiers since deploying in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom in November 2005. 

Fires battalion brings Easter cheer to Zafarania Girls Orphanage  

Story and photo by Maj. James Lowe  
506th Inf. Regt., PAO,  
101st Abn. Div.  

BAGHDAD – An excited group of young girls from the Zafarania Girls Orphanage received an extended visit from 26 Soldiers from the 4th Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, as well as units within the 506th Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division, April 16. The Fires battalion sponsored the event. The Soldiers worked hard to get selected to make the trip to the orphanage. When they heard what a difference spending time with the girls would make, the Soldiers were ready. Donations flowed in from the United States from churches as well as from Soldiers’ families and friends, and totaled more than one-hundred boxes. Soldiers also chipped in to add more food and drinks. “Spreading the love to the girls by sharing clothes, toys and the Easter egg hunt really made the event special,” said Capt. Jimmy Major, chaplain, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 4th Bn., 320th FA Regt.  
“My wife, Greta, my brother Todd’s youth group, my sister Julia, my son’s girlfriend Cara along with their family and friends sent eleven boxes of donations. Their hearts went out to the girls at the orphanage.”  
“I felt like they treated me like their mother. It was unexpected that they were so comfortable with us as we communicated mainly with signs and facial expressions,” said Sgt. Gliona Hernandez, human resources specialist, HHC, 506th Inf. Regt.  
The setting included green grass, beautiful cool weather, and twelve young girls who live at the orphanage. Events included an Easter egg hunt with over 300 eggs, a wonderful meal, gift giving from the donations sent to Iraq and even some special dancing. “It was like an oasis amidst the poverty and desperation,” said Chaney. The beauty of the grounds with the lush grass and the flowers was striking and we all felt how precious the girls were, he added. The key to giving is giving to someone who cannot give something tangible back – but these girls did give smiles, laughter, and shared dancing and fellowship. For the Soldiers, the experience of sharing with the girls shone in their own faces. The Sisters who care for the girls were very gracious and set the tone with loving kindness. “I realized how much we are alike in so many ways by spending the afternoon hunting Easter eggs with the girls,” said Spc. Leah Bentzen, human resources specialist, HHC, 506th Inf. Regt.  
“The girls and the nuns were so excited. They even brought us a little bit of home by singing a Christian song in English,” said Spc. Charles Joseph, HHB, 4th Bn., 320th FA Regt.  
“It was a very enjoyable experience for both the girls and my Soldiers. It was a great way for the Soldiers to spend their Easter if they had to be away from their families,” said Lt. Col. Kevin Milton, commander, 4th Bn., 320th FA Regt.
So, you don’t know jack about joe?

Here’s the scoop on the health benefits of drinking coffee (and other caffeinated beverages)

For many years people have wondered and worried about whether or not drinking coffee could be bad for their health. Based on numerous studies completed over the last few years scientists are now reaching a consensus that, taken in moderation — less than 20 ounces a day — coffee is not only safe, but healthy for most people to drink. Here are some considerations relevant for Soldiers that consume coffee.

Hydration in Moderation.
It is important to stay hydrated while exercising and drinking coffee prior to working out will not lead to dehydration. For years we have assumed that drinking caffeinated beverages will lead to dehydration, because caffeine can promote increased urination. However, during exercise our bodies release enough of the hormone adrenalin to blunt the diuretic effect of caffeine. After exercise it would be best to re-hydrate with non-caffeinated beverages to assure a quicker post-workout recovery.

The bottom line is, don’t be concerned if you drink coffee in moderation. Caffeinated coffee consumption, up to three cups a day, will not lead to any significant levels of dehydration. To assure good hydration status, you must monitor how much and how often you urinate, and check the color of your urine. When you are well-hydrated, urine should come out clear or pale yellow.

Antioxidants – Health Food in a Cup.
One of the interesting concepts emerging from recent research is that coffee can actually be thought of as a form of “liquid health food.” This concept starts to make sense if you view it from the perspective that coffee is derived from beans which, in general, are usually good for our health.

There is more to coffee than just water and caffeine. Hundred of compounds are leached from the coffee beans during processing. One of the compounds found in substantial amounts is magnesium, which may help our bodies regulate blood sugar levels. This may be why heavy coffee drinkers seem much less likely to develop adult-onset type 2 diabetes.

Other compounds found in high amounts in coffee are polyphenols, a class of antioxidants that may help our bodies fight off cancer and other diseases. The best sources of these antioxidants are berries and fruits. Since the average American does not consume large quantities of fresh fruit and vegetables, java is easily the largest source of antioxidants in our diet.

The Caffeine Connection.
Caffeine is the most widely-used drug in the world and its stimulant effects account for why coffee, tea and sodas are the most popular beverages consumed.

Caffeine enhances alertness, concentration, and memory. It can also enhance physical performance for endurance athletes involved in vigorous aerobic activity lasting half an hour or more. This is one reason why high doses of caffeinated drinks are banned by the International Olympic Committee.

Caffeine is used by the mainstream medical community to help treat asthma and migraine headaches, and is a component of Anacin®, Excedrin Extra Strength®, Midol® and Dextarin®. It is also the main component of No-Doze®, Vivarin® and various “trucker” pills.

It is commonly used by students cramming for tests and over-the-road truck drivers trying not to fall asleep at the wheel. Some health-conscious types even take coffee enemas so that the caffeine can relieve constipation and help stimulate colon cleansing.

However, caffeine is even being embraced by the U.S. Army in the form of “Stay Alert Caffeine Supplement Chewing Gum.” This is like getting a stick of Joe, and has the caffeine equivalent of a six-ounce cup of coffee. However, since it is absorbed through sublingual tissues in the mouth, it gets caffeine into the blood faster than a pill going through the stomach and intestines. For those that need to stay sharp during continuous combat operations, this may be the best delivery method available to help soldiers stay alert and stay alive.

Caffeine use may also be beneficial in preventing Type II diabetes, gallstones, kidney stones, depression, Parkinson’s disease, and other medical conditions, though the jury is still out on recent studies supporting these conclusions.

The Dark Side of Coffee Consumption.
Despite the many positive consequences of drinking coffee in moderation, there are some adverse effects that can occur, especially when consumed in excess. Too much caffeinated coffee can make people nervous and jittery, lead to insomnia, panic attacks, heartburn, elevated blood pressure and rapid or irregular heartbeats.

Caffeine is a mildly addictive stimulant and can cause significant withdrawal when abruptly stopped in about 15 percent of people who use it regularly. Withdrawal symptoms include headaches, fatigue and drowsiness.

Used at high doses, caffeine may contribute to miscarriage and low birth weight babies so women who are pregnant or trying to get pregnant should decrease their coffee and caffeine consumption.

Unfiltered coffee may contain cafestol, a substance that can significantly increase blood cholesterol levels.

The Bottom Line.
Most of the negative consequences of drinking caffeinated coffee only occur when a person drinks too much of it. The alchemist Paracelsus got it right when he said “the dose makes the poison.” Too much of anything, even water and vitamins, can be dangerous.

On the other hand, drinking coffee in moderation is perfectly safe, and probably quite healthy in ways we are only beginning to understand. So if you drink coffee in moderation, don’t feel guilty. Just sit back, relax and enjoy a nice healthy cup of Joe.

To learn more about the beneficial effects of caffeine read the 2001 Institute of Medicine article: “Caffeine for the Sustainment of Mental Task Performance Formulations for Military Operations”
Support company takes top honors in competition

Story and photo by Spc. Allison Churchill
Fires Bde. PAO, 4th Inf. Div.

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq — After a week of early morning races and other physically challenging events, the Fires Brigade’s 324th Network Support Company claimed top honors in the brigade’s Iron Gunner Desert Fitness Competition, which took place April 24-27.

The Soldiers were presented with the “Commander’s Cup” April 29 at a rooftop ceremony held at the Fires Brigade’s headquarters building.

The Soldiers of 324th NSC claimed one of the top three spots in three of the five events.

The four-day competition kicked off April 24 with a torch-lighting ceremony at Fires Brigade headquarters. The brigade’s best athletes on Camp Liberty gathered to welcome torch bearer Pfc. Katrina Wiltz, 324th NSC, the brigade’s Soldier of the Quarter, as she presented the flame to the top enlisted Soldier, Command Sgt. Maj. Gilbert Canuela.

An Army Physical Fitness Test competition immediately followed the opening ceremony.

Each of the brigade’s units sent their top athletes to compete on the course next to Z Lake. After the push-ups, sit-ups and run were over, Sgt. Oscar Delgado from Headquarters Company, Fires Bde, took top honors in the NCO competition after muscling his way to 88 push-ups, 81 sit-ups and the two-mile run in 13 minutes, 11 seconds, earning 298 points.

Pfc. Andrew Giddens, 324th NSC, won the junior-enlisted competition with 75 push-ups, 1 sit-up, and finished his two-mile run in 13 minutes, 24 seconds, earning 294 points.

As with the other events, first place in each event earned the team 15 points, second garnered 10 and third 5, said Sgt. 1st Class James Herron, 324th NSC, the event organizer.

In the next individual event, a weightlifting competition held April 25 at the Scorpion Morale, Welfare and Recreation center, Soldiers earned points for the number of repetitions in lifting 75 percent of their body weight and how many pull-ups they could do.

Staff Sgt. Mark Taylor, Company A, 589th Support Battalion, won the NCO competition, lifting 140 pounds 47 times and completing 19 pull-ups.

Pfc. Julian Ming, Company B, 589th BSB, was the winning Soldier, lifting 145 pounds 56 times and completing 18 pull-ups. It was the only event that the 324th NSC Soldiers didn’t place in.

“The company is full of young, energetic Soldiers, but under the pressure of the bench press, they didn’t fair very well,” said 1st Sgt. Allen Braswell, 324th NSC.

The Soldiers of 324th NSC placed second in the final three events en route to their overall victory.

The Iron Gunner Relay, held April 26 in a small field near 324th NSC headquarters, required teams of four to team up as one team member could carry a teammate 50 meters, switch positions, and have the remaining teammates do the same.

After the buddy carry, all four team members ran the 50 meters to liter carry another teammate to the starting point. Once there, the four Soldiers sprinted back to the other point where two picked up water jugs, carried them a lap, and then passed the water jugs to their teammates. When the water jugs were back to their original location, the team ran back to the starting point and performed 10 four-person push-ups.


Capt. Samuel Burns, 1st Sgt. Hubert Ervin, and Pfc. Samuel Smith, Company A, 589th Brigade Support Battalion, took first in the Guidon Relay, held April 27 around Z Lake. The team completed two miles in 12 minutes, 5 seconds. The Guidon Relay required each unit’s first sergeant and commander to each run half a mile, and the third Soldier to run a mile.

Battery A, 26th Field Artillery, won the last event, the Sandbag Relay, also held April 27 in the same field as the Iron Gunner Relay. Sgt. Joseph Massey, Spc. Michael Constancio, Pfc. Michael Probst and Pvt. Cody Purrell moved 20 sandbags from one pallet to another pallet fifty meters away in 48.89 seconds.

When all scores were totaled, 324th NSC claimed top honors with 45 points, HHB and Co. A, 589th BSB tied for second place with 40 points each, and Co. B, 589th BSB and Btry. A, 26th FA tied for third with 35 points.

“Initially, the strategy was just to show up and have fun,” said Braswell on his team’s success-filled venture. “As the games went on, the points mounted and the competitiveness grew stronger.”

Soldiers said they were glad to have something different to wake-up to.

“I think it’s a great break from the daily rigors of doing maintenance on trucks and going on convoys,” said Probst.

“The Commander’s Cup winners agreed.

“Got us out of the normal routine,” said Spc. Anthony DeLuca, a member of 324th NSC’s Sandbag and Iron Gunner relay teams.

The Desert Fitness competition was part of a series. Each month a different Fires Brigade unit is tasked with organizing a competition.

In the first event, held in February, Pfc. Rachael Nadeau, HHB, proved her knowledge of operations and intelligence, scoring highest on a test designed by Fires Brigade S-2.

In March, Sgt. Matthew Edmonds, HHB, and Spc. Daniel O’Dell, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 589th BSB, showed off their weapons’ knowledge in a competition organized by HHB, placing first in both the Soldier and NCO positions.

Upcoming Band Events:

May 16 Woodwind Quintet: DeFlurrey DFAC @ 11:30 a.m.

May 19 Tuba & Euphonium: DeFlurrey DFAC @ 11:30 a.m.

May 23 Brass Band: Blizzard DFAC @ 11:30 a.m.

May 26 Brass Quintet: Ironhorse Oasis DFAC @ 11:30 a.m.

May 30 Tuba & Euphonium:Ironhorse Oasis DFAC @ 11:30 a.m.

MAY Division MWR Calendar

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<th>MON</th>
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<td>Texas Hold’em</td>
<td>V Corps Rock Band</td>
<td>Karaoke Night</td>
<td>Salsa Night</td>
<td>R&amp;B</td>
<td>Flag Football Tourney</td>
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<td>Jazz/Old School Card Night</td>
<td>Chess Tourney &amp; Dominoes</td>
<td>Karaoke Night</td>
<td>Softball School’s Mfg.</td>
<td>Reggae Night</td>
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<td>Closest to the Pin</td>
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The Reserve Component to Active Duty Program is designed to allow enlistment of mobilized Army Reserve or Army National Guard Soldiers into the Regular Army. RC Soldiers with less than 18 years active service may apply to transfer from the RC to the RA anytime within six months of their projected demobilization or release from active duty date.

Additionally, soldiers who have out-processed from the demobilization site but are granted leave en route to their parent unit, or who are on terminal leave, may also apply for enlistment in the RA under policy prior to the end date of their leave since they have not yet been released from active duty. Soldiers who apply at the mobilization station will be placed on special orders extending them on active duty until the application is processed.

If a RC soldier is the recipient of an enlistment or reenlistment incentive and is in the process of fulfilling the service obligation required by the incentive, the Soldier will be notified that the unearned portion of the RA.

Grade determination is not required for mobilized RC Soldiers. These soldiers will be enlisted into the RA at their current rank. Once a Soldier enlists in the RA, the Soldier will remain with their current deployed unit until it redeploys to the demobilization station, then the Soldier will receive permanent change of station orders to the new duty station.

The following is a list of required documents needed in the application process:
1. RC to AC application;
2. DD Form 368;
3. copy of all mobilization orders;
4. copy of all DD 214 (certificate of release or discharge from Active Duty);
5. DA Form 1059 (service school academic evaluation report) “NCOES validation”;
6. DA Form 705 (Army physical fitness test scorecard) height/weight;
7. DA Form 3349 (physical profile);
8. Enlistment Records Brief or Personnel Qualification Record (DA Form 2-1); (9) DA Form 1506 (statement of service – for computation of length of service for pay purposes); and (10) most recent physical (less than five years old).

To assist you in this process before you apply for enlistment in the RA, please read the most frequently asked questions. All applications will be forwarded by the Soldier directly to Human Resources Command via Email to RCAC@hoffinan.army.mil.

For further assistance contact your RC Counselor, Master Sgt. Bass, and Sgt. 1st Class David Porter; via e-mail at donna.bass@mnd-b.army.mil; or via phone at DSN 847-2265/2552 or VoIP 242-4115.

Frequently asked questions

Q: What does the Soldier need to do after contracting in theater, so the Soldier’s pay will not be affected?
A: No. The Soldier will not contract in theater; any contract signed in theater will be null and void. Soldiers must wait until reaching the demobilization site to sign the enlistment contract.

Q: Can the Soldier take leave en route to the next duty location?
A: No. The Soldier will be granted 15 days of permissive temporary duty to clear home station and prepare for their next duty assignment.

Q: Can the Soldier remain in theater while the contract is signed?
A: The Soldier has the option of not remaining in theater determined by the installation.

Q: Can the Soldier request a specific unit of assignment?
A: No. The Soldier will be assigned in accordance with the needs of the Army.

Q: Can the Soldier remain mobilized with their reserve component unit until that unit’s mission is complete?
A: No, the regulation states that no favorable actions can be given to flagged Soldiers.

Q: Can flagged Soldiers participate in the RC to AC program?
A: No, the regulation states that no favorable actions can be given to flagged Soldiers.

Q: What is the estimated turn-around time for the RC to AC process?
A: Upon receipt of the complete application, the process takes approximately 21 days.

Q: What is the term of the enlistment for the RA?
A: The minimum is three years.

Q: What is the estimated turn-around time for the RC to AC program?
A: No. The Soldier has the option of not signing the enlistment contract to participate in the RC to AC program.

Q: Can the Soldier’s rank or grade be changed if the Soldier is promoted in his or her Reserve or National Guard unit after the RC to AC contract is signed?
A: No. The rank and grade the Soldier is when the contract is signed will remain the rank and grade the Soldier will be on active duty.

Q: Can Active Guard and Reserve Soldiers apply for the RC to AC program?
A: No.

Medical lanes training

Date/Time: May 31 from 7 a.m. to 11 a.m.
Location: Camp Liberty next to the Ironhorse Oasis DFAC
Who: Any CLS or 91W may attend

Your team may be a maximum of 5 members; please come with a team name

Only 10 teams can participate so act fast!

How: To register your team contact

Staff Sgt. Davis at:

Christopher.davis@iraq.centcom.mil
Or christopher.davis@mnd-b.army.mil
May 14, 2006

Culture Experts

“No tree has more honor than that under which (the virgin) Mary, daughter of Imran delivered her child.” – The Prophet Muhammad

At the time of this writing, a large multi-million dollar Coalition Forces-sponsored program is underway to spray some 75,000 hectares of Iraqi date palms in southern and central Iraq in a fight against the infamous pest known as the dubas bug. One reason that such a large effort is being put into a single crop is, of course, that it is the most important cash crop in Iraq. Another is that the date palm, botanical name Phoenix dactylifera, has a major historical, cultural and religious significance to the people of Iraq.

Many experts around the world – and all Iraqis – believe the current count of varieties, more than 400 different kinds of date, to have originated in Mesopotamia where evidence has been found of cultivated palm trees dating to 4,000 B.C. The date palm and its fruit were revered in several ancient cultures, but it is the Arab culture that has always held it in greatest esteem. The nomadic Arabs of Iraq and the Arabian Peninsula have, for thousands of years, depended on the date palm for irrigation. It has unique characteristics that enable it to thrive in sand and to grow in areas with long, dry summers and mild winters, where it is dependent on man for irrigation. It has unique characteristics that enable it to thrive in sand and to grow well where water is close to the surface without being aquatic.

In Iraq, with its sandy soil and abundant water, plentiful sun and mild winters, it is hardly surprising that Iraq was once not only the world’s largest producer of dates, but was famed as the producer of the world’s finest dates as well. In fact, most strains of the date, including the fruit, is also used to produce excellent animal feed, sugar and cooking oil. The fronds and trunks are used to weave baskets and build homes. In fact, no part of the date palm tree goes to waste.

During the holy month of Ramadan, Muslims traditionally break their fast with dried dates soaked in warm milk. In many Arab countries, including Iraq, young men will stand on street corners offering passers-by dates at the time of the breaking of the fast (iftar) as an act of charity to those who were unfortunate not to be at home at the time.

In modern times, the date palm occupies such a place of honor among Arabs that the Saudi Arabian Royal house of Saud have adopted the palm tree and crossed swords as the symbol of their dynasty. The date palm has adapted to areas with long, dry summers and mild winters, where it is dependent on man for irrigation. It has unique characteristics that enable it to thrive in sand and to grow well where water is close to the surface without being aquatic.

In Iraq, with its sandy soil and abundant water, plentiful sun and mild winters, it is hardly surprising that Iraq was once not only the world’s largest producer of dates, but was famed as the producer of the world’s finest dates as well. In fact, most strains of the very best of the world-famous California dates were imported from Iraq in the 19th and 20th centuries. Needless to say, Iraqi date palms are a great source of pride to the Iraqi people.

In the 1950s, the date palm population of Iraq was approximately 32,000,000 trees. Today the number of Iraqi date palms is no more than 15,000,000, many of which are afflicted with the dubas bug and other pests, which greatly reduce their yield.

It is very important to give the date palm the attention it needs in order to nurse back to health what is not only a major economic food crop, but also an important symbol of the Iraqi national identity.

Of Dates and Dubas: The fight to preserve the Iraqi date palm

By Jake Lester, Senior cultural and political advisor

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RELIGIOUS SERVICES, AA MEETINGS, AND MANDATORY R&R BRIEFINGS

VICTORY CHAPEL SERVICES, BLDG 31
Sunday
7 a.m. to 8:45 a.m.
Traditional Protestant Worship
10:30 a.m. Roman Catholic Mass
3 p.m. Protestant Music Service
9 p.m. Traditional Protestant Worship

Monday
9 a.m. Contemp. Protestant Worship
10:30 a.m. Roman Catholic Mass
2 p.m. Mormon Worship
5 p.m. Episcopal/Lutheran Worship
6 p.m. Contemporary Protestant Service

Tuesday
7 p.m. Gospel Study
7:30 p.m. Bible Study
8 p.m. Alcoholics Anonymous

Wednesday
6:30 p.m. Bible Study (Women)
7:30 p.m. Choir Rehearsal
12 p.m. Islamic Prayer
6 p.m. EML Chaplain’s Briefing
7 p.m. Bible Study
8:30 p.m. Protestant Music Rehearsal

Thursday
6:30 p.m. Catholic Mass
10 a.m. Contemporary Protestant Service
12:30 p.m. Bible Study
6:30 p.m. Contemporary Worship Service
7:30 p.m. Praise Band Rehearsal

Friday
7 p.m. Women’s Gospel Bible Study
7:30 p.m. Episcopal/Lutheran Worship
4 p.m. Mormon Worship
10 a.m. Protestant (Pad 6, Tent 410)
6 p.m. LDS Bible Study

Saturday
9 a.m. Seventh-Day Adventist Worship
11 a.m. Adventist Church Meeting
11 a.m. Contemp. Protestant Worship
4 p.m. Orthodox Worship
3 p.m. Gospel Worship Service
10 p.m. EML Chaplain’s Briefing
6 p.m. Bible Study

Sunday
7 a.m. LaGom’s Meeting
1:30 p.m. Protestant Gospel Prayer Meeting
3 p.m. R&R – Reunion and Suicide Intervention Briefs
7 p.m. Gospel Protestant Bible Study

ENGINEER CHAPEL
Sunday
8 a.m. Roman Catholic Mass
10 a.m. Traditional Protestant
11:30 a.m. Lutheran Worship
1 p.m. Latter Day Saints
7 p.m. Traditional Protestant Worship

Thursday
7 p.m. LDS Bible Study
7 p.m. LDS Bible Study

TUESDAY
7 p.m. Bible Study
7 p.m. LDS Bible Study

Thursday
7 p.m. Bible Study
9 p.m. Prayer & Praise
10 a.m. Reunion & Suicide Brief

WARRIOR CHAPEL
Sunday
9:15 a.m. Roman Catholic Mass
10:30 a.m. Contemporary Protestant
12:30 p.m. Gospel Protestant
5 p.m. Latter Day Saints
7 p.m. Non Denominational Christian

Wednesday
7 p.m. Gospel Prayer Service
7 p.m. General Protestant

Friday
6:30 p.m. Wicca Circle Meeting

DIVISION CHAPEL
Sunday
9 a.m. Contemp. Protestant Worship
10:30 a.m. Roman Catholic Mass
1 p.m. Episcopal Worship Service
3 p.m. Gospel Worship
8 p.m. Collective Protestant Worship

Monday
6 p.m. EML Chaplain’s Briefing
8 p.m. Bible Study

Tuesday
7 p.m. Praise Band Rehearsal
6 p.m. EML Chaplain’s Briefing
7:30 p.m. Bible Study

Wednesday
6 p.m. EML Chaplain’s Briefing
7 p.m. Bible Study
8 p.m. Alcoholics Anonymous

Thursday
6:30 p.m. Bible Study (Women)
7:30 p.m. Choir Rehearsal
12 p.m. Islamic Prayer
6 p.m. EML Chaplain’s Briefing
7 p.m. Bible Study

Saturday
7 p.m. Bible Study (Men)
8 p.m. Contemporary Protestant
8:30 p.m. Protestant Music Rehearsal

CAMP STRIKER CHAPEL
Sunday
9 a.m. Catholic Mass
10 a.m. Contemporary Protestant
10:30 a.m. Protestant (Pad 6, Tent 410)
11:15 a.m. Traditional Protestant
4:30 p.m. Protestant
6 p.m. LDS
7 p.m. Praise Service (Gospel)
7:30 p.m. Praise and Testimony (Pad 6, Tent 410)

Monday
9 a.m. Catholic Mass
6 p.m. LDS Bible Study
7 p.m. Prayer/Bible Study
7:30 p.m. Prayer/Bible Study (Pad 6, Tent 410)

Tuesday
5 p.m. Purpose Driven Life
7 p.m. Praise Choir Practice

Wednesday
7 p.m. Catholic Mass
6 p.m. LDS Bible Study
7 p.m. Prayer/Bible Study
7:30 p.m. Prayer/Bible Study (Pad 6, Tent 410)

Thursday
5 p.m. Praise Prayer Service
7 p.m. Praise Choir Practice

Friday
9 a.m. Catholic Mass
11:15 a.m. Catholic Mass (TOC Conference room)
7 p.m. Catholic Mass (TOC Conference room)

Saturday
6:45 p.m. Men’s ‘Purity’ Bible Rehearsal
6 p.m. Roman Catholic Music
8:30 p.m. Protestant Music

Sunday
7 p.m. Gospel Choir Rehearsal
1:30 p.m. Protestant Gospel
10 a.m. SGM’s Meeting

The Day of Pentecost

Chaplain’s Corner

“When the Day of Pentecost had come, they were all togeth-
er in one place. And suddenly from heaven, there came a
sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire
house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire,
appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them.
All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak
in other languages. as the Spirit gave them ability.” Acts 2:1-4

We, as Christians, celebrate the birth of Jesus and all the
world pauses to celebrate Christmas. We celebrate the death
of the Christ who would come from death and the whole world
to celebrate Easter.

However, on June 4, we will celebrate another major festival in
the church year about which very little is ever made men-
tion. In fact, it does not get the fanfare or the “hype”
that Christmas and Easter have

Pentecost, two loaves were
prayer that the Holy Spirit
in the church, because it is the
coming of the promised Holy Spirit. It is, in fact, the birthday
the coming of the promised Holy Spirit. It was a
festival holiday in which no work was done and the streets
of Jerusalem were filled with people celebrating.

The Hebrew word for wind is “ruach.” This is the same
wind or spirit of God that moved across the face of the
depth in the beginning of cre-
ations; this is the same spirit
of God that empowered those
who raised Jesus Christ from
out of slavery in Egypt and into
the promised land.

Pentecost has its roots in the
Jewish festival year. In
Biblical times, there were three great Jewish festivals which
every male Jew who lived with-
in 20 miles of Jerusalem was

5th Engineer Battalion
of God that empowered those
God-fearing Jews in Jerusalem
go forth out into the world and
to proclaim the greatness of
God. This is the same spirit of
God that lives and works
throughout the ages in the lives
of believers everywhere.

However, on June 4, we will celebrate another major festival in
the church year about which very little is ever made mention.
In fact, it does not get the fanfare or the “hype” that Christmas and Easter have
Pentecost, two loaves were offered to God in gratitude for the harvest, and then at
Pentecost, two loaves were offered to God in thanks for all the grain gathered. It was a
festival holiday in which no work was done and the streets of Jerusalem were
filled with people celebrating.

The Hebrew word for wind is “ruach.” This is the same
wind or spirit of God that moved across the face of the
deep in the beginning of cre-
ations; this is the same spirit
of God that led the Hebrew people
out of slavery in Egypt and into
the promised land. This is the
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who raised Jesus Christ from
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Sunday, it an agricultural signi-

tance in that it commemorated
the giving of the law to
Moses on Mount Sinai. Second, it had an agricultural significance in that at Passover,
the first portion of the grain had been offered to God in gratitude for the harvest,
and then at Pentecost, two loaves were offered to God in thanks for all the grain
gathered. It was a festival holiday in which no work was done and the streets
of Jerusalem were filled with people celebrating.

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Victory Base Open Circle

MAY 14, 2006

The Ivy Leaf

Chaplain (Capt.)
John Sutton, Jr.
5th Engineer Battalion

“Pentecost is a major festi-
val in the church, because it is
the celebration of the com-
ing of the promised Holy Spirit.
It is, in fact, the birthday of the
church. The coming of the Holy
Ghost was foretold by several
of Christ’s predecessors,
including John the Baptist and
John the Beloved. Pentecost has
its roots in the Jewish festival
year. In Biblical times, there
were three great Jewish festivals
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Victory Base Open Circle

Mets every Friday at 6:30 p.m., Warrior Chapel, Riva Ridge.
The Topic on May 19 will be “Witchcraft and the Nocturnal
Tradition” and on May 26 it will be “The Pentagram/Pentacle:
What it means to us.” The group also has special monthly rituals.
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/VBOC_Baghdad/
FORWARD OPERATING BASE O’RYAN, Iraq – When Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, had a local national truck turn over right outside their FOB early the morning of May 4, they responded to a call for help. As they searched through the wreckage of toilets and shower units that had spilled out of the truck, they found a bonus – four cases of Royal Horse Scottish whiskey. Led by 1st Lt. Michael Miller (right), Company D, 1-8 Inf., 3rd BCT platoon leader, the unit smashed the bottles; behind Miller is Staff Sgt. Timothy Schuschar, section leader, 1-8 Inf., 3rd BCT. 1st Lt. Miller is the son of Lt. Col. Jack Miller, provost marshal on Victory Base Complex, one of whose major tasks is, coincidentally, to locate and destroy illegal stores of alcohol. The senior Miller joked “we are kind of the Elliot Ness family in Iraq.”

The military judge sentenced him to reduction to E-1 and a bad conduct discharge.

He was convicted of disobeying a noncommissioned officer, violating General Order Number 1, failure to report to guard mount and sleeping on guard duty.

The military judge sentenced him to reduction to E-1 and a bad conduct discharge.

The Central Criminal Court of Iraq.
The Central Criminal Court of Iraq hears cases involving Iraqis or foreign nationals who are accused of committing crimes against the Iraqi people or Coalition Forces. Most of the convictions are based on the testimony and information Soldiers provide at the point of capture. The results of some CCCI cases for the month of April 2006 are summarized below:


He was convicted of receiving and possessing child pornography.

The military judge sentenced him to reduction to E-1, confinement for 15 months and a bad conduct discharge.


He was convicted of possessing illegal weapons.

The military judge sentenced him to reduction to E-1 and a bad conduct discharge.

Iraqi Court Convictions

Central Criminal Court of Iraq.

The Central Criminal Court of Iraq hears cases involving Iraqis or foreign nationals who are accused of committing crimes against the Iraqi people or Coalition Forces. Most of the convictions are based on the testimony and information Soldiers provide at the point of capture. The results of some CCCI cases for the month of April 2006 are summarized below:

1. A Multi-National Division – Baghdad unit captured multiple detainees September 21 who, while in their vehicle, attempted to avoid a CF patrol. A search of their vehicle revealed weapons, which included SA-7 systems (surface-to-air missiles), a mortar bipod, 12-gauge primer rounds and AK-47s.

The detainees were charged with, and convicted of, possession of illegal weapons. Each detainee was sentenced to seven years in Iraqi prison.

2. An MND-B unit in conjunction with the Iraqi Army captured multiple detainees on June 15, 2005. The detainees belonged to a cell of insurgents known for kidnapping, murder and extortion. Money extorted from the kidnappings was used to fund the operations of Al Qaeda in Iraq. The detainees were charged with, and convicted of, organizing and joining an armed terrorist organization for the purpose of stopping and delaying the laws execution, and disturbing the national security and stability in the country.

Each detainee received a life sentence, which is the equivalent of 20 years in Iraqi prison.

3. An MND-B unit captured a detainee on December 14 during a raid on the senior leadership of the Revolutionary Ghadab Brigade associated with Al Tawhid Al Jihad. The detainee admitted to “repairing” cars for the RGB with full knowledge that it was a terrorist organization, recruiting individuals for Al Tawhid and using a forged citizenship identification card.

The detainee was charged with, and convicted of, organizing, heading, leading or joining armed groups.

He received a life sentence, which is the equivalent of 20 years in Iraqi prison.

4. An MND-B unit captured a detainee October 22, 2004, after finding weapons in his residence, which consisted of AK-47s, pistols, 9-milimeter ammunition and body armor. The detainee was charged with, and convicted of, possession of illegal weapons.

He was sentenced to one year in Iraqi prison and a 50,000 dinar fine.

$ Pay Attention $

230th Finance Battalion
“Always There and Ready”

SFC Austin A. McLaughlin
Internal Control NCOIC, 230th Finance Battalion

Eagle Cash Stored Value Card

The EagleCash card will be landing by mid-June at the Liberty Complex, Life Support Area Anaconda, and Camp Speicher. Soldiers can enroll in the program and receive their card during the bulk enrollment period scheduled for June 1–10 (see specific location enrollment schedule below).

Similar to a debit card, the EagleCash card allows the cardholder to transfer a monetary value on the card and then, as each transaction takes place, the value on the card is debited.

To better facilitate the enrollment process it is recommended that Soldiers complete the EagleCash card enrollment form prior to seeing a representative at one of the bulk enrollment sites.

Once value has been stored on the EagleCash card, it can be used at the post exchange, post office, and local vendors located throughout Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, and Afghanistan that are affiliated with the Army Air Force Exchange Service. There are no fees or interest incurred for using this card. Another important benefit of the EagleCash card is the ability to recover funds that are stolen or lost.

If a service member loses cash, it is gone; however, with the EagleCash card, the service member simply goes to the finance office immediately and has the card turned off. The remaining money on the card will then be placed on a new card. At the end of tour you may also receive a cash refund for any value remaining on your card.

Another convenience of the EagleCash card is the ability to use a kiosk. The kiosk is an ATM-like machine that allows a service member the ability to perform transactions on their card 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week without having to visit the finance office and wait in line. Using the kiosk allows a service member to transfer value directly from the bank account of their choice to their card. No checks or casual payments are required! Funds can be loaded to the card or unloaded from the card into your bank account.

Funds can also be transferred between two cards and the kiosk can also be used to check the balance remaining on your card.

Service members need not worry about the security of their EagleCash card because you will have the ability to select your own Personal Identification Number, which is entered into the kiosk to process a transaction and can be changed at any time at the kiosk.

The EagleCash card and the kiosk will be a convenient, simple and fast way for service members to manage their money without the need to carry large sums of cash and without having to wait in long lines at the finance office.

**Bulk Enrollment Schedule:**

**Jun. 1:** Victory Dining Facility (during Lunch and Dinner meal period).

**Jun. 2:** Liberty Dining Facility (during Lunch and Dinner meal period).

**Jun. 3 – 4:** Liberty PX (10 a.m. – 4 p.m.).

**Jun. 5:** Slayer Dining Facility (during Lunch and Dinner meal period).

**Jun. 6:** Striker Dining Facility (during Lunch and Dinner meal period).

**Jun. 7:** Cafe de Fleurry (during Lunch and Dinner meal period).

**Jun. 8:** Riva Ridge Dining Facility (during Lunch and Dinner meal period).

**Jun. 9:** 4th Inf. Div. headquarters.

**Jun. 10 – 11:** Victory PX (10 a.m. – 4 p.m.).

Notice: Finance offices one-day closure
All finance offices throughout the Multi-National Division – Baghdad, Multi-National Forces – Iraq and Multi-National Forces – West footprint will be closed May 28, in order to upgrade to the new Deployable Disbursing System, version 2.31. Normal office hours will resume May 29. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause.
In 2005, Sadr City received fresh drinking water for the first time in more than eight years. Since that time, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has finished many other water projects for the city.

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\[\text{Photo courtesy of Gulf Region Division}\]

Road improvements near completion in Sadr City

The Al Tahreer Company of Baghdad has a $942,350 contract to repave 5,300 meters of roadways on Shaeed, Dakhell and Abu Thar Streets in Sadr City. The project started Oct. 30 and is scheduled for completion some time in May. Formerly known as Saddam City, Sadr City has always been a low-income section and is among the most impoverished in the country.

200,000 in Abu Ghraib receive electricity

About 200,000 residents of the Abu Ghraib neighborhood of Baghdad now have electricity with the installation of more than a mile of feeder line from a substation. Throughout Iraq, the U.S. Corps of Engineers has added 1,366 mega watts (each mega watt equals one million watts) to the grid. This has increased power generation to 1,240,000 homes and improved electricity distribution to approximately 220,000 homes to date.
Sports Roundup with “Josh the Mensch” by Sgt. Joshua Middleberg
363rd MPAD

Sports reflections and “Uncle Troy” – The full-meal extra value deal, extra condiments column

**The Astrology of Soldiers: What your ‘Earth sign’ says about you**

By Nancy Anderson 
Astrologer  
Waukomis, Okla., the Spirit of America

This issue we will feature the “Earth signs.”

**Taurus (Apr. 20 – May 20).** The bull. Ruled by the planet Venus, a fixed earth sign and a material protector. A Taurus Soldier is usually his or her “ownboss,” and much like the bull they are proud, stubborn and ready to fight for their pasture lands. They are healthy and do what is natural for them, and that is to protect and hold on to their territory. Taurus Soldiers are patient and dependable and if they commit to teaching another Soldier a skill, they will stick with it until that Soldier has truly learned the skill, not just skimmed the surface.

**Virgo (Aug. 23 – Sep. 22).** The virgin, ruled by Mercury. A mutable earth sign; marked by material sensibility and a mental bent. Virgo Soldiers are everywhere. They can perform in any military occupational specialty. They are behind the desk, knee deep in paperwork, in supply rooms, driving trucks, directing troops at the highest levels. They never seem to stop. Virgo Soldier can easily separate the “wheat from the chaff” and are good at assessing the abilities and strengths of their fellow Soldiers. They are known as “never tiring,” and can be relied upon to get the job done.

**Capricorn (Dec. 22 – Jan. 19).** The goat. A cardinal earth sign ruled by the planet Saturn. Capricorns are material leaders. The Capricorn, like the goat, is the “never tiring” and can be relied upon to get the job done. 

ESPN’s Top 30 Sports Movies of All-Time

20. When We Were Kings (1996).  

– Courtesy of espn.com
BAGHDAD – Spc. John Ruiz, 1st Platoon, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, waves goodbye to students at Al-Widha Primary School for boys and girls after a ribbon-cutting ceremony April 25. The newly renovated school has been in the Al Rasheed district since 1958 and was used as a polling site for the December elections.


ABOVE: CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Maj. Hugo Silva, 16th Engineer Brigade battle captain, and an Iraqi army soldier stationed at Camp Taji, find common ground while comparing flat bread and tortillas during a stop at an Iraqi army bakery at Camp Taji. Civilian bakers prepare the flat bread daily by hand and bake it in a brick oven at the site’s bakery for the Iraqi army soldiers. Maj. Silva and other 16th Engineer soldiers visited the base to tour previously completed and upcoming engineer projects for the Iraqi army base and also attended the Iraqi army Engineer School Jundi graduation April 20.

RIGHT: TARMIYAH, Iraq – A pair of Iraqi policemen patrol with Soldiers from Company A, 1st Battalion, 66th Armor Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, near a marketplace along the streets of Tarminiyah April 21. The Soldiers of Company A conduct multiple patrols through the town on a daily basis to help reassure the local citizens that both Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces are working together to keep Tarminiyah secure.

Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Tracy L. Ballog, 16th Eng. Bde PAO

Photo by Spc. Jason Thompson, 4th Inf. Div. PAO