



Marne Focus

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Supporting Soldiers in MND-Center



Photo by Sgt. Tierney Nowland
Combat Camera

A Soldier from Company B, 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) from Fort Drum, N.Y., checks for snipers in the area while performing a foot patrol in Rushdi Mulla, Iraq in support of finding three missing Soldiers May 17. (See story page 6)

Soldiers kill terrorist, seize weapon



Spc. Doug Coleman, Company A, 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) from Fort Drum, N.Y., shows the sniper rifle seized during a combat operation May 19 in Al Taraq.

Story and photo by Staff Sgt. Angela McKinzie
2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI) Public Affairs

AL TARAQ – Coalition Forces took a dangerous terrorist and his weapon off the streets of Al Taraq, Iraq during a combat operation May 19.

Soldiers from Fort Drum, N.Y.’s, 1st Platoon, Company A, 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) thwarted a possible sniper attack during an air assault looking for evidence of three missing U.S. Soldiers who were abducted by terrorists May 12.

“While searching the area we were notified that there were two terrorists with weapons who were near our location,” said Staff Sgt. Jon Eyton, a 4-31 fire support noncommissioned officer. “One of them positioned himself on a berm waiting for us to walk by. He would have killed one of us.”

After the terrorists were positively identified, they were shot by Apache fire.

“As soon as the Apache fired, we searched the area to see if the terrorists were killed and to look for any weapons in the area,” Eyton said.

During the search an semi-automatic sniper rifle and a magazine full of 7.62mm ammunition was found by one of the Company A Soldiers. The unit also confirmed one of the terrorists was killed.

“It is good to get the sniper rifle off the streets and away from the terrorists,” said Spc. Doug Coleman, a team leader with the company, and the Soldier who found the weapon. “I am sure that same rifle would have been used on one of us during the mission.”

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Realizing sacrifices for country, honoring those who serve

Soon, we will pause in remembrance of America's war dead. The tradition of Memorial Day is 139 years old. And just like we do at home we will honor the heroes that fell, in battle, for our nation and our freedom.

This Memorial Day has special meaning. I believe that every member of our Task Force has an even greater understanding of the sacrifices made in light of recent and tragic sacrifice.

Words alone are insufficient to show our appreciation to those whom we honor on Memorial Day. We must also demonstrate our enduring love.

"I will never leave a fallen comrade behind." These are not just empty words carved on a dog tag worn around our necks. It is the expressed commitment to our fellow Soldiers, their families, and our American people that we now embody.

As you all know, all across the Task Force, Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines have been working around the clock to locate three Soldiers from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division.

They have been missing since May 12, when insurgents attacked one of our patrols west of Mahmudiyah. The attack also killed five Soldiers, one of whom was an Iraqi army soldier.

This has been a trying time for the families of these Soldiers. Right now, five families are grieving the loss of a son, a husband, or a father. As I write this, another three families are left with an unfathomable emptiness and uncertainty.

Their only comfort right now is that their loved ones have comrades, thousands of them, searching through farmlands and buildings, and ditches and canals.

The stamina of our search teams is impressive. Only true love of brothers in arms is sustaining them. Make no mistake we will never leave a fallen comrade behind. We will always search. We will always hope.

There have been hundreds of hours of aviation support. Working dogs have trudged the toughest of terrain around the clock. Mountains of supplies have been moved by our magnificent logisticians. Our men and women have pushed themselves past exhaustion in order to find our men.

There have been hundreds of detainees. The Iraqi population have cooperated by providing tips and intelligence. We will follow every lead until we accomplish our mission.

On this and every day, remember our fallen and live our commitment. I ask that you now continue to pray for those who are missing. May God bless them and our Task Force.

ROCK OF THE MARNE!



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2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division
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Every Soldier a leader, mentor for Iraq's security, leading to future success

What a great day to be a noncommissioned officer in the Army – trainers, executors and leaders of troops. No other army has an NCO corps like ours. However, as we train the Iraqi army to win, we will do so by building up their NCO corps.

Every day our Military and Police Transition Teams, seasoned veterans, are out with the Iraqi army, patrolling the streets, living with them and teaching them what right looks like in our eyes. Then the Iraqi army takes our tactics, techniques and procedures and tailors them to meet their needs.

We are currently acting as observer controllers, very similar to the training that takes place at the National Training Center, in Fort Irwin, Calif., and the Joint Readiness Training Center in Fort Polk, La. Our initial role was to train the IA soldiers on how to take the fight to the enemy, maintain standards and implement values in their work ethic. Now, we have taken a step back, and are advising while they execute.

I've seen a major difference since Operation Iraqi Freedom III. The IA understands that terrorists exploit weakness and a lack of standards can be seen as a weakness. Now at checkpoints, Iraqi soldiers are standing at the ready, with the right gear on and cognizant of their surroundings. Repetition is the key. The more they take the lead and do what's right, the more confident they will be, and the less assistance they will need from us.

We're trying to train ourselves out of a job. We're doing that by putting the Iraqi army and police out front to show the Iraqi people that they can feel safe under their protection.

The Iraqi army made a major step in bridging the gap between their officers and NCOs by hosting the Iraqi Army Command NCO Symposium, May 19-20. Myself along with the other multi-national division level command sergeants major were on hand to answer questions at the symposium.

It was a Coalition Forces and Iraqi army event with participation from the Multi-National Corps Iraq Commander Lt. Gen. Raymond Odierno and Command Sgt. Maj. Neil Ciotola along with the Iraqi Ground Forces Commander Lt. Gen. Ali and Command Sgt. Maj. Qassim, who are equivalent to our chief of staff and sergeant major of the Army.

Within the next six months, the IGF will host and lead another symposium to discuss the NCO and officer relationship. For this symposium one, the duties of the non-commissioned officer were a major part of the discussion. In the past, the officers in the IA were in charge of training. The seeds we want to plant are that NCOs should be the primary trainers, the ones responsible for the morale and welfare of the troops. This will allow the officers to focus on strategy and battlefield operation. A strong NCO corps could be what it takes to get us back home.

A diverse corps of professionals that work together regardless of religious or other sectarian lines. Fearless individuals who will stand together and fight for their comrades in arms. Leaders who perform pre-combat checks and inspections, to decrease unnecessary and preventable accidents. That is the role of the NCO corps, and that what the finished product should look like in the IA.

Training the Iraqi army to win is our goal, and by building its backbone it will soon stand ready to defend its country and people from all who wish it harm.

ROCK OF THE MARNE!



Command Sgt. Maj. Jesse L. Andrews, Jr.

Chief Warrant Officer Julio Hall, a supply systems technician with the 210th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) is helped into a padded bite suit by military police officers. (Clockwise from left) Then Hall is chased down and tackled by military working dog 'Wandor' during a demonstration at Camp Striker, Iraq.



MP dogs make hard work look like play

Story and photos by Spc. Chris McCann
2nd BCT PAO, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI)

CAMP STRIKER — The terrorist is quiet during the search, letting Sgt. Harold Corey pat him down all along one side. But when Corey gets to his right hip, the terrorist shoves at him. It's less than a second before Wandor's huge mouthful of teeth is clamped around the terrorist's arm and Corey is out of danger, telling him "away!" to make him release the man's arm.

It's just a simulation and a chance for Wandor to play; "the terrorist" - actually 1st Lt. Timothy Owens, the executive officer for Company A of the 210th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) - is just trying out the "bite suit" used by dog trainers.

But even playing, Wandor, a Belgian Malinois shepherd, can take down a grown man in seconds, running at 30 miles per hour and exerting 1,400 pounds per square inch of bite pressure. When a military working dog is in the field at work, he is a formidable force.

"It was really cool," said Owens, a native of Corpus Christi, Texas. "It was surprising how the dog looks so lean, but one twist, and he took me down. They're a great asset for enforcement and detection."

Corey, a native of Newport News, Va., has been working with dogs for three years now with the 529th Military Police Company based out of Heidelberg, Germany.

"I enjoy it," Corey said of the practice session, which was attended by several 210th BSB Soldiers. "It's never not exciting to watch a dog take someone down."

The 2nd BCT, based at Camp Striker, Iraq, has several attached handlers with dogs that accompany brigade missions every day.

Sgt. 1st Class Michael Hart, a native of Syracuse, N.Y., and the BCT's provost marshal, explained that most of the dogs that work with the brigade are trained to seek explosives. But they are also adept at combat tracking. While a human usually requires hearing two shots to pinpoint the direction of origin, dogs can point to the

origin after only one shot - a skill that is critical when a sniper is shooting. Once the dog finds the shooter's hiding place, he can track the person and even pick him out of a lineup.

There are also patrol narcotics dogs, said Hart, used during health-and-welfare inspections of troops, and dogs trained to seek bodies.

The dogs are well-trained and well kept, Hart explained.

"They have veterinary coverage twenty-four seven," he said. "And there's medical evacuation coverage as well, just like there is for humans. They're out there risking their lives too - it's only fair."

And while the handlers haven't had to 'let slip the dogs of war' for take-downs, the animals have provided very tangible benefits for the brigade, sniffing out explosives and weaponry.

"They're a force multiplier," said Corey. "They can do the searching of five or six Soldiers and do with their nose what a Soldier has to do by prodding and digging. They make the job easier."

Corey said that Wandor has found several weapons while helping on cordon-and-search missions.

"He finds weapons in houses even before the homeowners turn them over to us. Instead of having to move everything in a house, he just sniffs around, and when he finds something, he sits. Then we just have to move one thing to get to the weapons."

Don showed his prowess at finding pieces of detonation cord hidden in the 210th BSB's supply yard, hunkering down as he caught a whiff of explosive and then sitting as soon as he found the source.

All of the hard training works, Corey explained, because the dogs think of the job as a game.

"A dog is like a five-year-old child," he said. "To get a kid to do something, you make it fun."

The object of the game for Wandor - as it is for almost every other military working dog - is a beehive-shaped rubber toy called a Kong. If he finds explosives, he gets to play. Corey explained that the dogs are trained to un-

derstand that finding the object of their search might take awhile, but if a mission is fruitless for too long, he's prepared with a piece of detonation cord.

"I'll hand it to someone else and ask them to hide it for me," Corey said. Wandor can then find the cord and win some quality time playing with his Kong before moving on and continuing the quest.

"I always carry training aids to refresh his interest," said Corey.

After being bitten through the padded bite suit, Chief Warrant Officer Julio Hall, a native of Grafton, N.H., and a supply systems technician with the 210th BSB, said he had more respect for the dogs' power and for the capabilities they provide against terrorists.

"The dog took me down right away," he said. "The dog itself is pretty intimidating. If I was an insurgent, I'd be petrified."

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Getting the rifle off the streets will help to make the 4-31st Battalion's area of operations safer.

"Sniper fire has been one of the problems in the surrounding area," Eyton said. "Hopefully this will help keep the guys in the surrounding areas safe."

The Soldiers appeared on Fox News for their heroic acts and were all complimented on a job well done.

"These guys did an excellent job - they were very professional and worked hard," Eyton said of his Soldiers.

"This massive search for our Soldiers is having some positive second and third order effects," said Maj. Web Wright, spokesman for the BCT. "We are finding weapons and many of the suspects wanted for terrorist and criminal acts not necessarily related to the abduction."

The weapon will be analyzed to see if it had been linked to previous incidents within the area of operations.

Maintaining UAV takes teamwork

Story and photo by Sgt. Kevin McSwain
3rd Inf., Div., PAO

KALSU, Iraq—What looks like toys in the hands of Soldiers from Company B, 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 10th Mountain Division, attached to 4th Brigade, 25 Infantry Division becomes one of the most mission essential pieces of equipment in Iraq.

“We maintain and operate tactical unmanned aerial vehicles,” said Spc. Michael Whaley, a generator mechanic for the unit. Whaley, who is also a crew chief for the UAV, said each member of the unit was chosen because of their special skills.

“As a generator mechanic I am familiar with the function of the engine on the aircraft,” he said. “I am able to perform routine maintenance or fix a malfunction to ensure the craft is mission capable.”

Whaley, who is from Mansfield, Ohio, is just one small part of a large puzzle that enables this sophisticated piece of equipment to fly. Members of the crew rely on each other to complete missions.

Cpl. Carlos Salmanca, the noncommissioned officer in charge of UAV maintenance, said his military occupational specialty allows him to impact the team in several ways.

“As a system integrator and maintainer, I learned about different types of shelters for military intelligence equipment and computer networking,” he said. “These skills are helpful in building and establishing an operating structure for the operation of the air craft.”

Salmanca said he is also qualified to work on the system used to control the vehicle. As crew chiefs, Whaley and Salmanca are responsible for loading and launching the aircraft.

“This is our baby until it takes off from the launch pad,” Whaley said. “We are responsible for every part of the bird while it is in our care.”

Once launched, another part of the crew takes control of the mission.

“We are responsible for flying the aircraft to the proper altitude at the start of the mission, and landing it at the end,” said Spc. Timothy A. Elkins, an unmanned aerial vehicle operator.

Elkins said operators are qualified to fly the aircraft or operate the camera system.

“We work as a team,” he said. “Everyone has a responsibility and each job is important



Spc. Michael Whaley launches an unmanned aerial vehicle during an operation in support of Task Force Marne Soldiers.

so we must communicate to ensure everything is running smooth.”

Each part of the team goes through extensive training before becoming a part of a UAV crew.

“As an operator, I went to school for 26 weeks,” Elkins said.

Members of the flight crew must attend their individual advanced training and then attend additional training, which is specific to the UAV.

“Our training continues here when we are not conducting a mission,” Elkins said. “We rehearse emergency situations and scenarios we have encountered in past missions.”

Salmanca said being part of the crew is a rewarding experience.

“We don’t go out on convoys regularly or conduct cordon and searches, but we provide a visual of the area of interest for the command group,” he said. “It feels good to know we are able to help our guys be safer out there.”

The San Antonio native said he feels that his role is vital to the success of missions.

“We have become an integral part of combat operations, he said. “Our job is to help commanders make better decisions about operations on the battle field.”

Artillery fire provides security around the clock

Story and photos by Sgt. Kevin McSwain
3rd Inf., Div., PAO

KALSU — As darkness slowly creeps across the sky, the moon fails to make an appearance as if knowing what lies ahead for the night.

This would appear to be a wise choice for the Soldiers from Battery A, 2nd Battalion, 377th Parachute Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25 Infantry Division as they prepare for another night of operations.

“We conduct fire missions,” said Capt. Matthew Thompson, battery commander. “We do anything from illumination to counter-fire missions. We own the night.”

Thompson, who is from Panama City, Fla., said the unit has been in Iraq for more than seven months.

“Our operational tempo keeps the Soldiers busy,” he said. “We are conducting missions around the clock.”

In addition to providing fire support during the night, the battery also provides a team that conducts combat operations during the day.

“We have a maneuver element in addition to our fire element,” Thompson said. “So we conduct combat patrols as well as support forward operating base defense.”

Soldiers in the unit understand the importance of their missions and take pride in knowing that they are providing security for everyone on their operating base.

“It feels good to be doing my job here,” said Pfc. Ryan Chambers, an assistant gunner. “Our missions help ensure the safety of everyone in our area.”

Chambers, who has been in the military less than two years, said that constant training has made him confident in his ability to complete any mission.

“We have trained hard for this mission,” he said. “I had a lot to learn once I completed advanced individualized training, and my unit has made it easy for me to gain experience and become an important part of the team.”

Chamber, from Charleston, S.C., said that communication is very important during their operations.

“Communication is important in any mission,” he said. “It is more important to us because we operate in complete darkness and everyone must know what is happening.”

In addition to talking to each other on the site, the Soldiers must stay connected to the operations center to ensure they are on target.

“We make sure the fire team has the proper munitions for the mission,” said Pfc. Walter Umland, a radiotelephone operator. “We calculate the distance and desired affect and tell them what they need.”

Umland, who has been an RTO for two weeks, said that the job is challenging but has many benefits.

“I have really had to pay attention to what I am told,” he said. “I am responsible for relaying information from observers on site to our operators. Being able to see how

the other side of a fire mission operates has helped me understand how everyone working together to accomplish the mission.”

The Battery A crew is very confident in their ability to support any mission needed during their deployment.

“We are able to respond quickly,” he said. “Each Soldier in Iraq has a job to do and we are doing our part to make sure our mission is completed every night.”



A Soldier from Battery A, 2nd Battalion, 377th Parachute Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25 Infantry Division verifies fire coordinates during a night of operations.



U.S., Iraqi troops search for comrades

Coalition spread tip-line, offer reward for information of missing troops

Staff Sgt. Angela McKinzie
2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI) Public Affairs

YUSUFIYAH, Iraq – A massive search has been ongoing since Saturday after three U.S. Soldiers disappeared outside Yusufiyah, Iraq just 20 miles south of Baghdad. They are believed to have been abducted by terrorists.

The Soldiers, all of Company D, 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment - known as the “Polar Bears” - of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) from Fort Drum, N.Y. They were discovered missing after a complex attack which killed four other U.S. Soldiers from the unit and one Iraqi army soldier.

The Soldiers, who were working to interdict improvised explosive devices, were ambushed with explosives and small arms fire at around 4:44 a.m. local time west of Yusufiyah.

The attack demonstrates the way in which insurgents operate without regard for human life and the future of their Iraq or its citizens,” said 1st Lt. Jared Miranda, a native of Chester, N.J., who serves as a fire support officer with 4-31. “And it should serve to strengthen our resolve to accomplish the mission here for the Iraqi people.”

Since the attack, nearly 4,000 coalition and Iraqi forces have been searching day and night for the missing Soldiers after immediately cordoning off the area. An influx of interrogators, interpreters and other assets are being used in the search.

“We are using every resource we have available to find these Soldiers,” said Maj. Gen. William Caldwell, the commander of Multi-National Corps-Iraq. “Tips are coming in, and they are leading to operations against targets of interest.”

“We have been conducting day and night foot patrols searching anything from houses to fields,” said Sgt. Monte Robertson, a 4-31 team leader and native of Denton, Texas. “I know they (the missing Soldiers) are out there and they deserve to be brought home. I hope for the best and that they are found soon.”

Along with searching the surrounding areas of the attack, Soldiers have been routinely communicating with Iraqi citizens and passing out reward flyers for any information leading to the missing.

“I have seen a lot in my time, but I have never seen anything like this before,” said Sgt. 1st Class Del Rodriguez, a native of Burney, Calif., who serves as a 4-31 Military Transition Team Leader who knew one of the Soldiers killed in the attack. “It’s horrifying ... This really shows you how precious life is.”

Soldiers of the unit had mixed emotions about the assault.

“Honestly, this makes me upset,” said Spc. Stephen Brininger, a personal security detachment gunner with the 2nd BCT and native of Alpena, Mich., who knew two of the Soldiers who were killed. Taking a deep breath, he said, “We just really need to find these guys ... We need to find them.”

The attack not only affected U.S. Soldiers, but Iraqi soldiers as well.

“We are doing our best to find the Soldiers,” said Sgt. Yassl, a 4th Battalion, 4th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division squad leader. “We (the IA soldiers) and the American Soldiers are like brothers and I want to find them.”



Staff Sgt. Angela McKinzie
2nd BCT PAO, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI))

Soldiers of the 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) out of Fort Drum, N.Y., search fields and reed lines May 14 in Rushdi Mullah, Iraq, for three missing U.S. Soldiers. The Soldiers were believed to be abducted by terrorists after a complex attack May 12 in Yusufiyah, Iraq.

Spc. Chris McCann,
2nd BCT PAO, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI))
(Top left) A U.S. helicopter drops reward leaflets over a village south of Baghdad, May 14. The leaflets, bearing tip-line phone numbers and information about three Soldiers missing after an ambush west of Mahmudiyah, were dropped over villages in the area to encourage local residents with information about the Soldiers to tell coalition forces their whereabouts.

from **SEARCH**, page 6

A MiTT squad leader said the Iraqis have been invaluable in the search.

“They have been guiding us through areas that we are unfamiliar with and gathering information from the Iraqis,” said squad leader Staff Sgt. William Scott, a native of Jacksonville, Fla. “They are angry this has happened and their search efforts have been going pretty strong since the abduction.”

“This just goes to show the terrorists are watching everything we are doing,” said Capt. Chris Vitale, Co. B commander with 4-31 and native of Washington, Penn. “They have their eyes on us and are looking for times to attack.”

A message posted on the same jihadist site which announced that the Islamic State of Iraq had captured the Soldiers told search-

ers to stand down.

“Your Soldiers are in our grip. If you want the safety of your Soldiers, then do not search for them,” the post said.

A military spokesman for the 2nd BCT commented about the threat.

“We are not calling off the search,” said Maj. Web Wright, a native of Annapolis, Md. “As Major General Caldwell has emphasized, we will never leave a fallen comrade. No matter how long it takes, we will bring our Soldiers home. We’re leveraging everything we have into this fight, and we’re going to bring them back.”

“They are out there and it is just a matter of time until we find them,” Robertson said with confidence. “But we will find them.”

“We need to catch the terrorists who did this and kill them,” Yassl said. “We will bring them to justice.”



Sgt. Tierney Nowland,
Combat Camera

Pfc. Ryan Edmond and his fellow Soldiers from Company A, 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) from Fort Drum, N.Y., clear a house in hopes of finding three of their missing comrades in Al Thobat, Iraq, May 18.



Sgt. Tierney Nowland,
Combat Camera

Spc. Douglas Coleman, a forward observer from Company A, 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) from Fort Drum, N.Y., holds a gate down as an Iraqi army medic from the 4th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division jumps over it in Al Thobat, Iraq, during a joint effort to locate three missing Soldiers May 18.



Staff Sgt. Angela McKinzie
2nd BCT PAO, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI))

Soldiers of the 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) out of Fort Drum, N.Y., search Iraqi homes May 14 in Rushdi Mullah, Iraq, for three missing U.S. Soldiers. The Soldiers were believed to be abducted by terrorists after a complex attack May 12 in Yusufiyah, Iraq.

Soldiers’ Creed

I am an American Soldier.

I am a Warrior and a member of a team. I serve the people of the United States and live the Army Values.

I will always place the mission first.

I will never accept defeat.

I will never quit.

I will never leave a fallen comrade.

I am disciplined, physically and mentally tough, trained and proficient in my warrior tasks and drills. I always maintain my arms, my equipment and myself.

I am an expert and I am a professional.

I stand ready to deploy, engage, and destroy the enemies of the United States of America in close combat.

I am a guardian of freedom and the American way of life.

I am an American Soldier.

Staying in touch keeps home fires burning

Story and Photo by Spc. Ben Hutto
3rd HBCT Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE HAMMER – For many Soldiers leaving for Iraq meant more than leaving their home. It meant leaving behind a spouse. It meant leaving behind children. It meant saying goodbye.

Whatever the circumstance, deployments pose unique challenges to marriage that the average married couple doesn't have to deal with.

"In the book of Deuteronomy it says that it was Jewish law that men were not allowed to be deployed their first year of marriage," explained Chaplain (Capt.) Anthony Randall, the squadron chaplain for the 3rd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment. "Of course, we don't operate like that now, but there is an important principle we can take from it. Couples need to come together in mind, body and spirit before they leave one another."

For 1st Sgt. Demetrius Brown, of Company F, 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment, this is his fourth deployment away from his wife, Valinda, and their three children. Brown tried to get his married Soldiers time with their families before they left for Iraq.

"Before we left, I made sure that they had time to strengthen their ties with their spouses and encouraged them to spend as much time as possible with their families," he said.

Brown said he understands how hard it is to be away from family, but he wants Soldiers to understand that separation comes with the job of being a Soldier.

"It's tough," explained Brown. "There is no doubt about that, but that is why it is important to make the most of the time you do have."

Leaving family

Sgt. Marsha Vega, the non commissioned officer in charge of 3-1 Cav.'s computer support section, was forced to leave her husband behind after only being married four months.

"My husband is very supportive so it makes it easier," explained Vega. "We are very spiritual-based Christian people so we have that bond to help us get through this as well."

Vega, who met her husband when they were both serving in Korea, said having a husband who used to be a Soldier is also an asset in coping with being apart.

In Kuwait, she tried to call him every day, but acknowledged communication would be more difficult in Iraq.

"I'll send letters and cards," explained Vega. "I love you cards' mean a lot. When you receive a hand-written card or letter, you feel that person took that extra effort just for you."

Letters are a very personal way to show your loved ones you care, Randal said.

"E-mail is nice, but snail mail is nicer," explained Randall. "It means something for your spouse to hold something that you held yourself. There is a connection there that can cut across the miles."

Communication between separated spouses is a key component to maintaining a healthy relationship. Many times Soldiers can get so caught-up in their mission or try to use their free time to catch up on sleep or get small tasks done that they neglect to keep in touch with

their loved ones back home.

"We have relationship multipliers that increase the health of our marriage," explained Randall.

Soldiers can make short movies using video recorders, send e-cards, write letters and phone when they have the opportunity.

"I encourage Soldiers to get creative and use all of their assets to stay connected with their spouses back home," said Randall.

Brown points out that deployment can put stress on marriages and Soldiers need to be aware of that.

"If your marriage wasn't strong before you deployed, it could get worse," said Brown. "You have to work on your marriage every day. It's too late to start working on it when things go wrong and you are out here. Soldiers need to maintain contact and maintain an upbeat attitude. If you sound worried, your spouse will worry. Stay positive and be strong for both of you."

Randall also points out that faith can provide a strong connection between spouses that are miles apart.

"The day I got back from my honeymoon I got deployed to Egypt," said Randall. "Nine of the first 12 months of my marriage we spent apart. That is how I know how important faith is in a marriage. My wife and I are no farther apart than God is between us. The same hope, belief and joy help us know that we will be together in the future no matter what happens."

Prayer has helped him and many other couples feel closer to their spouse when they are apart.

"Prayer allows us to endure and it allows us to encourage one another in our sufferings," said Randall. "Prayer also allows us to rejoice together in the good things. It is the cornerstone and centerpiece of our marriage."

Dual service marriages

Soldiers who are married to other Soldiers can also face the challenge of having to deploy with their spouse.

"Couples who are deployed in theater together are in a unique situation," pointed out Randall. "They have the opportunity to grow relationally because of the restrictions on the level of intimacy they can display. The deployment may be a good time to grow their friendship and relational love."

Sgt. Maureen Lynch and Spc. Joshua Lynch are both currently deployed together with the 203rd Brigade Support Battalion.

Sgt. Lynch is a driver for Company A and her husband Spc. Lynch is a track mechanic for Company B.

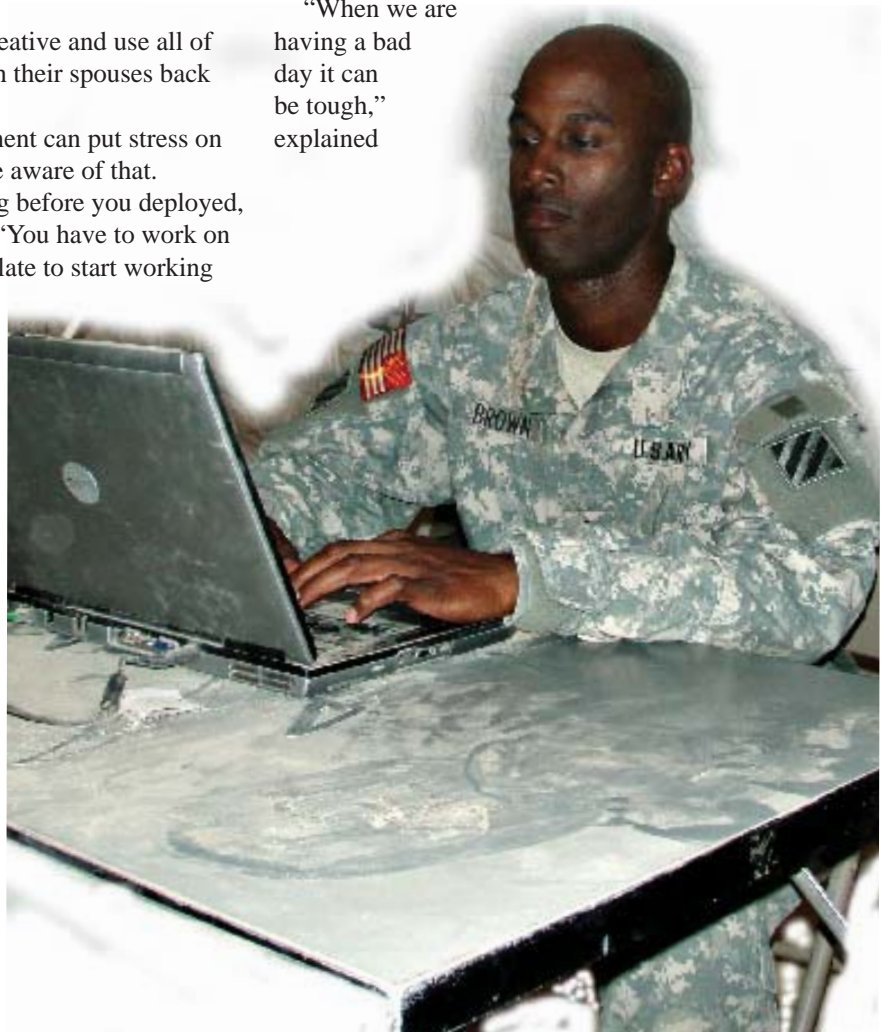
The couple has been married nine months, but this is

their second deployment together.

"It is a lot different this time," explained Maureen Lynch. "This time we are married, but there is still no touching or affection. It's definitely not easy."

Her husband concurs with his wife's assessment.

"When we are having a bad day it can be tough," explained



1st Sgt. Demetrius Brown, of Company F, 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment emails his wife, Valinda and his three children, from Forward Operating Base Hammer, Iraq.

Joshua Lynch. "You want to be able to console each other, but you just can't do it. We both know we have to be professional and try to be thankful for what we do have."

"Arguments are tough," explained Maureen Lynch. "It can be frustrating out here not being able to hold your husband. Back (at home station) we can sit next to each other on the couch and be close, but here we have to maintain a professional appearance. A lot of times you can wind up taking out that frustration out on the other person because they are right there in your face and an easy target."

As hard as it can be, Joshua Lynch acknowledges that it does get better.

"Last time it only got better about six months into it, but after that it gets easier once you get used to it," explained Lynch.

Whatever the situation, spouses can take comfort in the fact that married Soldiers have gotten through deployments before and come back from them stronger.

"It's not easy, but when you get back you appreciate

See **MARRIAGE**, page 9

Financial rewards: Part III
Playing your cards
right, saves money

By Spc. Chris McCann
2nd BCT PAO, 10th Mtn. Div.

As part of a series to help service-members and their families save money, Spc Chris McCann, a member of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division public affairs office has written a four part series. McCann spoke with the 2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div., human resources and finance noncommissioned officer in charge for advice.

Purchasing cell phones, televisions, refrigerators, and other niceties from re-deploying Soldiers is a way to save cash, and a Soldier can recoup the investment by passing on the items to incoming personnel.

Even Iraqna cell phone cards, low-priced to begin with, can be parlayed into more savings, said Sgt. 1st Class Joshua Harvey of Binghamton, N.Y., the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division out of Fort Drum, N.Y. human resources and finance noncommissioned officer in charge. "Family and friends in the U.S. can buy phone cards online that allow them to call Iraqna phones for as little as nine cents a minute – and the incoming call to the Soldier is free. With a quick "call me back" call home, a Soldier can talk for free.

"You could buy a \$20 Iraqna card here and never buy another," Harvey said. "With them calling you back, you save tons of money."

The cardboard coins distributed by the Army and Air Force Exchange Service as change in theater can also be lucrative, said Harvey. Although they are valid at any AAFES location, the pogs are often discarded.

"I went home last year with over \$200 in pogs that people had given me, just because they didn't want to carry them," he said. "I put them in a box and mailed them home."

A single Soldier who is keeping a car in storage can drop insurance to the minimum since it isn't being driven. Leased cars can be returned with no penalty in case of deployment, as can cell phones.

"Other than minor expenses, I'm sav-

ing all my money from this deployment," said Spc. Mike Mihelich of St. Louis, Mo., a radio-telephone operator for Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 1st Squadron, 89th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team. "I'm putting it into a savings account. After I'm out of the Army, I'll put it into stocks."

"Investing is its own reward," he added. "You get a pretty concrete return."

Spouses back home can also help with savings, said Harvey, and cited a common example. "Don't eat out more just because you don't want to cook."

"The military provides a host of services for spouses of deployees, such as free daycare, Internet access, and even free home computers for the families of junior enlisted Soldiers to allow spouses to communicate with them."

All it takes to save money is a little effort, said Harvey.

"A big one is just writing to all the creditors," he said.

He advises paying off "revolving debt" accounts like store credit cards; contrary to popular belief, they do not increase credit score. Instead, they undermine it.

"Even if the accounts carry no balance, a lender looks at the amount of credit possibility and recognizes that every card could carry a full balance later that day if the person went on a spending spree. If that were to happen, then a person's debt-to-income ratio would change dramatically, and not for the better," Harvey said. Result? Low credit score.

Stable credit – such as car payments, house payments, and the like – cannot be added to, and thus are "good credit."

"Don't worry about how much money is in your accounts. Worry about what's on your credit report, then watch your money grow," said Harvey.

As an example, he cited minimal investment for one year.

"Put \$100 a month into a savings account, and over one year, you have \$1275. Then when you go to buy a car, you can make that down payment, and because it's a large down payment, you knock down the monthly payments on the car, and save yourself some more."



“Pursuing Excellence Through Leadership”

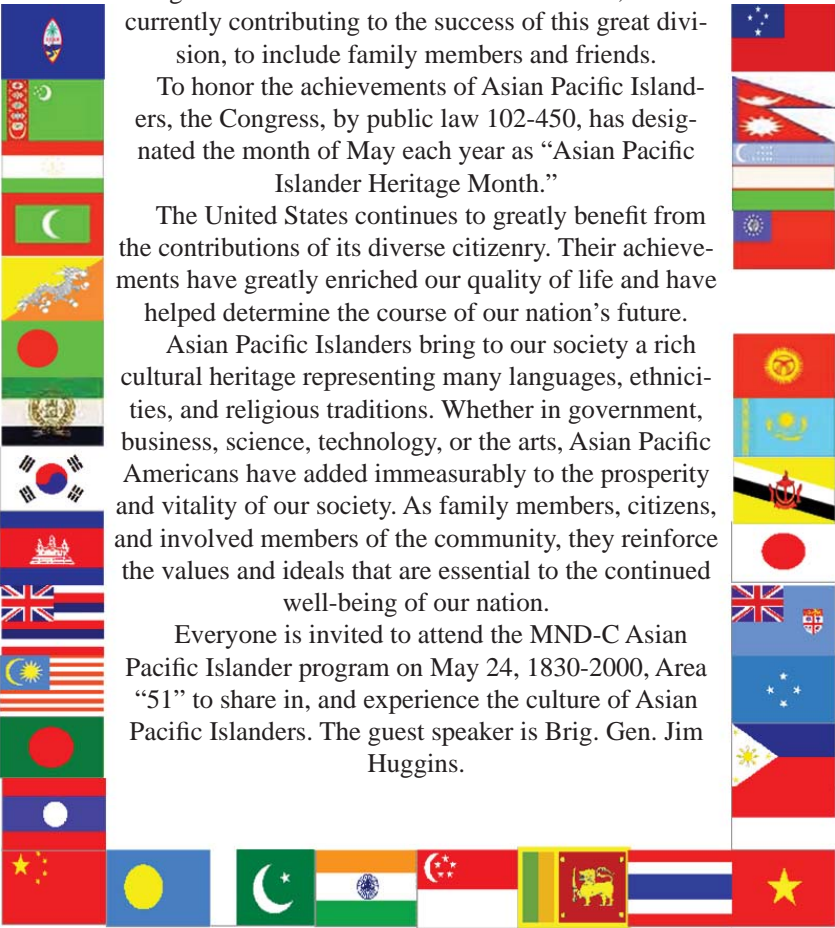
Multinational Division - Center will host an Asian Pacific Islander Heritage program on May 24. MND-C has numerous service members from the Asian Pacific Islander Heritage culture who are proudly serving in Task Force Marne. This month time will be taken out to recognize all Asian Pacific Islanders that have, and are currently contributing to the success of this great division, to include family members and friends.

To honor the achievements of Asian Pacific Islanders, the Congress, by public law 102-450, has designated the month of May each year as “Asian Pacific Islander Heritage Month.”

The United States continues to greatly benefit from the contributions of its diverse citizenry. Their achievements have greatly enriched our quality of life and have helped determine the course of our nation’s future.

Asian Pacific Islanders bring to our society a rich cultural heritage representing many languages, ethnicities, and religious traditions. Whether in government, business, science, technology, or the arts, Asian Pacific Americans have added immeasurably to the prosperity and vitality of our society. As family members, citizens, and involved members of the community, they reinforce the values and ideals that are essential to the continued well-being of our nation.

Everyone is invited to attend the MND-C Asian Pacific Islander program on May 24, 1830-2000, Area “51” to share in, and experience the culture of Asian Pacific Islanders. The guest speaker is Brig. Gen. Jim Huggins.



Marne Focus

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what you have,” explained Brown.

“My challenge to the Soldiers is to see how they can use this deployment to strengthen their marriage,” said Randall. “I challenge them to use their spiritual habits and spiritual actions to help strengthen their relationships. I want their marriage to go forward when they return home; not backward.”

Not exactly four star hotels

For Soldiers living on COPs, daily life gets better, slowly

Story and photos by Sgt. Natalie Rostek
3rd HBCT, Public Affairs

COMBAT OUTPOST CLEARY – The concept is honorable. The team is a brotherhood; never forgetting a fallen comrade.

Soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team have established three combat outposts in the units area of operation, all named after their fallen brothers.

While in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom V, 1-15 Inf. Regt., moved from Forward Operating Base Hammer, where the brigade headquarters is located, to Combat Outposts Cleary, Cashe, and Cahill in the areas of Wahida, Tuwaitha, and Salman Pak, respectively.

According to Maj. John Cushing, 36, Rochester, Mich., Operations Officer for 1-15 Inf. Regt., the battalion was assigned the specific area of operation known as ‘Dragon’ and moved to the distinct outposts to be closer to the communities and people they are here to secure. He said moving closer to the towns where they will be conducting their operations also allows for the battalion to better intermingle with the locals.

“To live with the populous and experience what they experience, you get a better appreciation for the area,” Cushing said.

COP Cleary is named after 1st Lt. Michael J. Cleary, 2nd Platoon Leader for Company E, 1-15 Inf. Regt., who was killed during an improvised explosive device strike Dec. 5, 2005 during OIF III in Ad Duliayah, Iraq.

According to Capt. Mathew Garner, of Dallas, Texas, commander for Company C, the unit had moved from a pharmaceutical plant to COP Cleary almost immediately. When they arrived at the former government building and greenhouses, there was nothing but one run-down building. Rubble and broken glass covered the ground rendering it nearly impossible to maneuver vehicles.

“It only took one day, really, for the inside of the building to be cleared,” Garner said, “and about a week or two to get all the glass cleared away.”

After hard work and dedication from the Soldiers at COP Cleary, the outpost now has toilets, a shower facility, and the Dragon Inn dining facility area.

“It’s gotten so much better here,” said Sgt. 1st Class

Quentin Fenderson, a native of Tuscaloosa, Ala., “especially with the new chow hall and showers. Most of the Soldiers would rather just stay here than go back to (FOB Hammer) for showers and chow.”

COP Cleary is also home to one female Soldier. Pfc. Marisol Garcia, a native of San Antonio, Texas, and a medic for the battalion Command Security Detachment, said she loves it at COP Cleary and being the only female doesn’t bother her. She said she feels safe with the Soldiers at the outpost.

“Some females can handle it, but it’s definitely not for everyone,” Garcia said. “Everyone is very professional; they don’t step over any boundaries. They are great at their jobs and they don’t let fear paralyze them. I feel safe with (the CSD) whenever we go out the gate.”

Company D, 1-15 Inf. Regt., occupy COP Cashe, named after Sgt. 1st Class Alwyn Cashe, 1st platoon sergeant, Company A 1-15 Inf. Regt. during OIF III, who died, Nov. 8, 2005 from wounds received from an IED strike, Oct. 17, 2005 in Ad Duliayah, Iraq.

The outpost is located in the town of Tuwaitha, just north of Salman Pak. Directly next to the building is a fire station where the Soldiers get most of their water.

“The fire fighters help us out,” said Staff Sgt. Quentin Heard, from Lagrange, Ga., tank commander for 2nd Platoon, Company D, 1-15 Inf. Regt. “They bring bread; they help us get our water running. We help them too; if one of them has a headache or something we will get with our medic to try to help them.”

COP Cashe currently has two man-made toilets, a new chow kitchen, and a shower made from ponchos, old lockers, and a fire hose. The living quarters are rooms within the building capable of housing eight to 16 Soldiers.

COP Cahill, named after Capt. Joel Cahill, commander of Company B, 1-15 Inf. Regt., during OIF III, who was killed Nov. 6, 2005 in an IED attack in Ad Dwar, Iraq. It is the smallest of the three outposts and is believed to be the former Hunting Club security building for Saddam Hussein’s sons, owned by the Ministry of Agriculture.

“It’s getting better everyday,” said Spc. Anthony Hartley of Delaware, Ohio, Company A, 1-15 Inf. Regt. “We have the phones and internet, all we need is a place to



Pfc. Fernando Jamandre, a cook for the 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment, serves breakfast at the new dining facility at Combat Outpost Cahill.

wash clothes and I’ll be set.”

The COP has one make-shift shower, dining facility, and phone and internet access. According to 1st Lt. Chris Pearson, executive officer for Co., A, improvements to be made to the outpost includes additional living space and air conditioning.

Although it is not clear how long 1-15 Inf. Regt., will be living at their designated outposts, the Soldiers are making tremendous progress with the resources they are given and are prepared for what could be an 18-month deployment.

“It’s my job,” Hartley said. “If I wasn’t prepared to do whatever I needed to, I wouldn’t have signed on the dotted line.”

Operating Posts named for fallen comrades

◆ **Combat Operating Post Cleary** is named after 1st Lt. Michael J. Cleary, 2nd Platoon leader for Company E, 1-15 Inf. Regt., who was killed during an IED strike Dec. 5, 2005 during OIF III in Ad Duliayah, Iraq.

◆ **Combat Operating Post Cashe** is named after Sgt. 1st Class Alwyn Cashe, 1st Platoon sergeant, Company A, 1-15 Inf. Regt., during OIF III, who died Nov. 8, 2005 from wounds received from an IED strike, Oct. 17, 2005 in Ad Duliayah, Iraq.

◆ **Combat Operating Post Cahill** is named after Capt. Joel Cahill, commander of Company B, 1-15 Inf. Regt., during OIF III, who was killed Nov. 6, 2005 in an IED attack in Ad Dwar, Iraq.

IN MEMORY OF OUR FALLEN HEROES

In honor of Memorial Day and for all who serve their country, obey lawful orders and sacrifice more than ever imagined. Below are the words to a song dedicated to you, the Soldier, the Marine, the Sailors, the Airmen and all who serve alongside you protecting our country and fighting for the freedoms of other nations who yearn for the same freedoms. Here is the song, 'American Soldier' as performed by Toby Keith.

I'm just tryin' to be a father, raise a daughter and a son
Be a lover to their mother, everythin' to everyone
Up and at 'em bright and early, I'm all business in my suit
Yeah I'm dressed up for success, from my head down to my boots
I don't do it for money, there's bills I that I can't pay
I don't do it for the glory, I just do it anyway
Providing for our future's, my responsibility
Yeah I'm real good under pressure, being all that I can be
And I can't call in sick on Mondays when the weekend's been too strong
I just work straight through the holidays, and sometimes all night long
You can bet that I stand ready, when the wolf growls at the door
Hey I'm solid, hey I'm steady, hey I'm true down to the core.

And I will always do my duty no matter what the price
I've counted up the cost, I know the sacrifice
Oh and I don't want to die for you, but if dyin's asked of me
I'll bear that cross with honor, cause freedom don't come free.

I'm an American Soldier an American
Beside my brothers and my sisters, I will proudly take a stand
When liberty's in jeopardy, I will always do what's right

I'm out here on the front lines, sleep in peace tonight
American Soldier, I'm an American, Soldier.

An American Soldier an American
Beside my brothers and my sisters, I will proudly take a stand
When liberty's in jeopardy, I will always do what's right
I'm out here on the front lines, sleep in peace tonight
American Soldier, I'm an American, an American, an American, Soldier.

(Toby Keith/Chuck Cannon)



Capt. Jimmy Hathaway, 37, Columbus, Ga., Commander of Headquarters Troop, 3rd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, kicks a soccer ball to a local boy from Al Zatia, Iraq, during a patrol through the town on May 9.



Contractor Abbas Harbi Marmas (middle left) and his assistant point out the road they plan to repair in the town of Al Zatia, Iraq, to a Civil Affairs leader and Capt. Jimmy Hathaway, (right) commander of Headquarters Troop, 3rd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment May 9.

Road repairs pave way for local jobs, potentially building community's trust

Story and photos by Sgt. Natalie Rostek
3rd HBCT Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE HAMMER – A new road repair project will help pave the way for coalition forces to meet with local vendors and the local populace. Leaders from the 3rd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, along with Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Soldiers attached to the 3rd Brigade, met with a local contractor Wednesday, at the Phas Elementary



A Civil Affairs leader, whose team is attached to the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, hands contractor Abbas Harbi Marmas 30 percent of his final payout, May 9, at Phas Elementary School in Al Zatia, Iraq.

School in Al Zatia, Iraq. According to Capt. Damond Davis, 32, Montgomery, Ala., 3-1 Cav.'s Fire Support Officer, Capt. Jimmy Hathaway, 37, Columbus, Ga., commander of Headquarters Troop, 3-1 Cav., and his CA and PSYOP counterparts visited Abbas Harbi Marmas to discuss plans to repair and repave a section of a road just outside of Forward Operating Base Hammer called Butler Range Road. During the meeting, the Soldiers and contractor gathered around a map of the local area and Marmas pointed out exactly where he would be repaving. When the area of construction had been established, Hathaway, the CA leader and Davis, gave Marmas 30 percent of his final disbursement. Davis said construction is slated to begin Saturday. "A project like this brings together the local people and Coalition Forces in a project to help employ the local populace," Hathaway said. After the meeting, the Soldiers and their counterparts proceeded to a local shopping area known as Four Corners to check the vendors for a generator battery the unit will place in a clinic in the town of Al Halendia. Hathaway said the generator will power the clinics lights, refrigeration system, and air-conditioning. From Four Corners, an intersection joining BRC Road and a major north-south running thoroughfare in the Mada'in Qada, the Soldiers patrolled through the town and talked to the locals about their general feelings and information of their town. "We engage the locals to get their attitudes on the CF, Iraqi Security Forces, and the Local Government," Hathaway said. During their mission, the team interacted with the local children, giving them soccer balls, stationary, and candy. Davis further explained that interacting with the local children today can potentially further strengthen relations between CF and the local population of the Mada'in Qada in the future.

Do you have your Force Protection Ammo?