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Paratrooper earns Silver Star Page 3



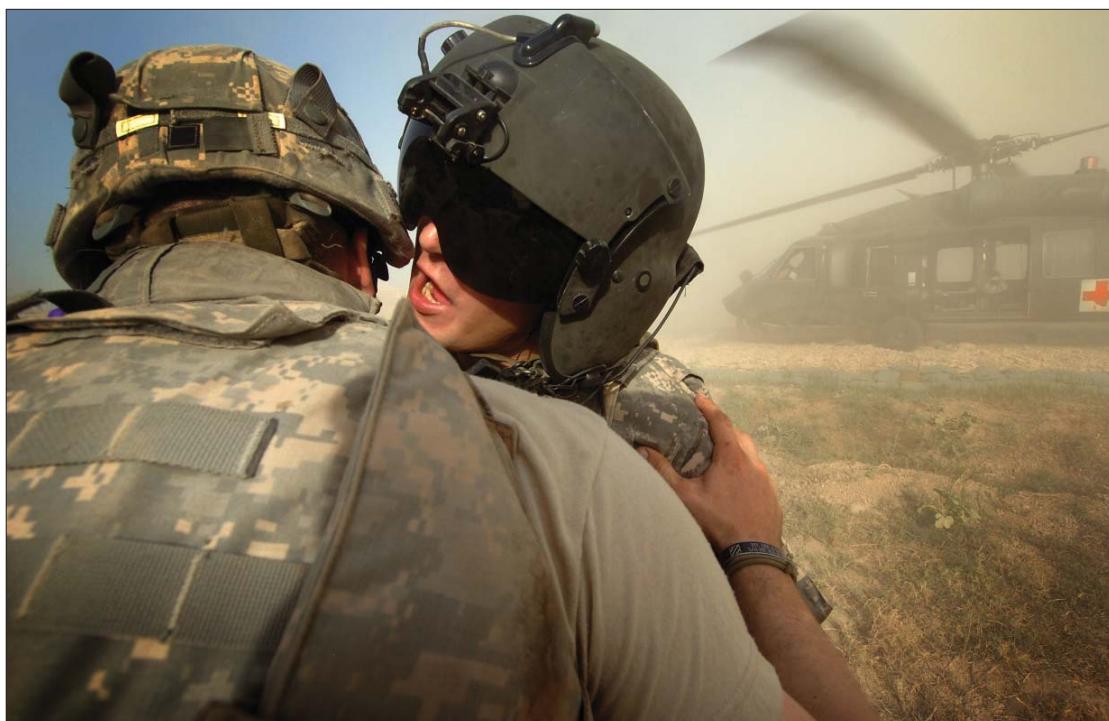
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Photos by Sgt. Ben Brody

Spc. Joe Penhale, a flight medic with Co. C, 2-3 Avn. Regt., shouts instructions to a medic at Patrol Base Murray during a MEDEVAC mission for two wounded Iraqi police officers.

## Hope flies from Kalsu

3rd CAB MEDEVAC crews rush from Kalsu to outlying locations, saving lives throughout the AO

By SGT. BEN BRODY  
MND-C Public Affairs

**BAGHDAD** – To see its Soldiers sprawled across couches and recliners, watching movies and casually chatting, it's hard to see how disciplined and proficient the medical evacuation crews of 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade really are.

Then the call comes in on a loudspeaker, "MEDEVAC, MEDEVAC, MEDEVAC!"

In an instant, the troops vanish, as if into thin air. The wail of helicopter engines starting up drifts in from the tarmac. And they're off.

The crews are allowed 15 minutes to get into the air, but on the morning of Sept. 12, they were up in five.

An Iraqi man had been hit by a car in Mahmudiyah, and his family brought him to U.S. troops. With severe head injuries, Soldiers knew the man's best chance for survival was in the hands of American doctors.

"Sixty or 70 percent of the calls we get are for Iraqis – civilians, military, police, and a lot of kids," said Chief War-



Medics at FOB Mahmudiyah carry an Iraqi man to a MEDEVAC helicopter after he was struck by a car. He was flown to Balad Air Base for treatment.

rant Officer Rick Mallick, an instructor pilot with Company C, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Aviation Regiment.

Minutes later, the crew of the Black Hawk known as Medicine Man 42 touched down at FOB Mahmudiyah and loaded the injured man into the helicopter.

Sgt. Reid Carpenter, a flight medic with Co. C, immedi-

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Marne 66 sends

# Missing Soldiers not forgotten

Search continues; New operation pursues enemy; New patrol base

Operation Marne Husky successfully ended Sept. 15 as our great Soldiers continue to take the fight to the enemy in areas where they once thought they could operate freely. It was led by our Combat Aviation Brigade as a part of Multi-National Corps-Iraq's Operation Phantom Strike, which focused on disrupting enemy operations by maintaining pressure during this critical period of the surge.

You are making a difference across Iraq by taking the offensive. Our number-one mission is to interdict accelerants into Baghdad, and Marne Torch II, our newest operation, will build off our successes as we push further into the Tigris River Valley.

After being in Iraq only four months, the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, is the division main effort for the second time. Following up on their success in June with Marne Torch I, the "Guardian" Brigade Combat Team is attacking further south into Arab Jabour in order to rid the area of al-Qaeda and eliminate an enemy safe haven.

We didn't just want to hold



Brig. Gen. James Huggins  
Deputy Commanding General  
- Maneuver

the line and allow the enemy to regain strength after clearing Arab Jabour in June. We want to keep him off balance and maintain pressure. We want to strike him whenever and wherever he is vulnerable.

In addition to continuing combat operations, Bravo Company, 1-30th Infantry Battalion established Patrol Base Hawkes in order to help secure the population. By living amongst the Iraqi people, these great Soldiers are gaining the trust of local citizens and are working with them to keep the community safe. I visited the patrol base within 48 hours of Soldiers being

on the ground, and I was impressed with their motivation, work ethic and determination to hold that ground.

As Gen. Petraeus pointed out in his testimony last week, our ability to ensure that the Iraqis feel safe helps them trust us and helps reduce attacks. It also helps our intelligence since the Iraqis show us where improvised explosive devices are buried, take us to the houses of the bad guys, and warn us of attacks.

The future of Iraq depends on us being able to help the Iraqis take control, and while we have been leading the operations for a while, it's coming time to turn the missions over to them. We continue to strengthen our commitment to partner with the Iraqi Security Forces and the local Iraqi concerned citizens, and then we can, and will, provide support as they take the lead and carry on the fight to secure their families and communities.

All over Task Force Marne we are partnered with capable Iraqi units and capable Iraqi leaders working hard to make this happen.

Our successes have come

at a cost. We grieve for those heroes that have fallen. And we pray for the comfort of their loved ones left behind.

Last Friday was POW/MIA day and our hearts turn to two missing Soldiers in Task Force Marne. Spc. Alex Jimenez and Pvt. Byron Fouty are members of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light) and part of Task Force Marne. The two were captured by al-Qaeda while providing over-watch for an improvised explosive device crater May 12th.

Both Alex and Byron are members of 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment. Alex is from the Bronx, N.Y., and Byron is from Waterford, Mich.

Our prayers and thoughts are with their Families. We are reminded of our duty given to us in the Soldiers' Creed, "I will never accept defeat. I will never quit. I will never leave a fallen comrade." Task Force Marne continues to search for its missing Soldiers, and we will not rest until they have been reunited with their families.

**ROCK OF THE MARNE!**



# Marne Focus

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4th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division

3rd Combat Aviation Brigade

214th Fires Brigade

82nd Sustainment Brigade

720th Military Police Battalion

Mobile Unit 3 Explosive Ordnance Disposal Battalion

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# Paratrooper receives Silver Star

Fellow unit members also decorated for 3-hour firefight that pitted 12 Paratroopers against force of nearly 1,000

By SGT. J.H. FRENCH  
4th BCT (Abn.), 25th Inf. Div. Public Affairs

**KALSU** – The details were sketchy. The only information coming in was that 10 Iraqi army soldiers had been killed and their brigade commander was taking fire and needed help.

With that little bit of information and the belief that they were facing a force of no more than 15 or 20 militants, 12 Paratroopers from 4th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division's Military Transition Team 0810 went to the aid of the soldiers of 1st Brigade, 8th Iraqi Army Division, Jan. 28.

The Paratroopers' initial mission was to provide close air support and communication with the helicopters circling above the firefight taking place on the ground just north of Najaf.

However, the mission quickly changed as the team approached the site of the ongoing battle. Nearing the battle, Paratroopers saw an AH-64 Apache helicopter fall from the sky. The MiTT's mission changed in an instant. They moved to the site of the downed chopper to protect the wreckage and look for the pilots.

"When I saw the Apache go down, it immediately changed everything," said Master Sgt. Thomas Ballard, non-commissioned officer in charge of MiTT 0810. "Everything was focused on that crash site. That's where we had to go and that's what we did."

Once the small team of Paratroopers reached the crash site, security became top priority.

"As we reached the crash site, we were driving on a road parallel to the crash site, so I decided to

have Master Sgt. Ballard's vehicle, the lead vehicle, pull onto the far side, and the rest of our convoy would remain on the other side," said Lt. Col. Stephen Hughes, deputy commander, 4th BCT (Abn.), 25th Inf. Div., and the MiTT team chief. As my vehicle pulled into position in an open area, we started receiving contact with heavy machine gun fire, an RPG was launched at us."

It didn't take long for the Paratroopers to realize they were up against more than a small 15- to 20-man force.

Once the fighting began, it didn't end for the 12-man team until nearly three hours later, when backup finally arrived.

"There were a lot of bullets flying, we were only a small group of people, and didn't know whether we could hold our position if the enemy made a concerted effort to get to the helicopter," said Maj. John Reed, the MiTT operations officer.

"The guys we were up against were the Soldiers of Heaven cult, led by a man who believed he was the 12th Imam," said Ballard, a native of Aberdeen, Miss. "It was said that upon his return, the demise of all the other leaders, religious and otherwise, would mark his coming, and he was planning to put that into effect the very next day coincidentally."

"They had ungodly amounts of weapons, there were tunnels, bunkers, there were even trenches, and they were around the entire perimeter of the compound," Ballard said. "It wasn't until the next day that we found out there was almost 1,000 people on that objective and what we were really up against."

After the fighting was over, more than 400 mili-

*"When I saw the Apache go down, it immediately changed everything. Everything was focused on that crash site. That's where we had to go and that's what we did."*

— Master Sgt. Thomas Ballard  
Silver Star recipient



By Sgt. Marcus Butler

Brig. Gen. James Huggins awards the Silver Star to Master Sgt. Thomas Ballard.

tants were captured, not to mention all the cult members who had died during the fighting.

For their actions during the battle against such a large foe, and for their willingness to sacrifice themselves and never leave their fallen comrades, the entire 12-man team was awarded Army Commendation Medals for valor.

Ballard, Hughes and Reed were further recognized Sept. 9 for their actions. Ballard received the Silver Star, while Hughes received a Bronze Star with Valor and Reed the Bronze Star.

"Master Sgt. Ballard's actions on the day of the fight and the following day were phenomenal," Reed said. "His dedication to the mission, his disregard for the enemy threat, and his lead-from-the-front attitude has been an inspiration for us all."

## Ramadan through Muslim Soldiers' eyes

By RENANAH MILES  
MND-C Public Affairs

**BAGHDAD** – Across Iraq, the tempo of life has perceptibly changed, reflecting the unique complexities of Ramadan. Business hours adjust to accommodate fasting. Food, drink and cigarettes are untouched as Muslims abstain during daylight hours. Days revolve around the calls to prayer marking the start and break of fasting.

Coalition Forces may note these changes out on patrols and various missions. But Ramadan is not just outside the base; Muslim Soldiers also try to balance the spiritual and physical demands of Ramadan with the strenuous nature of a combat environment.

Conversations with Muslim Soldiers and religious leaders within the Army paint a vivid picture of how

they meld faith with service.

Spc. Lamia Lahlou, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, is a young Muslim Soldier stationed at Camp Striker. This Ramadan is her first while deployed.

Abstaining from food and drink, she said, is not an easy feat for any of the U.S. Muslim Soldiers serving in Iraq.

"We're going to be fasting from 5 a.m. to 6 p.m., no food, no drink, no nothing, so it's going to be difficult for us especially with the heat," Lahlou said. "We need water."

But for Lahlou, the demands of the month are compensated by the spiritual significance of fasting.

"I feel close to God," Lahlou explained. "I know that God knows that I work a lot of hours -12 hours, no days off. I just need time to take a shower and eat and go to bed."

The Army is helping Lahlou with her religious observance, allowing her to switch to a night shift for the month of Ramadan. She is able to sleep during the day while fasting, and then wake up and eat the evening meal – her breakfast – before going to work.

Not all Muslim Soldiers will have that opportunity.

"If they're required to be at work at a certain time, they're required to do it," Lahlou explained.

The Army's Muslim religious leaders understand the strain that some Soldiers experience when attempting to adhere to Ramadan's demands.

Maj. Nadim Islam, M.D., 3rd HBCT, 3rd Inf. Div., is the Muslim version of a chaplain, what the Army calls Distinguished Faith Group Leaders.

"As we make all our decisions, it's

important to understand the unique backgrounds that all of our different Soldiers come from," Islam said.

During Ramadan, he explained, "trying to make whatever concessions are possible within the realms of the mission will go a long way in winning respect from your Muslim Soldiers. And if possible, during Eid, you know, just acknowledging the fact that it's a holy day for them, I think will be important for them."

Islam offered a cleric's insight into the meaning of Ramadan and the practice of fasting, and how it benefits Muslim Soldiers.

"It's a time of heightened awareness as you're fasting during the day. You're giving up food, and you're giving up water, and just trying to reflect

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# Soldiers team up with 'revolutionaries'

During Tuwaitha Sunrise II, concerned citizens' leader says revolt is against al-Qaeda

By SGT. NATALIE ROSTEK

3rd HBCT, 3rd Inf. Div. Public Affairs

**FOB HAMMER** – Moving forward hand-in-hand, Soldiers of 3rd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment and members of a concerned citizens group conducted Operation Tuwaitha Sunrise II Sept. 19-20 in Tuwaitha Village.

The mission was the second of its kind, the first being Operation Tuwaitha Sunrise conducted earlier this month. During these missions both 3-1 Cav. Regt. Soldiers and concerned citizens conducted patrols to clear the area of improvised explosive devices and weapon caches. The area is known for its high volume of insurgent activity.

Pfc. David Menillo, Fairfield, Conn., a medic from Troop B, 3-1 Cav. Regt. said during the first iteration approximately 120 concerned citizens came forth to participate in the operation.

"There were so many of them out here last time," he said. "They walked up ahead of us. They found IEDs and

told us about them. Then we got the explosive ordnance disposal team to blow them up."

According to Lt. Col. John Kolasheski, Loudon, Tenn., commander, 3-1 Cav. Regt., the series of missions came about when concerned citizens, tribal leaders, and National Police expressed concerns with security on the route. The road is a major transportation route from Tuwaitha to the Jisr Diyala marketplace.

"They have been basically cut off from civilization," Kolasheski said. "It has been very difficult to get to the market in Jisr Diyala because they have to make their way through an al-Qaeda controlled area."

Some 3-1 Cav. Regt. Soldiers arrived at the site a day early to coordinate the event and then spent the night at a resident's house.

Kolasheski said the owner of the house, an elderly woman who had left her residence because of the al-Qaeda presence in the neighborhood, returned to her house. He said many

of the residents of the village are returning to their houses after concerned citizens and 3-1 Cav. Regt. Soldiers began to secure the area.

Soldiers of 3-1 Cav. Regt. expressed their appreciation and pride for their concerned citizen brothers by telling stories of heroic accomplishments.

Spc. James Conner, of Cincinnati, a medic in Company E, 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment who was providing engineer support for the mission, told the story of one concerned citizen who consistently stepped up when an IED was found.

"There was one guy who, when they find IEDs, goes out and disarms them," Conner said. "He didn't want any money or anything. All he wanted was a Gerber tool. I don't know where he got the skills to disarm the IEDs. Maybe he's an insurgent gone good."

The concerned citizens are also proud. One of the leaders of the group said through a translator, they are revolutionaries.

"We are not the kind of revolutionaries you may think," he said. "We are revolting against al-Qaeda. We are taking our communities back."

While clearing houses, 3-1 Cav. Regt. Soldiers found a booby-trapped house containing one hand grenade and other explosives. Conner said many of the houses in the area have been occupied by al-Qaeda.

During the mission, concerned citizens established and manned 17 checkpoints. Kolasheski said he has high hopes for the citizens to keep the checkpoints fully operational.

On the first day, 3-1 Cav. Regt. Soldiers found two 57 mm projectiles and a large propane-tank IED, one pressure-plate-activated 120 mm IED, one crush-wire-activated 155 mm IED, two fire extinguishers, two extinguishers and one propane tank filled with explosives, and one rocket propelled grenade.

After an overnight stay at a strong-



Photos by Sgt. Natalie Rostek

Soldiers of Troop B, 3-1 Cav. Regt. prepare for Operation Tuwaitha Sunrise II in the early morning at COP Cashe.

hold house on the route, Soldiers and concerned citizens continued the mission. Day two resulted in three more weapon caches in three separate houses. In total, 19 propane tanks, three identification cards, one 55-gallon drum containing an oil and fuel mixture, a suicide vest, a suicide belt, two 120 mm mortars, a rocket propelled grenade, two canisters of munitions, two Iraqi hand grenades with bullets as fragmentation, one set of body armor, and one acetylene tank were found in the houses.

"It was a great mission for the concerned citizens and 3-1 Cav. Regt. which significantly increased the security for Tuwaitha Village," said Maj. David Fivecoat, Delaware, Ohio, operations officer for the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team.

The 3-1 Cav. Regt. is assigned to the 3rd HBCT, 3rd Infantry Division, Fort Benning, Ga., and has been deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom since March 2007.



Spc. John Ray, of Bozeman, Mont., 3-1 Cav. Regt., pulls a two-hour guard shift with the help of a concerned citizen on the roof of the home where Soldiers slept during Operation Tuwaitha Sunrise II in Tuwaitha Village.

## RAMADAN: An opportunity to build bridges says Dr. Islam

From Page 3

on the inner self, and really trying to purify the inner self, so that you kind of get back that sensitivity that you often lose as you're out and about," he said.

Lahlou echoed a similar sentiment. "I understand that no matter what God will help me. I'll be close to Him, and He will help me to do better," she said.

When it comes to Soldiers in the field, Islam acknowledged the security problems that Ramadan continues to pose in Iraq.

"Unfortunately, Ramadan – even though it's a very religious activity for us – has become synonymous in theater with increased mortar attacks, and really almost become a bad word," Islam admitted.

But amidst security concerns, there is still room to build bridges, Islam said. That point must not be lost sight of, he noted.

"Ramadan is an opportunity," Islam said. "It is a time where, you know, one fifth of the world's population is observing, and it's important as leaders in the Army to understand how we can use it to help build bridges with the people we are constantly interacting with, whether it's our own Soldiers that are observing it, or others in the villages that we are providing security to."





# Final Op. Marne Husky air assault

## Paratroopers capture suspected insurgent, find bomb materials

By SGT. BEN BRODY  
MND-C Public Affairs

**BAGHDAD** — On the final air assault of Operation Marne Husky, Soldiers detained an insurgent and discovered bomb-making materials along the western bank of the Tigris, 20 miles south of Baghdad, in the predawn hours Sept. 15.

The detainee, who had high-level contacts in a local al-Qaeda cell, was wanted for IED manufacturing and weapons transport.

"His story kept changing, so we brought him in," said Capt. Pete Peters, 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade's intelligence officer. "Once he was at our detention facility, three sources positively identified him as an al-Qaeda guy."

Another man was detained after troops found IED components in his house.

During the operation, four Apache attack helicopters cir-

cled overhead, firing hundreds of 30 mm cannon rounds at the insurgent positions.

Over the past month, Soldiers from Company B, 3rd Battalion, 509th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team (Abn.), 25th Infantry Division, teamed up with aviators from 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, and conducted seven air assaults in the Tigris River valley.

Operation Marne Husky disrupted insurgents who fled the towns of Salman Pak and Arab Jabour in front of earlier U.S. offensives, said Lt. Col. Robert Wilson, 3rd CAB's executive officer.

"We were able to use our combined-arms capability to insert forces into areas that the enemy previously thought were safe havens," Wilson said. "By disrupting and capturing insurgents in this area, we set the security conditions for Baghdad."



Photos by Sgt. Ben Brody

Aboard a Chinook, Paratroopers from Company B, 3rd Battalion, 509th Parachute Infantry Regiment, and Rocky, a military working dog, wait for the order to launch an air assault in the Tigris River valley. It was the final air assault of Operation Marne Husky.

From Aug. 15 to Sept. 15, troops from 3rd CAB and Co. B, 3-509th PIR, captured 80 suspected insurgents and killed another 43. Pilots flew 420 hours for Marne Husky.

The mission was unique

for Multi-National Division – Center, in that the unit primarily responsible was the aviation brigade. Typically an infantry brigade or battalion would control the ground and artillery forces.

"It's a great opportunity for us," said Wilson, from Dalton, Ga. "Baker Company is a well-led, very dynamic unit. Their experience in air assault operations made them a great selection to work with us."



Paratroopers (above) from Company B clear an AK-47 assault rifle found during the search. Paratroopers (right) secure two Iraqi men during the operation.



## On the lookout, getting full view



By Sgt. Marcus Butler

Sgt. Cody Posey of Wortham, Texas, sits on the roof of a building providing security for the Paratroopers from 3rd Platoon, Company C, 3rd Battalion, 509th Airborne, 4th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division Sept. 16, as they search houses in the Chaka IV Region of Iraq.



## HOPE: MEDEVAC missions are 'a huge rush' for flight medic

From Page 1



By Sgt. Ben Brody

Aboard a Black Hawk helicopter, Sgt. Reid Carpenter, a flight medic with Co. C, 2-3 Avn. Regt., administers an IV to an Iraqi man who was struck by a car. The man's family brought him to FOB Mahmudiyah where he was MEDEVAC'd.

ately went to work, changing the man's IV and checking his vital signs.

Carpenter, from Mauston, Wisc., is on his first deployment to Iraq after extensive training at Fort Rucker, Ala. He said he has found his calling.

"It's a huge rush going out," he said. "The MEDEVAC call is something you hate to hear, but you've just got to get on the bird as fast as you can. When the helo is coming in and I can see the ground crew below, that's when the excitement peaks – that's when it's my time."

Tearing over the Tigris River valley toward Baghdad at 150 mph, the helicopters, which are not armed with machine guns in accordance with the Geneva Convention, carve a direct route to Taji Air Base.

"When we land in unsecured areas, it's more exciting, but also way more dangerous than landing on a FOB," said Chief Warrant Officer Jerry Dickerson, a pilot with Co. C. "Other pilots plan their routes long in advance based on enemy threat. While we certainly take the threat into consideration, we also consider that there's someone dying out there

and we need to get there as fast as possible."

Once back at Kalsu, the crew inspected their helicopters, replaced the flares that were fired and fueled up for the next mission. Votes were cast for the next movie to watch – *Reno: 911* won by a landslide.

It would be another 24 hours before another call came in, this time from Patrol Base Murray, where two badly injured Iraqi policemen waited for evacuation.

Though they were both conscious and walking, one of the policemen had been shot in the face and leg; the other had been struck in the head with a hammer.

After the pickup, crew members brought the two men to the Combat Support Hospital in Baghdad's International Zone, where they would undergo immediate surgery.

Flight medic Spc. Joe Penhale, of Co. C, escorted the wounded men into the CSH and discussed their condition with a surgeon.

"The guy who was shot lost over a quart of blood, but he's going to survive because we got there in a hurry," said Penhale, from Marquette, Mich. "It's a great feeling."

## Air assault nets suspected al-Qaeda IED leader, 7 others

By SGT. LUIS DELGADILLO  
2nd BCT, 3rd Inf. Div. Public Affairs

**ARAB JABOUR** – Coalition troops air assaulted into a farm field south of Baghdad and captured the suspected leader of an al-Qaeda improvised explosive device-making cell Sept. 14.

Soldiers of Company B, 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, captured the IED cell leader and seven other suspected insurgents during building-clearing operations south of Patrol Base Murray.

Upon landing in a barren farm field, Soldiers made their way through deeply-rutted muddy fields to their first target house.

The mission was designed to secure the area around the prospective location of Patrol Base Hawkes, a new patrol base being constructed in Arab Jabour.

Once the perimeter of the building was secure and the residents were asked to come outside, Anderson and his Soldiers began the process of identifying the group.

The IED cell leader was the first person identified.

First platoon detained seven men, in the same building, who were also suspected of involvement in the IED cell.

Anderson said disrupting this cell was key because the area where he and his Soldiers were clearing buildings was known for a high number of IEDs targeting Coalition Forces.



By Sgt. Luis Delgadillo

First Lt. Cesar Santiago, executive officer, Company B, walks with fellow Soldiers while they transport detainees to awaiting vehicles near the site for Patrol Base Hawkes.

## Patrol Base Hawkes to open in Arab Jabour

2nd BCT, 3rd Inf. Div. Public Affairs

**ARAB JABOUR** – Coalition Forces are establishing a new patrol base to more efficiently interrupt the flow of insurgents, weapons and explosives into Arab Jabour and Baghdad.

Soldiers of 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, will use Patrol Base Hawkes to disrupt al-Qaeda operations and create better relationships with the Iraqi people and concerned citizens groups.

Such moves also better facilitate cooperation between Coalition Forces and Iraqis and help provide stability and security to these neighborhoods, said Maj. David Oeschger, executive officer, 2nd BCT.

The new patrol base will help Coalition Forces gather more intelligence to better coordinate future operations, Oeschger said.



By Sgt. Luis Delgadillo

Sgt. 1st Class Jaime Phillips, platoon sergeant for 1st platoon, Co. B, and a fellow Soldier help secure the area for Patrol Base Hawkes.



# 'Red Sox' hunt IEDs near Iran

## Bay State Guard unit joins 3rd ID, works with Georgians

By SGT. BEN BRODY  
MND-C Public Affairs

**AL KUT** – In 3rd Infantry Division's area of operations where a Southern drawl is the dominant accent among Soldiers, one unit stands apart. Or, more accurately, stands "apaaht."

The 182nd Engineer Company of the Massachusetts National Guard arrived mid-September to hunt for improvised explosive devices on the roads surrounding Al Kut, a city on the banks of the Tigris only 20 miles from the Iranian border.

The unit's 3rd platoon initially flew into Baghdad to pick up their minesweeping vehicles at Camp Striker. Before their drive to Al Kut, the troops, mostly from the Boston area, held a long brief on the threat levels and the mission plan.

"You're part of a great unit – throughout our history we've built things where nothing's been built before and cleared roads that have never been cleared before," said Lt. Col. Paul Huszar, commander of Task Force

Sapper, which the 182nd falls under.

He then told the platoon to close their eyes and visualize a scene where they were attacked with an IED, then mounted a successful counterattack, sending a clear message "not to mess with the Red Sox" (the unit's nickname).

After flying from Boston to Iraq, the platoon drove their minesweeping vehicles from Baghdad to Al Kut, which took about eight hours because the troops were scanning carefully for IEDs. The trip takes a normal convoy about three hours.

The creeping patrol of Humvees, Huskies, Buffalos and RG-31 minesweepers drew stares from Wasit Province residents, many of whom had never seen massive minesweeping vehicles before. From the window of a Buffalo, a 70-ton M1A1 Abrams main battle tank looks small.

The 182nd Sappers are one of several small engineer units attached to 3rd Infantry Division. The division did not deploy with engineer assets because of the rapidity of the spring's



Photos by Sgt. Ben Brody

A Husky minesweeper, operated by 182nd Engineer Co. of the Massachusetts National Guard, leads a route clearance patrol through Al Kut.

troop surge, Huszar said.

At FOB Delta, the unit stays in a bunker that once housed an Iraqi Air Force fighter jet. Within minutes of their arrival, a "Don't Tread on Me" flag was hoisted above the bunker door and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts flag was flying from a Humvee's radio antenna.

After a few hours' sleep in their new home, the platoon readied for their first mission: clearing roads to the east

– toward Iran – to protect Georgian army troops setting up a checkpoint on the main highway out of Al Kut.

The 12-hour mission uncovered no IEDs, a good sign, said Sgt. Jeff Paquin, a combat engineer.

"A good day is when you don't hit anything or see anything," Paquin, of Granby, Mass., said. "Still, it's nice when you spot an IED before it goes off – when you do that, you're probably saving someone's life."



Cpl. Jason Beasley (left) performs pre-combat checks on his Buffalo minesweeper. 1st Lt. Mike Bouchard (above) mans the radio. Father Gabriel (right), an Eastern Orthodox priest who works with the Georgian army, blesses the 182nd's minesweepers.



# Marne Torch II brings in more AQI

2nd BCT, 3rd Inf. Div. Public Affairs

**HAWR RAJAB** – Paratroopers conducting Operation Bethel detained insurgent suspects and destroyed weapons caches Sept. 19.

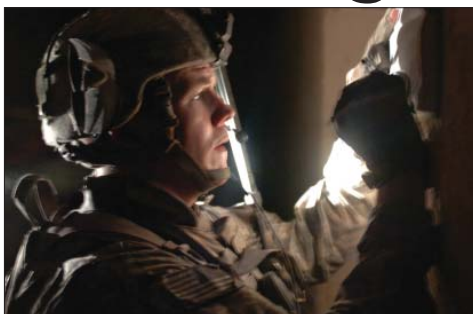
The Paratroopers of Company B, 1st Squadron, 40th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, currently attached to 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, detained seven suspects, two of whom were connected to the production of vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices.

The Hawr Rajab operation also yielded a homemade explosives cache.

While searching a building, Paratroopers discovered several hundred 20-kg bags of detergent, which an explosive ordnance disposal team assessed as a key ingredient in homemade explosives.

An AH-64 Apache helicopter destroyed the building with a Hellfire missile.

A second air weapons team destroyed a suspected VBIED factory that was discovered by another



By Sgt. Jason Stadel

Sgt. Roger Schilling sketches a home where suspected al-Qaeda members were detained.

group of Paratroopers in the area.

While conducting a patrol on the ground, the Paratroopers found a car missing its battery and one wheel. A military working dog reacted to the trunk, which was not opened for fear of booby traps. An air strike was called in to safely dispatch the vehicle

and the building in which the car was parked.

Two Apaches from 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, destroyed the vehicle and building with two Hellfire missiles. The attack helicopters destroyed four other vehicles at the site with their 30 mm cannons.

Soldiers at the scene counted seven secondary explosions at the site, which indicates explosives were hidden in the vehicles and building.

Operation Bethel also yielded several munitions, weapons and other items used in terrorist acts.

Capt. Donald Braman, commander, Troop B, 1-40th Cav. Regt., said the operation will have a significant impact on al-Qaeda command and control. The detainment of the two members involved in VBIED production will also reduce al-Qaeda's ability to conduct offensive operations in Hawr.

Operation Bethel is part of 2nd BCT, 3rd Inf. Div.'s Operation Marne Torch II, designed to reduce insurgent activity south of Baghdad and stem the flow of explosives, weapons and insurgents into Baghdad.

## Soldiers can take steps to avoid IEDs, UXO

### Task Force Troy uses military and civilian expertise to combat IEDs

By Staff Sgt. Tony M. Lindback  
MND-C Public Affairs

**FOB HAMMER** – Explosive ordnance disposal technicians have seen a change in the enemy's tactics, techniques and procedures.

Field experience, battlefield changes and the larger and more frequent presence of Coalition Forces in more areas are reasons the enemy has changed the way it operates, said Sgt. John Siebert, an EOD technician, 789th Ordnance Company (EOD), Task Force Troy.

Task Force Troy is comprised of military and civilian explosives experts for the purpose of lessening the threat of improvised explosive devices in Iraq. The 789th is from Fort Benning, Ga., and is attached to 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat team, 3rd Infantry Division.

Siebert has seen changes in the way insurgents work with his own eyes, having been deployed twice before.

"In the beginning of the war the IEDs were very simplistic," Siebert said. "As the war progressed, the IEDs progressed. Now, with the help of counter-IED technology, they're going back to their roots – the basics they know work. The only way you can stop them is to find them."

Currently U.S. Forces are being educated about IEDs and unexploded ord-



By Staff Sgt. Tony M. Lindback

EOD technician Spc. Dennis Speek, 789th Ordnance Co. (EOD), explains how to use the robot known as the "Talon" to handle explosives by remote control while standing in front of the Joint Explosive Ordnance Disposal Rapid Response Vehicle at FOB Hammer Sept. 18.

nance in a much broader way. Soldiers in basic training are learning how to look for and identify IEDs and UXO, and mobilization stations are training Reserve, National Guard and active servicemembers from other branches. Refresher training is also provided upon entry to the combat theater.

Siebert said, "Five years ago a lot of people in the Army didn't know what we did. Nowadays privates coming right out of basic training know what we do, when we need to be called and how to send up a 9-line UXO report."

"We're integrated with the units on the ground a lot better," Siebert added. "They understand what our job is more, so they know how to prepare for

us arriving better."

The job is easier with more Soldiers understanding EOD's mission, said Spc. Dennis Speek, another 789th EOD technician, but Soldiers can still take steps to make EOD's job easier.

Capt. Justin Gerken, commander, 789th Ordnance Co., said his recommendations for handling an IED or UXO is to call EOD for anything that looks suspicious. The person who saw the item should remain on scene to share information with EOD.

One challenge EOD technicians face is not always having a good marker for a suspected IED, Speek said. Telling an EOD team, "It's over there," simply isn't good enough.

Even with the challenges, Siebert and Speek said IEDs are becoming easier to defeat.

Siebert said it appears the purpose of many IEDs is to harass Coalition Forces rather than effectively kill large numbers of troops. For Coalition Forces, damage from IEDs, other than explosively-formed-projectile types, has been minimal, he said.

Another threat EOD tries to minimize is injury from UXO detonations, Speek said.

"We have had several incidents on the FOB of unexploded ordnance being dug up with a lot of the construction work being done," Speek said. "It's not uncommon at all. We've also had several incidents out on the ranges here."

He said UXO is just as dangerous as IEDs.

"Dead and injured is dead and injured, no matter how the explosion happens," Speek said. "There's no need to touch it. It's not a good souvenir."

"Even if it looks harmless, or like it has been there for a long time, it could very well be an IED," Gerken said.

The last piece of advice Gerken has is for Soldiers to wear the personal protective equipment they have been issued for going outside the wire.

"Items such as gloves, protective eyewear, ear plugs, and fire-retardant clothing have minimized injury and saved countless Soldiers when they have struck an IED, or been in the vicinity of one," he said.

The 789th Ordnance Co. (EOD) has been deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom since May.



# STB Soldier earns career counselor of year

Next step for Task Force Marne's top counselor is FORSCOM board

By Staff Sgt. Tony M. Lindback  
MND-C Public Affairs

**CAMP VICTORY** – Of all Dog Face Soldier career counselors, Sgt. 1st Class Gregory Koval is top dog.

Taking pride in his job and continually making the effort to help Soldiers has earned this Special Troops Battalion, 3rd Infantry Division Soldier the title of Task Force Marne career counselor of the year.

The annual competition was based on a board with job-specific questions about how to counsel Soldiers, Koval said. The division-level competition had more people on the board than participating.

Five senior brigade career counselors and Task Force Marne Command Sgt. Maj. Jesse L. Andrews, Jr. sat on the board asking the five competitors questions.

Andrews' questions were about cur-

rent world affairs. Participants had to know what was recently going on with the Iraqi constitution, what benchmarks were being made and how people in Honduras were being affected by the recent hurricane there. The rest of the board members asked questions specific to the career-counselor field but had different categories they asked from.

Though he came out on top, Koval said, "All the other career counselors who attended the board are just as proficient as me. They had to pick one winner, and, I don't think it's fair, but ... I think all that attended the board are winners. And I think all those career counselors should be recognized for the efforts that got them to that level."

An advantage Koval had was that he was no stranger to competition. He had competed years prior and even worked as a board recorder last year. That experience may benefit him as he moves on to the next level of competition.

"The next step is the FORSCOM career counselor of the year board which is in St. Louis Oct. 29," said Koval, "so, I'm studying now to go



By Staff Sgt. Tony M. Lindback  
Sgt. 1st Class Gregory Koval

and compete at the next level, hopefully win that one and then after that go and compete at the Department of the Army career counselor of the year board."

Master Sgt. James Nicolai, the division retention operations NCO, works in the same office as Koval and said it was not a big surprise he won the Task Force Marne competition because of his commitment to excellence.

"His level of responsibility and the fact that he tries to make himself better all the time are what I think are the best things about him," Nicolai said. "He's never content to just be as good as he is. He always wants to be better."

"He loves to help people and take care of Soldiers. That's his main goal every day."

Achieving his goals and helping Soldiers decide what to do with their careers is something Koval said he loves doing and has no plans to change it.

"I think being a career counselor is the best job in the Army," Koval said. "You have an opportunity each and every day to help a Soldier, i.e. benefiting them, counseling them, telling them how to get promoted, changing their job or just keeping them in boots."

"I would do this job a thousand times over. I would have done it for free. I will continue to do this job as long as I'm allowed to stay in the Army because I love to help Soldiers. I'm committed to helping them and making my mission. I love what I do."

## From relaxing to bullfighting, Soldiers enjoy EML

Soldiers trade war adventures for travel adventures during time off

By Staff Sgt. Tony M. Lindback  
MND-C Public Affairs

**FOB HAMMER** – Whether teaching a teen daughter to drive, scuba diving or cliff diving, Soldiers of 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team are taking advantage of their environmental morale leave.

Deployed servicemembers have the option to go almost anywhere in the world during their leave, and the military will pick up the tab for the airfare.

Chief Warrant Officer Michael Podesta, transportation officer, 3rd HBCT, used the free ticket to go to Italy. Though he is from Long Island, N.Y., his ancestors were Italian.

During late August and early September, Podesta traveled to 11 Italian cities in 18 days.

Podesta did his traveling without reservations – literally and figuratively. He traveled by himself with no real plans and said he loved it.

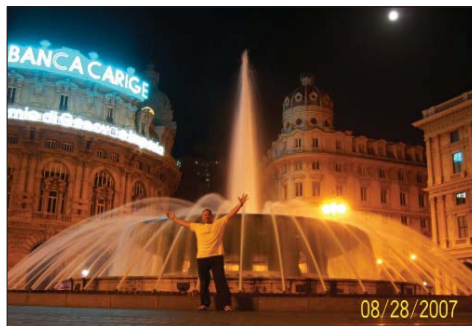
"I change my plans all the time," Podesta said. "I talk to the locals and find out, 'Hey, you should check this place out.' It's the stuff you won't read about in the travel books."

Not having to stick to a schedule gave him the flexibility to see all he wanted in every city.

"I'd wake up early, check out of the hotel, and if I liked the city I'd stay," he said. "If I thought I'd seen all the city had to offer, I'd head to the next one."

His days were spent walking around, seeing the sites, meeting new people and taking pictures.

After running around all day, he would shower, dress to go out, and hit the bars and clubs. He also spent many nights awake until 5 a.m. so he could get



Courtesy photo

Chief Warrant Officer Michael Podesta stands in front of the Ferrari Fountain in Genoa, Italy. He stayed awake into the early morning hours to get photos without bystanders in his shots.

photos at night when there weren't as many people out filling his shots.

In Sardinia, one of Podesta's first stops, he didn't pass up the chance to scuba dive and see what Italy had to offer under water.

Podesta is not the only Soldier from FOB Hammer who did some exploring. Spc. Amy Graybeal, a topographical analyst with 3rd HBCT, decided to visit a friend stationed at Lajes Field, Portugal.

"The opportunity is there," she said. "You don't have to go back to the states for EML. You can go pretty much anywhere you want as long as you have a passport."

"I was on an island. There were beaches. I just relaxed and hung out," Graybeal said.

Lajes Field is where she spent most of her time. Though she had the opportunity to drive around, she said she preferred to stay on the island.

"The little streets were really narrow," Graybeal said. "I thought I was going to hit something."

Being in a new place having narrow and unfamiliar roads prevented her from driving, but Soldiers need to take a little time to re-adjust to driving no matter where they take EML, she said.

Having a friend there gave Graybeal the advantage of getting home-cooked meals and being shown the sites. She even got to see a bullfight, sort of.

"It wasn't a real bullfight," Graybeal said. "They call it a bullfight, but they just block off the streets and let a bull run around. People get in and tease the bull. It was pretty fun."

Graybeal also did a little cliff diving in Portugal.

On a black-sand beach where there were pools carved from the volcanic rock, there were cliffs for diving.

"I'm a little bit of a thrill seeker. At least I try to be. Though, the cliff I dove off wasn't that high. I mean, it was high, but I chickened out on the really high one."

Not all Soldiers choose to venture to new places, choosing instead to spend time with family.

Staff Sgt. Marcus Bridges, of Sandersville, Ga., went home to see his wife and stepdaughter.

Bridges, who is a forward observer for Troop B, 3rd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, faced more danger during EML than in Iraq. He was teaching his 17-year-old stepdaughter, Marissa, how to drive.

Bouncing off curbs and letting go of the wheel while moving, Marissa made Bridges nervous, but he said it was worth it to spend time with her.

Senaria, Bridges' wife, and Marissa are in college, so the amount of time they could spend together was limited.

"We didn't do anything real crazy," Bridges said. "We just spent time together when we could."



# Soldiers find caches, catch wanted terrorists

By SGT. 1ST CLASS ANGELA MCKINZIE  
2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI) Public Affairs

**SAID ABDULLA CORRIDOR** — Since July, Coalition and Iraqi forces have been working with concerned local citizens to rid the area of al-Qaeda.

Recently, concerned citizens provided information to Coalition Forces working in the area.

After receiving the tip, Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 15th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry), out of Fort Drum, N.Y., and 4th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, teamed up for Operation Eagle Chancellorsville Sept. 21 in the Said Abdulla Corridor.

The operation, which was intended to deny enemy safe haven within 2-15 FAR's area of operations, yielded multiple caches and the capture of suspected al-Qaeda members in the area.

"The local population has pledged its support by moving alongside IA and U.S. forces," said 1st Lt. Dave Kendzior, a platoon leader with 2-15 FAR. "They have been instrumental in leading us to caches and buildings that al-Qaeda have been hiding in."

Since the increasing support of the concerned local citizens, al-Qaeda has continued to hide weapons, but they have not been successful.

During this mission, U.S. and Iraqi Soldiers discovered weapons caches in cemeteries.

The caches consisted of 12 rocket-propelled grenade rounds, a 152 mm artillery round, an improvised explosive device, three PKC machine guns, two AK-47 assault rifles, a Dragonov



Courtesy photo

Lt. Col. Bob Morschauser (second from left), commander of 2-15th FAR and Capt. Blake Keil (second from right), a battery commander with 2-15, read a map during Operation Eagle Chancellorsville.

sniper rifle with a scope, four RPG launchers, five mortar sights, 70 mortar primers, 20 mortar charges, a 60 mm mortar round, a camera flash IED initiator, three Iraqi army uniforms, three Kevlar helmets, 11 mortar fuses, 19 RPG boosters, two bolt cutters, an aid bag, a hand-held radio charger, three Global Positioning Systems, 3,000 rounds of PKC ammunition, various IED components, a roll of copper wire and two ammunition vests.

Aside from finding caches, Soldiers detained three terror suspects who were on the IA and U.S. target list.

"Concerned citizens have not only led us to caches, but to members of al-Qaeda," Kendzior said.



By Spc. Emily Wilsoncroft

Members of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. step during Poetry in Motion Sept. 22.

## Greeks 'stepping out' in Iraq heat

Routine in support of poetry jam

MND-C Public Affairs

**CAMP VICTORY**—Hundreds of miles away from their alma mater, fraternity and sorority members paused during combat operations to bond and give a cultural and rhythmic performance.

For the second time this year members of Greek organizations on Victory Base Complex took to the stage and combined the intricate footwork, handclaps and vocals to perform what is known as stepping. The first time was to celebrate Juneteenth, and Sept. 22 was to support a local poetry reading.

"Stepping has a long history behind it," said Capt. Tyrone Lewis, from the 3rd Infantry Division, G-6 and a member of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc. It builds camaraderie, healthy sportsmanship, and everyone has a good time, he added.

*"Stepping has a long history behind it. It builds camaraderie, healthy sportsmanship, and everyone has a good time."*

— Capt. Tyrone Lewis  
G-6

To some, there may seem to be animosity among the Greek organizations because during the step shows they often mock or poke fun at each other. However, all of the Pan Hellenic members have a deep respect for one another.

"We were all born out of the need to give back to our communities and provide public service. We share some of the same ideals, goals and values. It's those fundamentals that allow us to bond so easily," Lewis said.

"We're all family," said Maj. Shilisa Geter, with the 3rd Inf. Div., G-3. "We all made a lifetime commitment to our fraternities or sororities when we pledged, and the support we give each other will also last a lifetime. The Pan Hellenic members and especially my sorority sisters of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., have helped me cope with this deployment."

Stepping for Geter was one way of taking her mind off tracking combat operations for a short while, but the laughs and small talk with her sorority sisters is what made it worth sacrificing a few hours of sleep.

"Not everyone can understand how perfect strangers can automatically connect based on Greek affiliation. But for most of us in fraternities or sororities, we don't see each other as strangers. We immediately recognize each other as family."



## THIS WEEK IN MARNE HISTORY

PROVIDED BY SASHA McBRAYER  
Fort Stewart Museum

## Rocky comes to Iraq

Rocky was drawn by Walt Disney himself in 1965 and sold to the Marne Division for \$1. The division commander during the transaction was Maj. Gen. Albert O. Conner, who asked Walt Disney Studios to create a mascot that would, "Mirror the qualities of the Dogface Soldier: heroic but humble; fierce but gentle, quick-witted and wise; with a confidence and dignity that comes from having proved oneself."

A current photo of Rocky at Task Force Marne Headquarters, Camp Victory, Iraq.



By Sgt. Michael Connors



# U.S. organization pays for Tebarek's surgery

Hope is Iraqi girl will make full recovery

By 2ND LT. LIZ LOPEZ  
2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI)

**YUSUFYIAH**—Miracles do not happen every day, but for one Iraqi girl and father, they seem to happen often enough.

It has been more than two months since Sgt. William Ludlow, a native of Fort Smith, Ark., a combat medic with Company C, 210th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) was first introduced to Tebarek, an Iraqi girl wounded in a mortar attack near the city of Yusufiyah.

The whirlwind of events that followed changed both of their lives. Late in the day July 21, at Patrol Base Yusufiyah, the aid station's normal routine was thrown into chaos by the arrival of eight victims of a nearby mortar attack. Among the wounded were seven Iraqi children.

One of the victims, a 6-year-old girl named Tebarek, was placed under Ludlow's care.

Initial triage showed Tebarek's left leg and abdominal injuries were so severe that she needed immediate evacuation to the 28th Combat Support Hospital in Baghdad's International Zone.

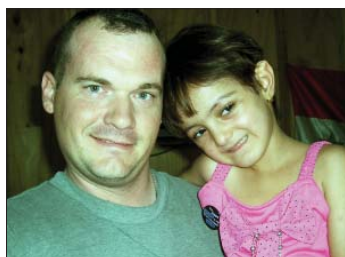
In response to Tebarek's story, the 31st Regiment Association, made up of retirees and former members of 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 2nd BCT, the unit to which Ludlow is attached, raised \$2,510 for her to receive a surgery to reverse the colostomy that had once saved her life.

With the cast now off of her leg and her health improving, she and her family are ready to get back to a normal life.

Reversing the colostomy will be a step in the right direction by returning her normal intestinal function.

"Basically, this surgery is the last step in her being healed," Ludlow explained.

On Sept. 1, Ludlow presented the



Courtesy photo

Sgt. William Ludlow holds Tebarek. He treated the Iraqi girl on multiple occasions at the Yusufiyah Aid Station after she was injured.

money to the little girl and her father.

It would be the last time Ludlow would ever get to see this young patient who has inspired him to focus his future medical aspirations in pediatrics. Yet initially, he was not expecting to go.

"I had already said my goodbyes," Ludlow said. "But I changed my mind at the last moment."

It was a short and simple ceremony, during which the medic presented Tebarek's father with \$1,000, enough money to cover the surgery. The unit is saving the rest of the money for another Iraqi child who needs heart surgery to correct a congenital defect.

Because of combat operations, the availability of Arabic translators was limited, but words were not really necessary.

When Ludlow presented the money to Tebarek's father he already knew what it was for. His gratitude was immeasurable.

Although he has no way of knowing, Ludlow assumes Tebarek has already had her surgery. Her dad seemed anxious to get it done even before he received the financial help.

"You don't see many fathers react to their kids the way he reacted to her," Ludlow said.

Though he admits to missing his sessions with the little girl, Ludlow agreed that it was time for them both to move on.

Tebarek will be starting school in a couple of months, and with her latest surgery, the hope is she'll be just like any other child.

## Photo Contest Winner: CW2 Jerry Dickerson



### Photo Contest Get Published!

#### Want to be famous?

Email your best photo to the editor: michael.connors@iraq.centcom.mil. A photo will be chosen for the next edition of the *Marne Focus*. Include your rank, full name, unit, photo date and a brief caption with rank, full name and unit of each Soldier in the photo.

### In-sector MEDEVAC:

Chief Warrant Officer Jerry Dickerson, a helicopter pilot with Co. C, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Aviation Regiment, 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade submitted this photo to the *Marne Focus*. The majority of helicopter MEDEVACs occur from forward operating bases. In-sector MEDEVACs, as depicted here, are infrequently caught on film.

## PVT MURPHY'S LAW



Not all of our enemies are outside the FOB...

## OPERATIONAL SECURITY

...some have disguised themselves as one of us. Report suspicious activities immediately.

### ...IT'S EVERYONE'S JOB.



# Drill Sgt. still leading troops 4 years later

## Mentor, Cav Scouts serve in Iraq together

By **Sgt. JASON STADEL**  
2nd BCT, 3rd Inf. Div. Public Affairs

**FOB FALCON** – From 2002 until 2005, Sgt. 1st Class Derek Heavener was “on the trail” as a drill sergeant at Fort Knox, Ky., molding civilians into Soldiers. In those three years, he helped transform about 1,400 privates into cavalry scouts.

Two years after ending his tour, Heavener is still leading two of his ‘high speed’ Soldiers from Fort Knox, only this time in Iraq.

Staff Sgts. Bruce Cosgrove and James Chavers, Heavener’s former basic-training Soldiers, are now both in Heavener’s platoon.

They both advanced in rank quickly. Chavers attained the rank of staff sergeant in four years, the minimum time in service, and Cosgrove made staff sergeant at four and a half years. The Soldiers are both in Troop A, 1st Squadron, 40th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division.

When entering the United States Army, cavalry scouts go through one-station unit training. Simply put, basic combat training and advanced in-

dividual training are combined into a 16-week training course.

Although Heavener trained more than 1,000 cavalry scouts, he said he easily remembers Cosgrove and Chavers. “They were both some of the best (Soldiers) I ever had,” Heavener said. “In fact my partner and I identified Sergeant Chavers as being a stand-out private the second day.”

Heavener is happy to have NCOs working for him that he knows a lot about; as the three highest ranking NCOs in the platoon, he said they have a good rapport with each other.

Like Heavener, both Cosgrove and Chavers completed airborne school. In 2005, the Army began a new airborne brigade at Fort Richardson, Alaska, in which 1-40th Cav. Regt. was born. Most of the Soldiers that were brought to the unit were airborne qualified.

Heavener said since the world of cavalry scouts is small, especially when it’s airborne cavalry, he was able to follow parts of both Soldiers’ careers. After basic training, Cosgrove’s first duty station was at Fort Knox while Chavers was stationed at Fort Polk, La.

Through friends Heavener said he



Photos by Sgt. Jason Stadel

Staff Sgt. Bruce Cosgrove provides cover during a mission in Iraq.

knew they were both going to 1-40th Cav. Regt., but he had no idea they would end up in his platoon.

“It was strange at first,” Heavener said. “It’s a completely different face they see of me now from when I was their drill sergeant.”

He said it’s now a much different atmosphere in the “Denali” Squadron than at basic training. “They were civilians becoming Soldiers then. Now that they are (non-commissioned officers) I can teach, coach and rely on them.”

Cosgrove and Chavers are the section sergeants for Heavener’s platoon; they said they both liked working with the NCO that introduced them to the Army.

“It was hard to get used to being around him at first,” Cosgrove said in reference to Heavener’s old role as drill sergeant and current role as platoon sergeant. “He was a great drill sergeant and now I enjoy working for him.”

Chavers remembered his time in basic training under Heavener, “I was the platoon guide in basic. Sergeant Heavener was the one I could go to when I had an issue to bring up. Of our drill sergeants, he was the quiet one but he could get really mad,” said the 27-year-old Chavers, who is from

Mobile, Ala.

One of the memorable moments for Heavener, Chavers and Cosgrove was when the United States invaded Iraq during their time in basic. Heavener and the other drill sergeants allowed the privates to watch the news coverage of the invasion. Heavener told the

privates because of the job they chose in the Army, they would be called on at sometime to deploy to Iraq.

“I made sure they knew about the reality of the situation,” Heavener said. “It just didn’t cross my mind that I’d be right here with them.”

— Sgt. 1st Class  
Derek Heavener  
1-40th Cav. Regt.

percent of you guys are going to end up over there in a couple years. I guess they were right,” Cosgrove said.

The three have very different personalities but when it comes to work they are usually on the same page. “We think very much alike when it comes to tactics,” Chavers said.

As the three Troop A, 1-40th Cav. Regt. NCOs continue their time they will always have something to talk about.

“We spent our first 16 weeks in the Army with (Heavener),” said Cosgrove. “And now we’re going to spend 15 months over here, we’ll always have a lot of stories to share.”



Sgt. 1st Class Derek Heavener talks on a radio during a mission in Iraq.

