



Wedding Another First Team First

Page 25



Sappers Work to Quell Insurgent Activity

Page 14



Iraqi Army Troops Bring Medical Care

Page 4

Crossed Sabers

Volume I, Issue 16

Telling the MND-Baghdad Story

Monday, July 9, 2007



(Photo by Sgt. Mike Pryor, 2nd BCT, 82nd Abn. Div. Public Affairs)

Another One Bites The Dust

A cloud of smoke and dust envelopes Staff Sgt. Michael Mullahy, of Batavia, Ill. seconds after he fired an AT4 rocket launcher at an insurgent position during a firefight in Baghdad's Adhamiyah District June 16. The rocket ended a 20-minute running gun battle with insurgents, resulting in one insurgent dead and three others captured. Mullahy is a squad leader with Company C, 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment. No U.S. Soldiers were injured in the engagement. (See story page 20)

Redeployment: First in, First Out

By Spc. Jeffrey Ledesma
1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq - At three o'clock in the morning and a cool 90 degrees in Baghdad, while harsh rains poured down back home, families of military members in central Texas got further clarification on redeployment dates during a live town hall meeting from Baghdad to Texas' Fort Hood and Fort Bliss June 26.

Reinforcing what Lt. Gen. Raymond Odierno, the commander of Multi-National Corps-Iraq had already put out to dispel a media-provoked rumor of extending an

already 15-month deployment to 18 months, Brig. Gen. (promotable) Vincent K. Brooks, the deputy commanding general of support with Multi-National Division-Baghdad and the 1st Cavalry Division reassured family members that no units who are currently deployed will be extended beyond 15 months, period.

A standing-room-only crowd filled the Ball Room at Catering and Conference Center at Fort Hood, Texas while hundreds more viewed the proceedings hundreds of miles away at Fort Bliss.

This town hall meeting was the first to have the 1st Cavalry Division's 4th

'Longknife' Brigade Combat Team families in attendance, via satellite at Fort Bliss. Because of technology, the families were allowed them to speak, hear and see everything at the southwest Texas post. In addition, the live feed from Baghdad was available through a link on the 1st Cavalry Division website enabling about an additional 500 people to view the proceedings.

Brooks explained to the family gathering that although it is highly uncommon to have an exact outline on the First Team's redeployment schedule this far in advance, he has

Air Cav Aviators Honored With Awards for Valor (See page 10)



See Home Page 24

'Harraka Barraka,' Blessed Movement

"Harraka barraka" is an Arabic phrase meaning "movement is blessed." It's the new slogan of the Baghdad Operations Command and it was coined by their commanding general in early June.

Iraqi Lt. Gen. Abud Qanbar, the BOC commander, explained Harraka barraka this way: it is better to keep moving forward, eventually achieving progress than to sit back and complain.

I'm no great linguist. When I first heard the term, and the interest in senior leaders to make this our new mantra, I thought to myself, "Harraka barraka? It sounds sort of like Hakuna matata, or maybe abracadabra." But the slogan isn't meant to bring about a magical transformation.

It's meant to remind Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces that every step ahead we make is progress. And that progress should be cherished.

Movement is blessed. If we apply that to the current surge of troops into Baghdad neighborhoods, we can see for ourselves that by beating the streets and making connections within local communities we can make a difference. We move in; we move the enemy out.

We can see movement in neighborhoods already cleared, at marketplaces protected with barriers and in neighborhood and district advisory councils where improvements to the quality of life for the Iraqi people are planned.

We see grass-roots interest in commu-



**Pegasus 9
Sends**

**Command Sgt.
Maj. Philip
Johndrow**

nities across Baghdad to say "No" to extremists and "Yes" to security. Hundreds of Iraqis are lining up to go through the vetting process to join the Iraqi Police or other branches of their security forces.

That's progress.

With all of the surge forces on the ground in Baghdad and across Iraq we are moving forward with Fardh al-Qanoon, better known as the Baghdad Security Plan back home.

The surge is being reported as a horse race - are we ahead, are we behind?

This ain't no horse race (or political race, either).

It's a war against terrorists, illegal militiamen and extremists with their own agendas. It's a fight for freedom for the people of Iraq and the security of the region.

Our Soldiers are making progress. With every cache find and every bad guy we yank off the streets, Baghdad becomes a little safer.

Some units have seen their Iraqi counterparts step up and take the lead in their areas. There is movement across the capi-

tal by Iraqi Security Forces in that direction.

Is it going quickly enough? Not for some, I'm sure, but the forward momentum - that blessed movement is occurring every day in our area of operations.

Everyone within the Multi-National Division - Baghdad should be proud of the service and sacrifice we've made thus far. And we should all recognize that we still have a ways to go.

In late June the division put out redeployment "windows" for our units. After

wondering for nearly two months how the Department of Defense-mandated extension would apply to our formations, we now have a clearer picture of the road ahead.

We can see the finish line. For most of us, that's six months from now.

Then it will be time for us to conduct a professional battle handover with our brothers and sisters from the 4th Infantry Division.

Harraka barraka! Movement is blessed. First Team!



Commanding General:

Maj. Gen. Joseph F. Fil, Jr.

Public Affairs Officer:

Lt. Col. Scott Bleichwehl

Command Information Supervisor:

Master Sgt. Dave Larsen

NCOIC, Print Production:

Sgt. 1st Class Bryan Beach

Editor:

Spc. Shea Butler

Contributing Writers:

Sgt 1st Class Kap Kim, Sgt. 1st

Class Robert Timmons, Sgt. 1st

Class Nicholas Conner, Sgt. 1st

Class Rick Emert, Staff Sgt. Jon

Cupp, Sgt. Mike Pryor, Sgt.

Robert Yde, Spc. Alexis Harrison,

Spc. Nathan Hoskins, Spc. L.B.

Edgar, Spc. Ryan Stroud, Spc.

Karly Cooper, Spc. Jeffrey

Ledesma, Spc. Courtney Marulli,

Spc. William Hatton, Pfc.

Benjamin Gable, Pfc. Ben Fox,

Pfc. Nathaniel Smith

Contact the *Crossed Sabers* at

VOIP 242-4093, DSN 318-847-

2855 or e-mail

david.j.larsen@mnd-b.army.mil.

The *Crossed Sabers* is an authorized publication for members of the U.S. Army. Contents of the *Crossed Sabers* are not necessarily official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, Department of Defense, Department of the Army or the 1st Cavalry Division. All editorial content of the *Crossed Sabers* is prepared, edited, provided and approved by 1st Cavalry Division Public Affairs Office.



REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

HEADQUARTERS
MULTI-NATIONAL CORPS - IRAQ
BAGHDAD, IRAQ
APO AE 09342

June 21, 2007

To The Soldiers of Multi-National Corps-Iraq:

Tuesday, there were reports in the media about possible further extensions of tours of duty in Iraq, based on coverage of Acting Secretary of the Army Geren's Senate confirmation hearing.

Let's be clear, no one extended here now to 15 months will be extended further.

I ask leaders to move quickly to quell potential rumors. Inform your Soldiers and Family Readiness Groups without delay.

RAYMOND T. ODIERNO
Lieutenant General, US Army
Commanding

Baghdad News Briefs

MND-B Troops Continue Successful Clearing Operations in Baghdad's Rashid District

4th IBCT, 1st Inf. Div. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD - Multi-National Division - Baghdad Soldiers defeated multiple insurgent attacks and discovered several caches during clearing operations in the eastern and western portions of the Rashid District of the Iraqi capital June 23 and 24.

Stryker troops from the 2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment "Tomahawks," attached to the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division were attacked several times by insurgents with small arms fire on both June 23 and 24. The Soldiers returned fire in the engagements, killing six insurgents. Five more were seized and taken into custody.

Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment "Black Lions" found a cache in northwest Rashid June 23, which included a PKM machinegun with spare barrel, 400 rounds of belted ammunition, three rocket-propelled grenade launchers with 10 grenades, seven AK-47 assault rifles, one sniper rifle, one bolt-action rifle, loose 7.62mm small arms ammunition and bomb-making materials. Several bullet-resistant vests and ammunition bandoliers were also confiscated.

Earlier June 23, Soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment "Warriors" seized another cache in East Rashid, discovering several 15-pound bags homemade explosives, RPG rounds, blasting caps, loose ammunition and other bomb-making materials.

"The brigade's Soldiers have responded to heightened enemy activity across the Rashid Security District," said Maj. Kirk Luedeke, 4th Brigade spokesman and public affairs officer. "Our troops continue to act on tips and information provided by local residents and the evidence of their work is demonstrated in the continued successful operations against extremists throughout the area."

"Neighborhood Watch" finds Another Cache

By Maj. Randall Baucom
1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

CAMPTAJI, Iraq - For a second time in a week, a large cache consisting of improvised explosive device-making material and mortar rounds was turned over to Coalition Forces by the "Neighborhood Watch" June 25 in Taji, Iraq.

The Taji neighborhood watch contacted Coalition Forces after the driver of a truck fled the scene when the volunteers stopped a suspicious vehicle moving through the rural village of Abd Allah al Jasim. The vehicle contained 24 mortar rounds, two rockets, spare machine gun barrels, small arms ammunition and other IED-making material.

The neighborhood watch is made up of a group of 500 volunteers, from a number of tribes in the area, who want reconciliation with the Coalition Forces and the Iraqi government. The volunteers are currently being vetted for possible future selection for training as Iraqi Police or some other organization within the Iraqi Security Forces.



(U.S. Army photo)

Mortar rounds and other improvised explosive device-making materials were turned over to Coalition Forces by the "Neighborhood Watch" in Taji, Iraq June 25.



(Photo by Navy Lieutenant James Cook, 492nd Civil Affairs)

Staff Sgt. Kyle Richey cares for one of the 24 starving boys in the back of an Iraqi Army ambulance. Civic leaders escorted the boys to the Iskan Hospital for medical treatment.

Two Dozen Iraqi Children Rescued from Orphanage

2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD-U.S. and Iraqi Army Soldiers discovered an orphanage housing 24 severely malnourished and abused boys on June 10 in the Baghdad neighborhood of Fajr.

U.S. and Iraqi Army forces found 24 naked and abused boys, ages 3 to 15 years old, in a darkened room without any windows. Many of the children were tied to their beds and were too weak to stand once released.

Nearby in a locked room, the Soldiers discovered a room full of food and clothing which could have been used to aid the children. Three women, claiming to be the caretakers, and two men, the orphanage director and a guard, were on site when the Soldiers arrived.

Members of the Fajr Neighborhood Advisory Council were notified by the Iraqi Army soldiers and escorted to the orphanage to assist the boys. Paratroopers from Company B, 1st Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, and a 492nd Civil Affairs Team also arrived at the orphanage with medics to treat the malnourished boys.

"The council members were crying at the site of the starving boys," stated Navy Lt. James Cook, a 492nd Civil Affairs Officer.

The NAC arranged for three ambulances to take

the boys to the Iskan Hospital for care.

In May, the boys were removed from the coed orphanage located in Atafiyah because it was believed the boys and girls should not live together, according to accounts from workers at the orphanage.

The council members made arrangements for the children to temporarily stay at the orphanage in Atafiyah, hiring ten additional workers to care for the boys. The Neighborhood Advisory Council vowed to take action and ensure the boys were properly cared for.

"We're very grateful that this story unfolded the way that it did, that none of these 24 boys lost their lives. This is a story of partnership, courageous action and compassion overcoming deplorable negligence," said Brig. Gen. Vincent Brooks, Multi-National Division -Baghdad deputy commanding general.

"The role of the Iraqi Soldiers and the community council was a key to this action being taken to save these young boys," Brooks said.

"We're very fortunate to have the kind of Soldiers we have who are willing to take action, even at personal risk to save the lives of others. These Soldiers in a literal and figurative sense are the best chance for Iraq, just as they were for these boys," he said.



(Photos by Staff Sgt. Jon Cupp, 1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

An Iraqi medic from the 2nd Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division (Mechanized) teams with Air Force Tech Sgt. Joey Torres, a medic attached to the Camp Taji, Iraq Regional Support Unit, Coalition Military Assistance Team, to examine and diagnose an Iraqi patient during a healthcare outreach project in Sab Al Bor, Iraq June 18.

Iraqi Army Troops Bring Medical Care

By Staff Sgt. Jon Cupp
1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

SAB AL BOR, Iraq -- Iraqi Army medics from the 2nd Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division (Mechanized) are moving toward transition by taking the lead in providing medical care for their own healthcare projects.

That's just what these IA troops did as they teamed with Soldier from the 1st "Ironhorse" Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division to bring free healthcare to the villagers here during a June 18 community healthcare outreach project at the



An Iraqi Army troop from the 2nd Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division (Mechanized) asks an Iraqi woman what happened to her eye prior to the woman receiving treatment at the Sab Al Bor health clinic during an Iraqi-led community healthcare outreach project in Sab Al Bor, Iraq June 18.

Sab Al Bor health clinic.

The effort was coordinated by medical staffs from the 2nd Bde., 9th IA Div. (Mechanized). The 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment's squadron surgeon aided the effort by arranging to bring in medics from the 115th Brigade Support Battalion and a few healthcare professionals from the Regional Support Unit, Coalition Military Assistance Training Team on Camp Taji.

"The IA medics are really very professional and they learn very quickly," said Sgt. Jim Nnoko, a medic for Charlie Medical Company, 115th BSB, who said he enjoys working with the IA medics. "They do a good job working with the patients."

Nnoko over the past few months has been helping these Iraqi medics get to the point where they are now--working in real operations with little help from coalition forces--by training them in basic medical skills and combat lifesaver courses.

"They've come very far," Nnoko, who hails from Fort Dodge, Iowa said. "They continue to impress us. Sometimes it can be hard working with them due to the language barrier, but they have been doing just fine, you just have to be very patient with them."

After the Sab Al Bor health clinic opened its doors, patients were seen by Iraqi medics or a U.S. medic and the 1st Sqdrn., 7th Cav. Regt. surgeon was on hand to assist with diagnosis and treatments of patients as well as giving advice to the patients and the medics.

Over the course of the healthcare event, more than 400 patients were treated for ailments ranging from colds, minor burns, allergies, ear infections and other easily treated maladies much like during a military sick call. Patients with more severe injuries or diseases were referred to seek treatment at a hospital in Baghdad.

"We're helping to give the Iraqi people badly needed medical attention that they don't normally get," said 1st Lt.

Juan Briones, a physician's assistant for Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 1st Sqdrn., 7th Cav. Regt. who worked with an Iraqi medic during the outreach project. "Sometimes we see diseases here that we don't normally see in the states."

Briones said that an example of those diseases include the skin disease leishmaniasis which can be treated if caught early. The disease which can be spread to humans by sand flies which eats away at the skin. He also said they sometimes find chicken pox in adults, which hardly ever happens in the states, but can be easily treated.

Along with medical treatment, Iraqi Army troops and U.S. Soldiers gave out free toys, candy, hygiene items and many other things to the villagers.

Ramone, Calif. native Spc. Jack Rosfeld, a medic with Troop B, 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, who has spent much of his time working in line units and now works in the 1st Sqdrn., 7th Cav. Regt.'s aid station, said he lives for days when he can participate in medical missions like this one.

"It's awesome, I really love doing this," said Rosfeld of the day's healthcare mission. "Something that I can take away from this experience is knowing that I actually got to help the Iraqi people."

"What I hope they (the Iraqi people) take away from the experience is knowing we really do care about them," Rosfeld added.

Reflecting on the day's healthcare effort, Soldiers said they see the role they are playing in helping the IA medics as in some small way benefiting the efforts of Iraq to become its own independent nation.

"Overall, the more we help these guys help themselves, that's what it's all about," said 1st Sgt. James Brown, top non-commissioned officer for C Med. Co., 115th BSB. "They have been trained in train the trainer-style courses so they can do it for themselves and they're getting there slowly but surely."

A Goat's Gotta Eat, Too!

Bardstown, Ky., native Sgt. Christopher Cichocki, a chemical defense specialist for Company C, 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, feeds grass to a goat in the village of Naif Al Hasan, Iraq June 20. An Iraqi boy (right) gave Cichocki the grass and also brought out a baby goat by that he wanted to show to the Soldier.



(Photo by Staff Sgt. Jon Cupp, 1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Single Father Labors in Iraq for Kids at Home

By Staff Sgt. Jon Cupp
1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - Nearly three years ago during his first tour to Iraq, things were a little different for Sgt. Chester Temple, a supply specialist for Battery A, 1st Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment.

He had a wife and twin premature babies to worry about - a boy, Trey, and girl, Abbey, who weighed just a little less than three pounds each and could fit in the palm of his hands.

Shortly after their birth, he had flown home to Fort Hood, Texas on emergency leave to see them for the first time but then had to return to Iraq. Later, when his tour was over in early 2005, his wife moved far away leaving him custody of the ailing twins. Eventually, a painful divorce left him a single father raising his children.

For his second deployment to Iraq, Temple had to leave his son and daughter in the care of his parents, who live in Killeen, Texas.

"The kids are doing really well now, they're nearly three years old and healthy," said Temple, who calls Fort Hood his home. "I had no worries leaving them with my parents. I'm glad to know that my babies are being taken care of."

He said he worried more when his children were younger and dealing with health issues. It's easier now.

"My son has become a chunk, getting big," Temple said. "His sister was always bigger than he was, but now he's outgrown her. But they're both healthy and happy."

Temple's father is a retired Soldier and his mother now works at home with her own business, processing physician's orders for nursing homes via computer. They are able to easily watch Abbey and Trey and take turns doing so, Temple said.

"My parents are great people. I was raised by the best," he said. "I really appreciate what they're doing for me and the sacrifices they're making at home. I've got pretty good kids and they're not that hard to manage," added Temple. "They're communicating well now and can tell you when they're hungry and thirsty."

Along with Abbey and Trey who are from his second marriage, Temple has an 8-year-old son, Austin, from his first marriage, who lives with his mother in Alabama.

"Whenever I go on leave, I go see him. I really miss him a lot and I know he misses me, too," said Temple, who said



(Photo by Staff Sgt. Jon Cupp, 1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Sgt. Chester Temple, a supply noncommissioned officer for Battery A, 1st Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment and a native of Fort Hood, Texas, re-stocks his supply room with notebook binders and other items at Camp Taji, Iraq June 13. A single father and sole bread winner for his family, Temple is serving his second tour in Iraq while his parents are taking care of his children for him in Killeen, Texas.

he has good relations with his first wife.

Temple also said he keeps in touch with his children as often as he can.

"I email Austin a lot and he has a good understanding of what I'm doing out here," said Temple. "The twins don't really understand, they just think that daddy's at work."

"I also call them on the phone," he added. "They tell me they love me and miss me. Trey will usually tell me what he's watching on TV and Abbey will look at the phone trying to figure out how I got in there."

To stave off depression and keep his mind off his family, Temple said he often keeps himself busy so the time goes by quicker.

"The best thing to do is for me to engulf myself in my work," said Temple. "When I can't contain thinking about them, a telephone call always softens things up and makes it easier to cope. It can be lonely (without your family), but I joined the military for a sense of pride-my family heritage." Temple noted that not only did his father retire from the Army, but both of his grandfathers, most of his uncles and

three brothers have all served in the military.

When he gets back home from this deployment, Temple said he has a lot of things he wants to do with his kids. Most of the things they like to do together involve being outdoors, but there is one special place he likes to take them.

"They love to look at the animals at the zoo in Waco," said Temple. "I plan on taking them first to the zoo and then out to eat."

Temple said he hopes to convey a simple message to people who ask him why he's in Iraq when he could instead have chosen another career path that would have allowed him to have been home with his kids.

"I love this," he said. "Too often the American people as a whole forget the price that's been paid for freedom. They'll take the freedoms they have for granted and lay them by the wayside."

"People in Iraq have never had true freedom before, but you can see they love the taste of it," Temple said. "We're helping them to get those freedoms. Everybody needs to think about that, especially when so many people have laid their lives on the line for it."

Beauty in Baghdad

Bowling Green, Ky., native 2nd Lt. William Lynch of Company C, 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment attached to the 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div., takes a photo of the Baghdad skyline at sunrise atop one of the many high-rise apartments on Haifa Street June 22.



(U.S. Army photo by Spc. Alexis Harrison, 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Soldiers Build Pool for Prosperity

By Sgt. Robert Yde
2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE PROSPERITY, Iraq - When Soldiers from the 15th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division began relocating from Forward Operating Base Falcon to FOB Prosperity earlier this year, one of the first things they noticed about their new home was all of the empty and half-empty springs that surround the bases main structure - the palace, which houses the brigade headquarters.

With the temperature beginning to rise as the summer months quickly approached, some of the Soldiers saw these springs as potential sights to construct a swimming pool.

"We're putting a pool together so that once Soldiers come back from a patrol they can jump in and relax because it's getting kind of hot out here," Staff Sgt. Timothy Roberts, one of the non-commissioned officers in charge of the construction of the new pool, said. "We're just doing it to try to improve morale and give them a little taste of home."

Soldiers from the Co. A's fuel and water platoon took on most of the work that has gone into putting the pool together, and according to company commander, Capt. Erin Gilliam, one Soldier in particular, Sgt. David Hudock, a water purification specialist from Pittsburgh, Pa., was very instrumental in getting the project off the ground.

"Sgt. Hudock and his guys did all the leg work on it," Gilliam, a native of Fort Monmouth, N.J explained. "They pitched the idea and our battalion commander said it sounded like a good idea to him and he talked to Black Jack 6 and from there they just started working it to see what we could come up with. They studied up and they read several web-sites on what it would take."

Hudock said that after getting permission from the brigade commander and the embassy to go ahead with the plan, the next step was getting the selected sight cleaned and getting the necessary supplies together to complete the project.

"Sgt. Hudock commissioned some Iraqi workers to come out here to sweep it up," Roberts, who is originally from Phoenix, said. "Initially, there was a whole bunch of debris inside of here - grass, shrubbery, stuff of that nature, and they really worked their butts off to get this area cleaned up because it was pretty nasty when we originally started."

Although the area was swept out, Roberts said they still wanted to cover the concrete with something. Originally they decided to lay down two 210,000 gallon fuel liners inside the

pool and seal them together to prevent water from getting underneath them and causing them to rise.

However, after they started putting the liners down, Hudock said they realized they wouldn't cover the entire space, so they hired some local national workers to reseal the pool with waterproof concrete and then paint the concrete with a water-repellant pool paint.

The Soldiers are currently filling the pool from the spring next to it. The water is sucked from the spring and ran through a purification machine before it drains into the pool and Hudock said he expects this process to take five or six days.

Once the pool is filled Hudock said it will hold 525,000 gallons of water and be able to accommodate 150 to 175 people.

Although it won't be deep - only about four feet - it will offer Soldiers a chance to escape from the heat.

"You won't be able to dive in it, but it'll be better than just sitting around in a tower for a couple of days sweating," Roberts said.

Gilliam said that the 15th BSB has also ordered furniture for the pool area so Soldiers will be able to sit in the area and relax, and that once everything is complete, her Soldiers will continue to monitor certain aspects such as the chlorination level of the

water.

"We'll continue to run the reverse osmosis water purification unit and test it to ensure that it's chlorinated just the same as it would be back in the states at any other pool," she explained. "We'll be responsible for the overall upkeep and maintenance of it and for keeping the water level where it is."

According to Roberts, taking on maintenance issues for the pool is something his Soldiers are excited about.

"Most of my water guys have been doing fuel missions, and so now we're going to have our equipment out here treating water," he explained. "We've been glad to help out our fuelers but our MOS is to treat water, and truthfully, we've really been wanting to do this for quite a while, so we're looking forward to doing it."

Although the project has taken a little longer than they first anticipated, Gilliam said that her Soldiers are getting closer to completing the pool and they are hoping to have it opened in late June or early July.

"I know it's been a lot of hard work, a lot of sweat and a lot of effort," she said, "but I think it's an important mission and it's a great morale boost that couldn't come at a better time."



(Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Kap Kim, 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Spc. Stephanie Gould, Spc. Alicia Cummings and Spc. Shelly Martinez, Soldiers with the 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. paint the First Team patch on Forward Operating Base Prosperity's newly constructed swimming pool June 17.

There's Only Room for One Mayor (Cell) on This FOB

By Spc. Alexis Harrison
2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE PROSPERITY, Iraq - Merriam Webster defines a "mayor" as the executive chief of a city, town or borough. Although a military base in Iraq might not be considered a borough or town, the need for a municipal chief remains the same to keep the basic necessities in working order.

Several Soldiers from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division were tapped for mayor cell duties when the Black Jack Brigade came to Baghdad more than six

months ago. Every day they troubleshoot problems with essential services while also making decisions that impact all the Soldiers and civilians living on the base.

Master Sgt. James Graves from Greensboro, N.C., thought that being a first sergeant at his last post was hectic and challenging. That was until he was assigned to be the FOB mayor when the Black Jack Brigade came to town last November.

Now, he and his team oversee every aspect of living on the FOB from getting water dropped off to making repairs to buildings or trailers. The group of Soldiers works closely with all the Kellogg, Brown & Root

(KBR) contracted civilians and dozens of local nationals who work on the FOB.

"We are the first line of logistics on the FOB," Graves said. "Things we do here could be as simple as getting water dropped off somewhere or getting rooms built into a tent. There's a different challenge every day."

A few months ago, several hundred Soldiers moved from FOB Falcon, a few miles south, to Prosperity. Rooms were needed, and the mayor's cell stepped up to the challenge of making it happen.

Along with the challenge of managing Soldiers' housing and needs, Graves' team accredits local nationals who work and live on the FOB. Graves said they have more than 20 vendors on the FOB selling items like shoes, electronics and everything else to Soldiers.

Each and every one of these vendors is indirectly managed by the mayor's cell and in particular Staff Sgt. Keith Bolden. Graves said that when he and the team from Black Jack arrived, many of the vendors weren't keeping records of any type, normal hours nor did they have any return policy for defective products.

"[The store owners'] style is very different from what our style of business is," he said. "They adapted to a lot of our practices and it's naturally benefited them."

Not only does the team work with the local vendors, but they also take care of the management of all local laborers who work on things like street cleanup, carpentry and much more.

Graves said that security is paramount to success when letting people into the secured FOB. He gives all the credit to the noncommissioned officer who takes care of all the badge assignments: Sgt. Jeffrey Bauer. After all, Graves said, without the proper security

procedures in place, the FOB would be in a crucial state.

Whenever Soldiers have problems with water, electricity or anything else related to living conditions, they're urged to call or stop by the mayor's cell to talk with one of the many people who work there.

Graves admits that although it's hectic sometimes and sleep is more a luxury than necessity, he couldn't imagine doing anything else.

Graves had spent three years as a first sergeant at his last duty station.

"I went from having about 180 Soldiers to take care of to the entire Black Jack Brigade and everyone else on this FOB," he said. "It was really tough in the first couple months. I thought to myself 'This is going to be one tough year', but we got into a routine and a good battle rhythm, and now things are just fine."

Some decisions Graves has to make don't seem to make sense to Soldiers like closing all the local shops at a strict and specific time. However, Graves says that making tough decisions is just part of the job.

"Everybody expects the mayor to make a decision on something," he said. "Some decisions are easier than others, but they're all in the best interest of the Soldiers and people living here."

Graves hopes to continue to see success in all areas of the FOB while he's here. He said that although it's the most challenging thing he's ever done, he has a great staff that helps with everything, and he sees the satisfaction of a job well done on a daily basis.

"There's nothing better than a Soldier coming back to our office and saying, 'Thanks a lot. We couldn't have done it without you guys.'"



(Photo by Spc. Alexis Harrison, 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Columbia, S.C., native Spc. Delone Hampton and a contract employee check the log book of privately-owned vehicles after the Mayor Cell noncommissioned officer in charge, Master Sgt. James Graves, signed off on the form June 8.

Follow the Leader

Troops from Company D, 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, attached to the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, scale a flight of stairs on their way to the rooftop of one of the many apartment complexes on Haifa Street June 22.



(Photo by Spc. Alexis Harrison, 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

1st ACB Career Counselors Earn Re-up Awards

By Spc. Nathan Hoskins
1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - One tradition of the 1st Cavalry Division is to keep Soldiers in the Army while keeping the horse patch on their shoulders.

The 1st Air Cavalry Brigade "Warriors" have been doing just that and were rewarded for their retention achievements during a ceremony June 21.

The Warriors took the award as top brigade in the division for two consecutive quarters, along with awards at the battalion and company level, said Auburn, N.Y., native Sgt. 1st Class Joseph Alcock, a 1st ACB career counselor.

The 2nd "Lobo" Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div., took the best battalion for the first quarter and Company A, 4th "Guns" Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, took best company in the division for the same quarter. Company B, 4-227th, took best company for the second quarter, said Alcock.

Maj. Gen. Joseph F. Fil Jr., commanding general of the 1st Cav. Div and Multi-National Division - Baghdad, handed out the awards and praised the retention representatives.

"The best (retention programs), by far, are the ones where it's just straight up honest - laying out options for the troops, helping them find what it is that they desire," said Fil.

That's just what the career counselors do,



(Photo by Spc. Nathan Hoskins, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Maj. Gen. Joseph F. Fil Jr., (second from the right) commanding general of Multi-National Division - Baghdad poses for a photo with the 2nd Bn., 227th Avn. Regt., 1st ACB command team and retention noncommissioned officer after presenting them with a painting for being top battalion in the division for retention in the first quarter June 21 while his top noncommissioned officer, Command Sgt. Maj. Philip F. Johndrow (far left) looks on. (From left to right) Command Sgt. Maj. Francisco Melo, the top NCO of the battalion; Lt. Col. Christopher Joslin, the commander; and Sgt. Stanley Hopkins, excepted the painting.

with a little help of within the ranks of their unit.

"There are only three (brigade-level) career counselors, and we can't talk to everyone. It takes more than one person to take care of Soldiers," Alcock said.

Sgt. Stanley Hopkins, the retention noncommissioned officer for the Lobos

agreed.

"The 2nd Battalion's retention program is successful because we have good rapport with our Soldiers and everybody from the commander down to the squad leader is actively involved," said Hopkins. "I talk to everyone involved with the Soldier to get an accurate picture of where they're at and where they want

to go."

Hopkins shies away from taking credit for his award, he instead puts the spotlight on his battalion's Company E, which pushed him quickly to his goals, he said.

There is also a huge effort that each retention NCO takes to get the troopers what they want in order to fulfill their goals and desires, said Alcock.

"If you keep (the Soldiers) happy and you keep them informed about what's going on in the Army and how to help them within their career, they'll stay in," said Alcock.

Hopkins believes that "world conflict directly affects retention, but nothing (adversely) affects dedication to duty or loyalty to country. That's why Soldiers reenlist. That's a fact," he said.

While dedication to duty and patriotism may be the driving force in a Soldier's decision to reenlist; there are also bonuses, college options and more to help persuade that trooper who is teetering on the edge of indecision, said Alcock.

The 1st Cav. Div. offers the option for Soldiers to attend a college of their choice for a semester if they reenlist. Other Soldiers just get hefty, tax-free bonuses, Alcock said.

Whether it's the personal touch of the retention staff or the alluring benefits, the Warrior Brigade knows what it takes to keep Soldiers in the Army and content, said Alcock.

"A happy Soldier stays in the Army," he said.

Couples Who Reenlist Together Stay Together, Stay Army, Air Cav

By Spc. Nathan Hoskins
1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - The Wallers seem to do everything together. They are on the same page in their lives and often finishing each other's sentences.

It only makes sense that these 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Soldiers would reenlist together.

Sgt. Michael Waller, an ammunition specialist for Company A, 615th Aviation Support Battalion, a native of Lynchburg, Va., and his wife, Spc. Alexis Waller, a unit supply specialist of the same unit have tied the metaphorical knot with the Army for another six years.

Although they discuss every major issue concerning their family, which includes two boys: Jordan, 7 and Michael Jr., 2, they decided to make a pact that neither one would sway the other to reenlist or not reenlist, said Alexis a New Orleans Westbank native. This isn't to say they didn't diligently discuss the topic of each other reenlisting, she said.

The Army couple has been married for three years, but haven't yet spent an anniversary together - one of the pitfalls of being an Army couple, said Alexis.

"This would be our first anniversary together whether we're at home or not ... we would prefer to spend it in the states if at all possible," Alexis said with a laugh.

Both husband and wife reenlisting is a major decision, and the Wallers know that it isn't for everyone.

"I would tell anybody to look at it, weigh the options and if it works for you then do it. Make sure you're getting what you want to get out of the deal," Alexis said.

This reenlistment puts Michael a lot closer to fulfilling a 20-year career with the Army.

"I might as well go ahead and finish up a career, but anything can happen. The Army benefits me as much as I benefit them," he said.

Alexis is still weighing her options as to her future in the



(Photo by Staff Sgt. Michael MacDonald, 615th ASB)

Sgt. Michael Waller and his wife of three years, Spc. Alexis Waller (right), both of Co. A, 615th ASB, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div., reenlist together for six more years of service.

Army.

"It depends on how the next two or three years go whether or not I stay. I do plan on putting in a warrant officer packet, so depending on how that goes ... we'll see," she said.

Alexis and Michael are both taking advantage of the 1st Cav. Div.'s college option where they will take a semester of classes at a college of their choice located within a 100-mile radius of Fort Hood, Texas.

"To be a technical warrant officer (non-flight), (the can-

didate) must have at least an associate degree, but I'm going for a bachelor's just for my own personal benefit," she said.

They also came out of the deal with a combined total bonus of \$30,000 - tax free, said Michael.

The Wallers have a lot planned out in their career in the Army, but definitely feel it is not a decision to take lightly, they agreed. Not only couples, but Soldiers in general should consult their career counselor before making their decision.

"My only advice is to weigh your options," said Alexis.

Cold Steel, Lobo Troops Join NCO Corps

By Sgt. 1st Class Rick Emert
1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

TAJI, Iraq - Just because troops are deployed to Iraq doesn't mean they have to buck tradition.

In two ceremonies hosted by the 615th Aviation Support Battalion "Cold Steel" and 2nd "Lobo" Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment - both from 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division - 50 new sergeants were inducted into the Noncommissioned Officer Corps in traditional fashion.

"You are that leadership."

In the June 14 Cold Steel ceremony, 32 new sergeants walked under crossed sabers held by 1st Sgt. Tim Johnson, Company B, and 1st Sgt. Joseph Bell, Company E from

Milford, Ohio, and Jacksonville, Fla., respectively. The sergeants' supervisors stood and announced to the battalion's senior NCO, Dallas native Command Sgt. Maj. Glen Vela, that they sponsored the young NCO being inducted.

Afterward, each sergeant was presented with a certificate from Multi-National Division-Baghdad's senior noncommissioned officer, Command Sgt. Maj. Philip Johndrow. During the ceremony, all NCOs present sang the Army Song and recited the NCO Creed.

The new sergeants were impressed by the traditional induction ceremony.

"It is a great honor," said Sgt. Jenny Van Pelt, Company B, 615th ASB, a native of Utopia, Texas. "These ceremonies are few and far between during deployments. A lot of

people don't even know what an NCO induction ceremony is. Not every NCO can say that they were officially inducted into the NCO Corps."

The fact that the MND-B command sergeant major was on hand to welcome the new sergeants was the icing on the cake.

"I am honored that the division command sergeant major came," said Sgt. Vicente Ramirez, Company B, 615th ASB, a native of Los Angeles. "I had never met the division sergeant major before, so this is a day I will always remember."

During remarks at the ceremony, Johndrow told the new NCOs that, as sergeants, more would be expected of them.

"You cannot forget that ... Soldiers need leadership in order to be successful," Johndrow said. "You are that leadership. Our nation looks to men and women of honor and character, leaders who do not have to make excuses for their past or current actions; leaders who Soldiers want to emulate, to be looked upon as examples. Leadership is practiced, not so much in words as it is in attitudes and in actions."

He also told the young sergeants that their Soldiers would be watching and learning from their actions.

"Your Soldiers look up to you and learn from everything that you do. It is imperative that you set the good example for them at all times, and you lead them with the best of your abilities and make decisions not because they are easy, or because they are popular; you make them because they are right," Johndrow said.

"What will you do with it?"

Eighteen Soldiers were inducted into the NCO Corps in the Lobos ceremony June 15.

The ceremony included a history of the noncommissioned officer, the induction and a recital of the NCO Creed. The guest speak-

er for the event was Multi-National Corps-Iraq's top NCO, Command Sgt. Maj. Neil Ciotola.

"It welcomed us into the NCO world," said Phoenix, Ariz., native Sgt. Theresa Daniels, a member of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2-227th. "It's an official welcome. Back in the rear, they don't do this as much. I think being out here in Iraq, it makes it more special."

"(It meant) being a part of something big, something the Army really makes a big deal about," said Sgt. Joshua Davis, Company D, 2-227th, from Greensboro, N.C.

Daniels said she was inspired by the Ciotola's words.

"(He said) that we make a difference," she said. "He said that by him being older and higher rank, he's going to be leaving the Army and we're new - we're fresh in the Army. We have to take what he says and take it in and learn from it."

In remarks during the ceremony, Ciotola told the new sergeants that NCOs are vital to the success of the U.S. Army.

"We noncommissioned officers are responsible for day-to-day operations," he said. "We are the ones. We wake the Army up; we put the Army to bed."

He charged the young NCOs to make the Army's future as successful as its past.

"When you peel this thing and you take this uniform off, it's all about making the grass grow as opposed to cutting it," he said. "This is all about lifting up the youth of our great nation and assuring and ensuring the relevancy, credibility and ability of this institution for years to come."

"It is the second day of the 233rd year of the American Army, and something wonderful has been born. That's you," Ciotola told the new NCOs. "What will you do with it?"



(Photo by Spc. Nathan Hoskins, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

New noncommissioned officers from 2nd "Lobo" Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, recite the NCO Creed at an NCO induction ceremony June 15 at Camp Taji, Iraq. Eighteen new NCOs from the battalion were inducted with Multi-National Corps-Iraq Command Sgt. Maj. Neil Ciotola on hand as the guest speaker.

Maintainers Keep ACB Aircraft in the Fight

By Sgt. 1st Class Rick Emert
1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - If the Soldiers from Company D, 4th "Guns" Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, have anything to say about it, a battle damaged aircraft may be down temporarily, but it won't be out of the fight forever.

The Co. D, 4-227th, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Soldiers are about 93 percent complete with a battle damaged Apache that required extensive repairs.

The Apache that they set out to repair had holes in the frame which also caused damage to the windows, wiring and rotors, said Capt. Randy James, commander of Co. D.

"It ... required all three levels of maintenance up to the depot level," said James, a native of Slidell, La. "We decided to do it here because my guys are that good. We got approval to do the repairs here."

The first task was to strip the aircraft completely down to assess the damage underneath the frame and clear the way for the armament specialists to make needed repairs, said Staff Sgt. Sean Higgs, an Apache mechanic.

The crews had to remove all of the weapons system components and inspect hundreds of wires, said Spc. Josh Rosenbaum, an armament specialist.

"This is the same kind of thing we would do for a 500-hour

phase (maintenance)," said Rosenbaum, from Keller, Texas. "We would normally have to inspect everything and then put it back together like brand new."

Finally, the aircraft had to be put back together and is now in the inspection phase. In all, the Co. D maintainers have put about 1,800 man hours into the Apache repairs, all the while continuing with their normal maintenance mission.

"The other maintenance that these guys do has not slowed down at all," James said. "In fact, it has sped up because of the surge. More flying means more maintenance. They have been able to accomplish this by being even more focused - they have not had to increase the hours they work."

Along with focus, the Soldiers had to dig deep for the confidence to conduct such a mission.

"A lot of guys might have shied away from doing this, because this level of maintenance is not taught at the schoolhouse," said Portland, Ore., native Spc. Andrew Koplin, an aircraft structure repairman. "For some Soldiers, this was outside their normal (military occupational specialty) skills. A lot of us did on-the-job training to get this done."

Although they didn't realize it at the onset, the mission would become a great training event for the crews. Throughout the mission the Soldiers gained new skills and gelled as a team, and most importantly, worked to keep one of their aircraft in the fight.



(Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Rick Emert, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Spc. Andrew Koplin makes repairs to an AH-64D Apache June 11 at Taji, Iraq. Koplin, from Company D, 4th Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, is part of the maintenance team that keeps Apaches damaged in battle flying over Baghdad.



(U.S. Army photo)

Chief Warrant Officer 4 Johnny Judd (center) and Capt. Randy James (left), receive the Air Medal with Valor from Lt. Col. Timothy DeVito, commander of 4th Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division. Judd, James and Chief Warrant Officer Two Jake Gaston (not pictured) earned the Air Medal with Valor for their actions during fighting in An Najaf, Iraq, Jan. 28.

ACB Aviators Honored With Awards for Valor

By Sgt. 1st Class Rick Emert
1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - Three AH-64D Apache pilots from the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade don't like to talk about the Air Medal with Valor awards they earned for their actions on Jan. 28.

The pilots, from 4th "Guns" Battalion, 227th Aviation, 1st ACB, 1st Cavalry Division, don't care so much about their heroics and even deny that they behaved heroically.

For now, the awards are a painful reminder of the loss of their comrades. Capt. Mark Resh and Chief Warrant Officer 3 Cornell Chao - fall heroes who made the ultimate sacrifice that day during fighting in An Najaf, Iraq.

There is no question however, that the actions of Chief Warrant Officer 4 Johnny Judd, Chief Warrant Officer 2 Jake Gaston and Capt. Randy James were heroic.

Judd and Gaston were the lead team with Resh and Chao as their wingman when the Apache crews were called in to support ground forces in An Najaf. There were more than 600 insurgents with small arms and rocket propelled grenades that were engaging the ground forces.

"They came in to the target area; they were talking to the (U.S. Air Force Joint Terminal Attack Controller)," said Maj. William Denny, executive officer for 4-227th. "Jake Gaston was obtaining just superb situational awareness of what was going on, but one thing we never got the picture of from any systems or any sources was actually what was on the ground.

"The radio came up; someone came on the

net and said: 'Hey, you're taking fire; break left.' "So, (Judd) was breaking left and, on the video feed we saw, you could see the bongo truck that was shooting at him - the earth just erupted around it, and that was the engagement by Captain Resh and (Chief Warrant Officer 3) Chao that saved those guys both. They didn't know if they had battle damage or not. They broke left; they came back around and saw their wingman impact the ground."

Judd immediately got on the radio and alerted the JTAC and the 1st ACB tactical operations center that one of the aircraft was down.

"That gave us the upper hand. We called all of the aircraft in the sky. We got a hundred percent accountability of all of our aircraft except in Najaf, so we launched another Apache team to conduct battle handover," Denny said.

That team consisted of Chief Warrant Officer 2 Zach Johnson and Capt. Randy James.

Meanwhile, Judd and Gaston remained on station.

"Heroically, they stayed on station as their weapons systems malfunctioned, but they rolled back in to reengage anyway, because they knew their teammate was in trouble," Denny said. "When you listen to it on the tape, their commitment - their absolute commitment to their brothers - that's heroism.

"(Chief Warrant Officer 2) Gaston's only thought at that time was protecting his teammates. (Chief Warrant Officer 4) Judd's thoughts were a little bit more comprehensive. He knew that was a bad area," Denny explained. "So, he protected his airframe and his crewmate using his knowledge and experience as a pilot in

command and got back in there. He reengaged the target area with suppressive fires. Even though they were having weapons systems malfunctions, they still did not pull off the area. They adjusted what they were doing to cover their wingman as long as they could."

Judd calmly conducted battle handover to the team coming in, which included James and Johnson.

"He was doing a battle handover when (the team) was five minutes out, and Johnny Judd is just as calm as he can be explaining to them without emotion exactly what is happening, what they're doing, what they can expect, where they should go," Denny said. "It was just the interplay of professionals and how they react when they are in that situation. You know you have people who are absolute scientists, but they're there for their brothers. I don't know any other way to say that."

Gaston continued to talk to the JTAC about what was developing on the ground.

"He was increasing situational awareness with every transmission," Denny said. "Every time he talked, everybody else knew a little bit more about what was going on, about what to expect - developing the situation so that we could carry the day."

The crew's mission focus had changed from supporting the ground forces to protecting their wingman. Priorities always change when there is a downed aircraft. That switch in priorities was instantaneous, and it was seamless, Denny said.

James and Johnson, along with their wingman crew Chief Warrant Officer Two Eddie

Roche and Capt. James Cahill, continued to fight the enemy forces, leaving the site once to rearm and then returning to engage the enemy forces.

James worked with Special Forces troops and the JTAC to determine Coalition Force and enemy positions. He led his team's attack that dismantled the enemy's defensive positions and set the conditions for follow-on teams to exploit, according to his award recommendation.

After expending all of his ammunition on enemy positions, he led his team back to the rearming point and then rejoined the fight.

James downplays his heroics, calling attention to Resh and Chao and to James' own wingman crew of Roche and Cahill.

"I'm no hero," James said. "I did what we were supposed to do. You look at those guys, Captain Resh and (Chief Warrant Officer Three) Chao - those guys are heroes. Those guys (Roche and Cahill) who were going in with a broken aircraft - those guys are heroes."

Soldiers talk about what makes a hero, and they study the Warrior Ethos as a model of how they should behave in combat, but the pilots from 4-227th lived the Warrior Ethos that day, Denny said.

"We preach the Warrior Ethos every day. Almost every one of the Soldiers in my battalion can tell you the Warrior Ethos," Denny said. "Those guys exemplified and lived it. When the chips were down and people were counting on them, they delivered. That's what it's about."

Rashid Sheiks Meet, Discuss Peace, Progress

By Sgt. 1st Class Robert Timmons
4th IBCT, 1st Inf. Div. PAO

BAGHDAD - More than 60 Sheiks from across the Al-Rashid District met June 13 at the District Council Hall to discuss the way ahead at the founding Conference of Sheiks.

The meeting, which 67 sheiks, both Sunni and Shia, was called by Sheik Faisel Kareem Jabour Al Saadi, the Al Rashid District Council Sheik Council Chairman and by Sabeeh Al-Ka'abi, the District Council chairman. It was viewed by Coalition Forces as a first step into bringing tribal leaders into the transition process in southern Baghdad.

Besides security issues, the meeting also covered the negative impacts of sectarian violence and the status of essential services. During the meeting, the attendees agreed to meet again and to have a better mix of Sunni and Shia sheiks present.

Col. Ricky D. Gibbs, the commander of the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division whose units patrol the district, who was invited to speak at the meeting. He asked the tribal leaders to take the lead in their own security.

"The violence in Baghdad and the Rashid District is crushing the people of Iraq," said the Harker Heights, Texas native. "I foresee a great nation with all people living together in peace. To get there, we all have to work together."

While presenting his remarks, Gibbs highlighted the gains made in the Anbar and Diyala provinces against al-Qaeda and other terrorists by Iraqis working in conjunction with Coalition Forces.

"The people in Anbar, Diyala and other areas of Baghdad are showing their courage by standing up to terrorists and improving the stability of their provinces," he said. "Together, you can do this."

After asking how his Dragon Brigade could assist, Gibbs said he couldn't stop the violence without the influence the sheiks have over their tribes.

"I sat with Maj. Gen. Abdul Ameer (deputy commander of the Iraqi Karkh Command and the 6th Iraqi Army Division commander), one of the Iraqi Army's great leaders recently

and he said that it is the people who must rise against the terrorists and criminals who are harming Iraq."

Gibbs told the tribal leaders that more than \$110 million has been spent on rebuilding Iraqi infrastructure and highlighted the Doura Market and the district's own advisory council as examples of success.

"The market is a shining star for all the world to see," he said. "It shows the Iraqi strength and resolve to push past the violence and reject terrorism."

He also asked for the sheiks' help in speeding up recon-

struction efforts by "ensuring the workers on the projects are from your neighborhoods and keeping the contractors working."

Besides Col. Gibbs, Iraqi Brig. Gen. Salam, Omar Jabouri, Amar Al-Moamorai, Iraqi Col. Mahdy Jassim and Sheik Faisel spoke during the conference.

"I have been to Iraq three times," Gibbs said during his remarks. "The next time I come, I would like to bring my family here on vacation to spend time with your families and the wonderful citizens of Iraq."



(Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Robert Timmons, 4th IBCT, 1st Inf. Div. Public Affairs)

Sabeeh Al-Ka'abi, the Rashid District Council chairman, speaks to some sheiks during an intermission at the founding Conference of Sheiks in the Al Rashid District June 13. The conference brought together 67 sheiks, overwhelmingly Shia, to discuss various issues affecting the district.

Support Troops Guard FOB Falcon

By Pfc. Nathaniel Smith
4th IBCT, 1st Inf. Div. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD - The infantryman kicks down doors. The engineer destroys enemy positions. The military policeman detains suspected bomb makers.

Some jobs in the Army get all the glory. There are many jobs, however, that are vital to success in Iraq that people may not think about. One of these is the duty of preventing dangerous people and materials from entering a base.

The 610th Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division out of Fort Riley, Kan., has undertaken that important mission at Forward Operating Base Falcon's Gate G in southern Baghdad.

1st Sgt. John Padgett, the first sergeant for Company B, 610th BSB from Fort Riley, Kan., said monitoring the vehicles and individuals that come and go through FOB Falcon has become a battalion-wide effort.

"We have supply personnel, we have drivers, we have mechanics, radio repair Soldiers," he said. "They work an eight-hour shift or more in their (military occupational specialty) every single day and this is an additional job that they take on."

For Pfc. Brandy Moore, a driver with

Company A, 610th BSB from Bellevue, Neb., the job isn't difficult. In fact, it is the opposite.

"I enjoy it," she said. "It gives me something to do every day."

With hundreds of vehicles passing through the gate a week, Moore has plenty to do, and according to Padgett, there's no room for error.

"I won't let them lose their focus," he said. "My (noncommissioned officers) won't let them lose their focus. The worst thing those guys have to deal with is me."

Moore said the company of her fellow Soldiers helps her keep focused on the task at hand.

"We talk, and we search our vehicles," she said. "It's OK, it's just hot."

The triple digit heat is hard on the Soldiers.

"It's very difficult when we're in full battle rattle, we have to watch the Soldiers and make sure they stay focused, make sure they stay hydrated," he said. "It's an extremely difficult job this time of year."

Heat aside, Padgett said FOB Falcon and the Soldiers operating out of there are in able hands.

"We have some of the best NCOs in this battalion," he said. "The FOB is a safer place from us being here."



(Photo by Pfc. Nathaniel Smith, 4th IBCT, 1st Inf. Div. Public Affairs)

Pfc. Lance Francis, a driver with Company A, 610th Brigade Support Battalion from Kingfisher, Okla., pulls guard on Gate G at Forward Operating Base Falcon June 19. Since the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division has arrived at Falcon, the Phoenix Battalion has prevented any security breaches from taking place.



(Photo by Maj. Kirk Luedeke, 4IBCT, 1st Inf. Div. Public Affairs Officer)

Friendship Bracelet

2nd Lt. Robert Plummer, from Anniston, Ala., a platoon leader with Company D, 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, slides a plastic bracelet on the arm of an Iraqi girl during a patrol in a neighborhood in the Doura region of the Rashid District of Baghdad June 10. The 2-12th Inf., based out of Fort Carson, Colo., is attached to the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Inf. Div.

'Warriors' Protect and Serve

By Pfc. Nathaniel Smith
4th IBCT, 1st Inf. Div. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD - Soldiers in Baghdad have been helping religious minorities who fear persecution in Iraq.

The 'Warriors' of the 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division have been aiding Christians in the Al Doura neighborhood of the Rashid District since inheriting the area.

1st Sgt. Todd Hood, the top noncommissioned officer for Company D, 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division from Peyton, Colo., said his unit has already done a lot to assist all residents in their mulhallahs, or neighborhoods.

"We started off by getting the barriers in there to...stop the bullets and stuff like that from coming in from the other mulhallahs," Hood said. "We're working the contracts for the schools, and the schools have come a long way.

"We're talking to the locals and handing out our phone card, getting them to call us if they feel threatened or unsafe."

In addition to everything already done, the entirety of 2-12 Inf., which is attached to the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Inf. Div., is conducting a census. This is useful in the Christian regions of Doura so the unit can monitor if people of different religious ideologies are leaving en masse.

"If...all of a sudden three or four fami-

lies got threatened and moved out, and if the new one's that moved in aren't of Christian decent," Hood said, "we'd be able to find and pinpoint if they're the bad guys and find out if they're starting to influence Al Qaeda or what-not in that area."

The Soldiers in Doura have been working hard to protect the people and the people have responded.

"They've definitely been cooperative," Hood said. "They normally say the same thing, that the neighborhoods are unsafe or we can't go outside like we want to anymore.

"You can tell that within the past couple months they've noticed a change."

While the unit has already seen signs of progress, the Soldiers have shown no signs of slowing down with plans already to bring in a new generator and to repair an old one to provide the citizens of the area with power.

With the progress that has been made, Soldiers have already noticed the people treating them differently. Where parents used to be scared of their children interacting with Coalition Forces, they've already warmed up to the troops.

Their parents aren't pulling them back in as much as they would before," Hood said. "Now we're actually getting waves from the military age men and it makes you feel a little bit better.

"I say that...in hopes that it does stay that way."



(Photo by Pfc. Nathaniel Smith, 4th IBCT, 1st Inf. Div. Public Affairs)

Spc. Seth Davis, a driver with Company D, 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division from Syracuse, N.Y., talks to an Iraqi child while on patrol June 11. The 'Warriors' of 2-12 Inf., currently attached to the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, have already placed walls around the neighborhood to protect its residents from any dangers coming from other neighborhoods.

Troops Strengthen Palestine Market

By Staff Sgt. W. Wayne Marlow
2nd IBCT, 2nd Inf. Div. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD - Merchants and shoppers at the Palestine Market can now go about their business in a more secure setting.

Soldiers with the 2nd Infantry Division's 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team's 3rd Squadron, 61st Cavalry Regiment are almost complete with barrier emplacement in the market, located in the Rusafa District of eastern Baghdad.

Work began on May 1 and according to Maj. Bruce Vitor, squadron executive officer was 95 percent complete June 19. Squadron leaders accompanied Maj. Gen. Joseph F. Fil Jr., Multi-National Division - Baghdad and 1st Cavalry Division commander, on a tour of the market.

Over 1,800 concrete sections have been emplaced, but those won't be the only barriers involved in the project.

"We talked with local nationals to convince them it was in their best interest to have the barriers emplaced," said Lt. Col. James Phillips, squadron commander.

While merchants understood the need for security, they had concerns about the barriers. For instance, pastry and fruit vendors often rely on impulse purchases, so they were worried about their products not being seen from street.

Others needed room to get push carts or scooters through, and others worried about access to driveways and delivery trucks.

"It's a very dispersed market," Phillips said. "We had to accommodate each block differently. We went business by business, block by block, and that really helped."

Vitor said 3-61 Soldiers maintained regular contact with the merchants.

"We talked with the store owners before, during, and after the emplacement. Each one had different concerns and we tried to accommodate them," he said.

The barrier emplacement seems to be paying dividends, though Phillips cautions it is too early to declare it



(Photo by Staff Sgt. W. Wayne Marlow, 2nd IBCT, 2nd Inf. Div. Public Affairs)

Multi-National Division - Baghdad and 1st Cavalry Division Commanding, Maj. Gen. Joseph F. Fil Jr., front, accompanied by Lt. Col. James W. Phillips (right), commander of the 3rd Squadron, 61st Cavalry Regiment, tours the Palestine Market in the Rusafa District of eastern Baghdad on June 19. Over 1,800 barriers have been emplaced in the market since May 1, making the area more secure.

a success.

"Some of the merchants have said shopping has increased and that the shoppers seem more relaxed," Phillips said "It's as crowded as I've ever seen it."

Also, some merchants are putting advertisements or paintings on the barriers.

There were several obstacles along the way, such as

destroyed bridges and intimidated contractors. But the barriers are up and benefits are being seen.

"Everybody understands the purpose and everybody would like more protection," Vitor said.

He added the barriers are only one part of the security plan, which also includes checkpoints and patrols.

Special Troops Battalion Helps Keep Area Safe for Iraqis

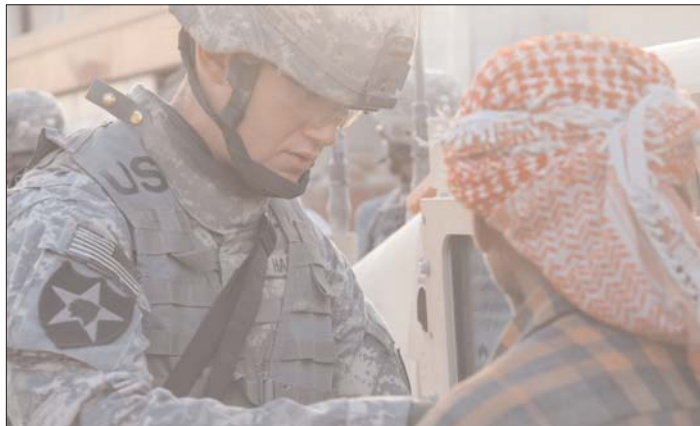
By Maj. Sean Ryan
2nd IBCT, 2nd Inf. Div. PAO

FORWARD OPERATING BASE LOYALTY, Iraq - Most of the time, you won't see Soldiers of the Special Troops Battalion working because nearly all of their missions are at night or early morning escorting convoys, providing route clearance on dangerous roads, or helping secure the area for both the Soldiers of 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division and local civilians.

Their latest mission on June 19 in the eastern Baghdad area of 9 Nissan, formerly called New Baghdad, was to search and cordon off a local gas station that may have been subject to illegal insurgent activity.

Fuel is a target for insurgents to extort since supplies are sometimes short and some people will bypass waiting in long lines to buy black market fuel.

However, this doesn't exclude local gas stations from extortion either and the Fort Carson, Colo., based unit commanded by Lt. Col. James Wolak was primed not to let the local populace fall prey to an unsafe



(Photo by Maj. Sean Ryan 2nd IBCT, 2nd Inf. Div. Public Affairs Officer)

Spc. Jonathan Harris, a scout from the STB, 2nd IBCT, 2nd Inf. Div., based out of Fort Carson, Colo., logs personal information of a local worker into a database June 19 in the 9 Nissan District of eastern Baghdad. Harris added information for security reasons to protect local civilians in fear insurgents may try to extort local workers or claim they work at the business.

environment and allow the gas station workers to become manipulated.

Using a new biometric system that allows individuals information to be stored and accessed quickly, Soldiers were able to log valuable information in the

system regarding workers that not only legitimizes their job, but can corroborate if an insurgent claims they work at the business.

"Gaining information and getting an idea of who the workers are and keeping track in the database, is important in case insurgents try to manipulate them," said Spc. Jonathan Harris, a scout by military occupational specialty and native of Portland, Ore., said.

The local civilians will sometimes sleep outside gas stations to get in line for fuel, but in many areas, they are putting themselves at risk for extortion.

"The goal is security for the civilians," said 1st Lt. Martin Leopard, a Military Police platoon leader for Headquarters and Headquarters Company. The Spotsylvania, Pa., native said,

"The threats for (vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices) and (other improvised explosive devices) are still present for large crowds and the security checks are there to help the civilians. We have to look at how the enemy views things and adapt our tactics," he said.



Soldiers from Co. E, 2nd Bn., 8th Cav. Regt. prepare to clear a irrigation canal near Taji, Iraq June 19.

Sappers Work to Quell Insurgent Activity

By Staff Sgt. Jon Cupp
1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

TAJI, Iraq - Multi-National Division - Baghdad Soldiers who serve as engineers for the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division have been working in several operations, designed to improve security and lessen insurgent activity in multiple locations near Taji, which began late May and concluded June 25.

Soldiers from Company E, "Sappers," 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment used equipment to clear trees and reeds from fields and farming canals, explosives to demolish bridges and assisted in the construction of traffic control points and a Coalition outpost.

The fields and canals were cleared to prevent their use as hiding places from which insurgents could launch attacks on Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces.

During a field clearing operation, the Sappers teamed with Iraqi Army troops from the 3rd Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division

(Mechanized).

Working off tips and based on previously gathered information, the Sappers teamed with a platoon from Company B, 2nd "Stallions" Bn., 8th Cav. Regiment to destroy two bridges which extremists were traveling on throughout the Stallions area of operations to locations from which they launched attacks against civilians, Iraqi security forces and coalition forces. As Co. B troops ensured no civilians were in the area and secured the site, the Sappers used explosive charges to make the structures unusable and impassable to vehicle traffic.

At two traffic control points, the Sappers, worked with 3-9 IA troops to emplace concrete barriers, new fighting positions and concertina wire along with making other security improvements.

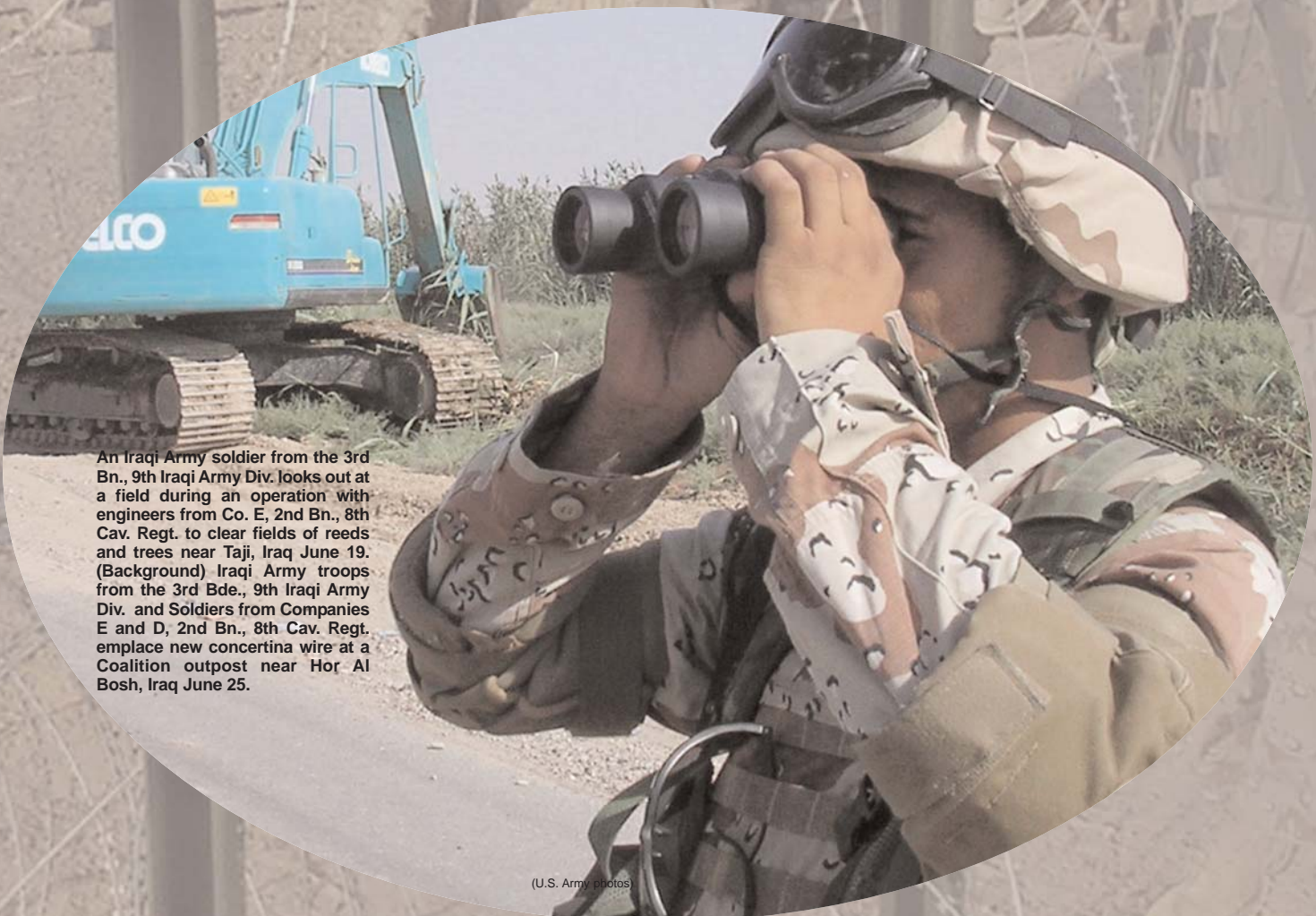
"A joint effort between the 3rd Bde., 9th IA Div. (Mech.) and Co. E was integral at these sites," said Capt. John Burescia, commander, Co. E, 2nd Bn., 8th Cav. Regt. "We have a strong partnership that allows for continuous operations

in support of 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division operations."

In a final effort, Co. E, again working with 3rd Bde., 9th IA Div. (Mech.) troops, linked with elements from the 510th Engineering Company, 20th Engineering Battalion and the 1169th Engineering Group to expand the walls of a Coalition outpost near Hor Al Bosh, Iraq.

They also worked with troops from Co. D, 2nd Bn., 8th Cav. Regt. who operate from the site. Along with expanding the walls, they helped to boost the quality of life for Iraqi troops and Co. D Soldiers staying at the site by improving air conditioning, power outlets, adding picnic tables, and shelving space. They also helped to reinforce the outpost's fighting positions and security, adding new concrete barriers and concertina wire among many other improvements.

"The security improvements at the outpost will continue to assist in the success of joint operations, with elements of the 3rd Bde., 9th IA Div. (Mech.) that are based there," said Burescia.



An Iraqi Army soldier from the 3rd Bn., 9th Iraqi Army Div. looks out at a field during an operation with engineers from Co. E, 2nd Bn., 8th Cav. Regt. to clear fields of reeds and trees near Taji, Iraq June 19. (Background) Iraqi Army troops from the 3rd Bde., 9th Iraqi Army Div. and Soldiers from Companies E and D, 2nd Bn., 8th Cav. Regt. emplace new concertina wire at a Coalition outpost near Hor Al Bosh, Iraq June 25.

(U.S. Army photos)



(Photo by 1st Lt. Erik Klapmeier, 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment)

My Turn!

Spc. Leo Pacheco, a rifleman with Company C, 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment, attached to 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, demonstrates to a young boy how to ride a bike.



(Photo by 1st Lt. Juan Ortiz, 1st Bn., 64th Armor Regt.)

Sgt. Darren "Doc" Hubbell, from Co. B, 1st Bn., 64th Armor Regt., provides first aid to a child who had a gunshot wound to his foot June 17 in Jamia.

Troops Help one Foot at a Time

By 2nd Lt. Michael Kelly
1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment

BAGHDAD - Multi-National Division - Baghdad Soldiers assisted a young boy recovering from a gunshot wound to the foot June 17 in the Jamia area of the Iraqi capital.

A patrol from Company B, 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, assigned to 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, encountered a young boy who had been shot in the foot. The platoon medic on scene eval-

uated his injuries and provided further treatment.

Soldiers gave what medical aid they could provide and assured the boy's family they would return to check up on the boy.

On their next patrol, they made a point to visit the child's home again. This time the company's senior line medic, Sgt. Darren Hubbell accompanied the patrol.

Hubbell was able to clean and dress the wound to prevent infection and ensure healing.



(Photo by Sgt. Jack Androski, 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment)

Soldiers from 1st Bn., 5th Cav. Regt. teamed up with troops from 2nd Bn., 1st Bde., 6th Iraqi Army Division to deliver humanitarian assistance packs to residents of the neighborhood of Ameriya June 14.

Joint Mission:

Humanitarian Assistance in Ameriya

By Sgt. Jack Androski
1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment

BAGHDAD - Hundreds of Iraqi residents received humanitarian assistance packages from Multi-National Division - Baghdad Soldiers and Iraqi Security Forces in the Ameriya neighborhood on the west side of the Iraqi capital June 14.

Each package provided families with enough subsistence provisions to last 10 days.

This small, but focused effort on assisting those most affected by sectarian violence in Ameriya is another way to undermine al-Qaeda's public support.

"The ability to feed the populace with these non-lethal operations is certainly tilting support for U.S. and Iraqi forces," said Capt. Michael Ernest, who unit, 1st

Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment based out of Fort Hood, Texas teamed up with the Iraqi Security Forces to provide assistance to area residents.

"Our hope is to ease the suffering of the local population as the battle for Ameriya continues," he said.

After more than a month of violence in this once prosperous community, Soldiers from 1-5 Cavalry worked with elements of 2nd Battalion, 1st Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division to deliver the first of two scheduled humanitarian aid missions.

The neighborhood of Ameriya is currently home to the largest Sunni population within the city of Baghdad, and the center of gravity for al-Qaeda presence.

As al-Qaeda loses ground to Coalition and Iraqi forces, the ability to deliver humanitarian assistance to the local population increases, Ernest said.



(Photo by 1st Lt. Erik Klapmeier, 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment)

“Everybody was Kung-Fu Fighting ...”

Spc. Leo Pacheco, a rifleman with Company C, 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment, entertains local children on the streets of northern Ghazaliya.

Better Security & Service at Gas Station

By 1st Lt. Brian Cooke
2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery

BAGHDAD - Iraqi and U.S. Soldiers from the Multi-National Division-Baghdad are now fortifying a western Baghdad gas station that has been the target of recent insurgent attacks in the neighborhood of Yarmouk.

The gas station, which serves the residents of southeastern Mansour, has come under small arms fire and two car bombs exploded within 100 meters of the gas station in recent weeks.

These attacks prompted leaders from the 2nd Battalion, 5th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Division and 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery to take action.

Col. Ali Al-Obaydi and Lt. Col. Michael Lawson, who assumed command of Task Force Patriot just two weeks ago, made reinforcing the gas station one of their top priorities.

"The ability of this gas station to operate free from attack is vital to giving the Iraqi people normalcy in their lives," Lawson said.

He also stressed that keeping the gas station secure is one way that the battalions are working to safeguard the populace as they go about their daily routines.

Soldiers from the Iraqi Army Battalion took the first step in protecting the gas station by observing the traffic patterns at the station over the course of several days, noting trends in high traffic times and looking for possible ways insurgents might attack the waiting customers.

They then turned their observations over to the combined staffs of the two battalions to come up with a plan to



(Photo by 1st Lt. Mike Hayhurst, 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery Regiment)

Barriers emplaced surrounding the Yarmouk gas station to protect it from small arms fire and car bombs. Soldiers from 299th Forward Support Battalion and Golf Company, 610th Brigade Support Battalion used heavy equipment haulers to move the barriers from Camp Liberty out to the gas station.

reinforce the gas station with concrete barriers.

In one night, Soldiers from 299th Forward Support Battalion and Golf Company, 610th Brigade Support Battalion used heavy equipment haulers to move the barriers from Camp Liberty out to the gas station.

They worked throughout the night to download the material from their trucks and used heavy-duty cranes to maneuver the barriers into position while soldiers from

2/5/6th IA and 2-32 FA provided security.

The overall effect, according to 1st Lt. Ryan Stidum, 2nd Platoon Leader, Bravo Battery, is a well-protected, better-organized gas station. "We've already begun to see an improvement in the traffic flow," said Stidum.

"Black market fuel peddlers can no longer cut in the waiting line, customers are safer, and the whole process seems faster now," he said.

Thousands of Miles Can't Separate Two Sisters

Capt. David Levasseur
2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div. Public Affairs officer

BAGHDAD-A family's military tradition continues today as one older sister, currently serving in Baghdad, Iraq, gives the commissioning oath to her graduating sister via video teleconference.

When asked who she wanted to give her the commissioning oath, 2nd Lt. Mallory Kessler had only one response,

her sister. The problem is her sister, 1st Lt. Brittany Kessler, has been deployed to Baghdad, Iraq, since October, 2006. With the support of her Reserve Officer Training Corps Cadre she was able to set up a video teleconference to Camp Liberty, Baghdad so that her sister could administer the oath.

2nd Lt. Mallory Kessler is being commissioned as an Air Defense Artillery Officer and will first attend the Officer Basic Course before being assigned to Ft Bliss, Texas.

1st Lt. Brittany Kessler is a Military Intelligence Officer and

is currently serving with the 2nd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division in Baghdad, Iraq. She is expected to return from her deployment to her home station of Schweinfurt, Germany, in October.

At 7:00 PM Baghdad time on June 15, 1st Lt. Kessler raised her right hand and gave the commissioning oath to her little sister. "I am very proud of her," she said afterwards. "She joined the Army to pay for school and I think partly because I did. I am really glad that I could participate in her commissioning, even though I couldn't be there."



(Photos by Sgt. Lance Wall, 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div. Public Affairs)

1st Lt. Brittany Kessler administers the Commissioning Oath to her younger sister, 2nd Lt. Mallory Kessler, on June 15 at Camp Liberty, Iraq. Mallory is being commissioned as an Air Defense Artillery Officer.



1st Lt. Brittany Kessler, a Military Intelligence Officer deployed to Baghdad, Iraq, with the 2nd Brigade, First Infantry Division, administers the Commissioning Oath to her younger sister, 2nd Lt. Mallory Kessler on June 15 at Camp Liberty, Iraq.



(U.S. Army photo by 1st Lt. Juan Ortiz, 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment)

2nd Lt. Robert Langford, with Company B, 1-64 Armor, speaks with Iraqi troops after escorting a woman in labor get to a Baghdad hospital June 15.

New Arrival in Baghdad

By 1st Lt. Juan J. Ortiz
1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment

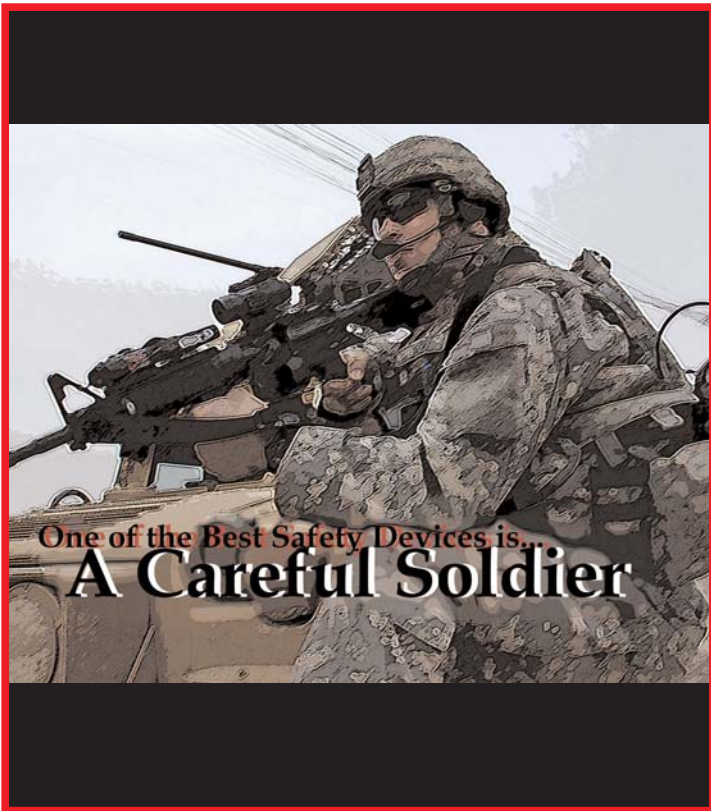
BAGHDAD - An Iraqi woman safely delivered a newborn thanks to the efforts of Multi-National Division - Baghdad Soldiers and the Iraqi Army.

Soldiers from Company B, 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment with the help of troops from 2nd Company, 3rd Battalion, 5th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, escorted the pregnant woman to local Baghdad hospi-

tal June 15.

The day's mission was side tracked when Soldier's from Co. B's 1st Platoon came upon the woman, who looked in need of assistance. The patrol leader, 2nd Lt. Robert Langford, had his medic verify that the woman was going into labor.

Since Iraqi custom dictates that only an Islamic doctor can treat the woman, she was escorted to the local medical treatment facility. The woman gave birth to a healthy baby and is in good condition.



One of the Best Safety Devices is.
A Careful Soldier

Roadside Bomb Targeting Soldiers Injures Seven Civilians in Adhamiyah

2nd BCT, 82nd Abn. Div. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD - A roadside bomb struck a patrol of Multi-National Division - Baghdad Soldiers and Iraqi Army troops traveling through Baghdad's Adhamiyah District June 14, injuring seven civilians who were out on the street when the bomb went off.

The bomb struck a heavily armored Bradley Fighting Vehicle, but no Soldiers were injured. However, shrapnel from the explosion sprayed into a group of civilians who were standing nearby on the sidewalk.

Two of the residents were seriously injured, including a man with severe lacerations to his neck and another man who suffered a heart attack following the attack. U.S. and Iraqi soldiers tended the wounded at the scene and helped evacuate the casualties to a nearby hospital for further treatment.

The joint patrol of U.S. Soldiers from Company C, 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment and Iraqi troops from 1st Battalion, 1st Brigade, 11th Army Division was traveling through a crowded area with shops and families mingling outside their houses when the roadside bomb detonated.

Following the attack, the Soldiers dismounted and rushed to the aid of the injured civilians. Staff Sgt. James Lesco kicked in a door and dragged the wounded inside, in order to seek cover from any further terrorist attacks and called medic Pfc. Jonathan Hewett to apply first aid. Their company commander, Capt. Cecil Strickland, radioed for an ambulance.

The most critical casualty was an elderly man whose heart had stopped from the shock of the blast. Hewett believed he would die if he didn't get to a hospital as soon as



(Photo by Sgt. Mike Pryor, 2nd BCT, 82nd Airborne Division Public Affairs)

Staff Sgt. James Lesco (right), a squad leader with Company C, 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment from Colorado Springs, Colo., watches as doctors at Al Numan Hospital in Baghdad's Adhamiyah District treat a patient he delivered to the hospital June 14. The man had suffered a heart attack when a bomb exploded as a joint Coalition and Iraqi Security Force convoy was passing by. The Iraqi doctors were able to resuscitate the man and stabilize him.

possible.

"I told the (commander) that he needed to be loaded up and gotten out of there immediately or he was going to die right there on the floor," said Hewett, a native of

Columbus, Miss.

Acting quickly, the Soldiers moved the casualties outside and into their vehicles, and then raced them across town to the Al Numan Hospital, where doctors took over and were

able to resuscitate the man.

Recently, innocent bystanders have suffered from failed terrorist attacks against Coalition Forces in Adhamiyah. "They don't care who they hurt," Hewett said.



(Photo by Sgt. Mike Pryor, 2nd BCT, 82nd Airborne Division Public Affairs)

Cooling Off, Hanging Out

While searching a house in Baghdad's Adhamiyah neighborhood June 14, San Antonio, Texas-native Spc. Ruben Chavez of Company C, 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, gets some help beating the summer heat from children he found playing in a kiddie pool in the kitchen.



(U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Mike Pryor, 2nd BCT, 82nd Abn. Div. Public Affairs)

Good Samaritans

(Left to right) Pfc. Sean "Doc" Lawson of Tyler, Texas; Staff Sgt. Rick Hamblin of Tempe, Ariz.; and Pfc. Michael Blair give first aid to an Iraqi man after a motorcycle accident knocked him unconscious June 17. The Soldiers, who are with Company C, 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, were on patrol in Baghdad's Adhamiyah District when they witnessed the accident and ran to help.

Firefight in Adhamiyah:

One insurgent killed, 3 captured in shootout

By Sgt. Mike Pryor
2nd BCT, 82nd Abn. Div. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD - What started as a routine patrol turned into a shootout that left one insurgent dead and three others in custody after an intense, 20-minute gun battle on the streets of Baghdad's Adhamiyah District

June 16.

Soldiers from Company C, 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment were on a mounted patrol when they began receiving small arms fire from a small group of ski mask-wearing insurgents on a rooftop. The Soldiers returned fire and the insurgents fled. A wild chase through the city streets followed as the

Soldiers attempted to cut off the insurgents' escape route.

As they rounded a corner, the Soldiers were engaged by a larger group of insurgents firing rocket-propelled grenades. Again the Soldiers returned fire, forcing several of the insurgents to seek cover in a walled courtyard on a side street. Clouds of dust and

smoke filled the narrow street as volleys of fire went back and forth. The exchange continued until Pfc. Ismel Sanchez, of Greensboro, N.C. lobbed a grenade over the wall, silencing the insurgents' guns.

When the Soldiers moved inside to clear the courtyard, they found three insurgents, one mortally wounded. Another insurgent who was attempting to hide in the house next door was quickly identified and detained.

While the Soldiers were still securing the area, several insurgents armed with RPGs appeared at the end of the street and began firing at the U.S. vehicles. The turret gunner in the lead truck laid down suppressive fire, but his 7.62 mm ammunition was no match for the brick wall the insurgents were using as cover. While Sgt. Jake Richardson of St. Johns, Ariz. kept the insurgents' heads down with his M203 grenade launcher, Staff Sgt. Michael Mullahy of Batavia, Ill. retrieved an AT4 rocket launcher from one of the trucks. Placing himself directly in the line of fire, Mullahy sighted the AT4 and fired, leveling the wall and forcing the insurgents to retreat.

"They were firing at us from behind cover, so I took away their cover," Mullahy said.

Mullahy's shot ended the engagement. Once the area was secured, the suspects were loaded into vehicles and transported back to the company's base for further questioning.

When they returned, the Soldiers who had been in contact were greeted with a warrior's cheer from those who stayed back. Richardson summed up the engagement in one sentence for a friend who asked him what happened.

"It was a cute little fight that turned real sour for the bad guys," he said. There were no U.S. Soldiers injured during the engagement.



(Photo by Sgt. Mike Pryor, 2nd BCT, 82nd Abn. Div. Public Affairs)

(From left) Sgt. Jake Richardson, of St. Johns, Ariz., 1st Lt. Travis Atwood, of Abilene Texas, and Staff Sgt. Michael Mullahy, of Batavia, Ill., take cover while Mullahy prepares to fire an AT4 rocket launcher at an insurgent firing position during a firefight in Baghdad's Adhamiyah District June 16. The 20-minute firefight ended with one insurgent dead and three others captured. All three Soldiers are with Company C, 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, based in Schweinfurt, Germany, but operating in east Baghdad with the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division.



(Photo by Spc. L.B. Edgar, 7th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

Nashville, Mich., native Spc. Chase Walden, a team leader with 1st Platoon, Company A, 1st Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, pulls security inside a guard tower of the Joint Security Station Hurriyah in a northwest district of Baghdad.

Life in a "Crow's Nest" is no Picnic

By Spc. L.B. Edgar,
7th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

BAGHDAD - Thoughts of home cloud the cerebellums of the two Soldiers perched on the building like birds of prey alert for threats from the wild below. In lieu of lethal talons and a razor-sharp beak, the Soldiers clutch the pistol grips of their M-4 rifles, vigilantly scan their sector and wait. And wait. And wait. And wait.

Four times every 24 hours Peewaukee, Wis., native Sgt. Josh Smyth and Nashville, Mich., native Spc. Chase Walden share the sand-bagged room dubbed "the crow's nest" at the Hurriyah Joint Security Station in the Kadamiyah district of the Iraqi capital.

Each tour of guard duty brings the same mission: protecting their fellow Soldiers. The task involves a multitude of responsibilities, from denying insurgents the ability to emplace improvised explosive devices to stopping suicide bombers from detonating and spotting snipers before they can strike.

To kill time Walden and Smyth chew the fat, sharing random stories of times seemingly long ago, before deploying to a foreign land most Americans only see on the nightly news. Most of the tales involve humor so as to lighten the mood.

"Everyone has hilarious things that have happened to them. If you can tell it halfway decent, then everyone is going to laugh," said Smyth, a team leader with 1st Platoon,

Company A, 1st Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division.

Separation, but no isolation

Humor is often a godsend since the most grueling battle rages inside the heads of Soldiers with time, not enemies, to kill. In this respect, guard duty is an arduous task. Soldiers have time to think of kin left behind.

"The hardest part is trying not to think of how much you miss your family. When you're in solitude in the middle of the night and you're tired, you start thinking about your family a lot. That's why you start telling jokes, I guess," said Walden, also a team leader with 1st Platoon.

Excitement builds to almost epic proportions while deployed and reunions become increasingly anticipated, Walden said.

"You always make all these incredibly intricate, ornate plans. This is going to be so amazing. I'm going to go home and have candlelight dinners with my wife.' Then you go home, you get a T.V. dinner and you play Nintendo until you fall asleep. It's kind of unfortunate, but that's what happens," said the 25-year-old Smyth.

Coping with losses

Unfortunately for Soldiers being deployed, it is more than just having to spend more than 12 months away from friends and family.

The reality is Soldiers may be injured, killed or witness harm to fellow Soldiers. When the worst does come to pass, no one is ever pre-

pared.

"Everybody has their way of coping. Some guys are going to cry. Some guys are not going to cry. It's tough on everybody, even the guys who are not close to the guy who died. Everybody feels it," Smyth said.

With four Purple Hearts in their squad, Walden and Smyth, know what it is to see their comrades in arms hurt on the battlefield.

The loss of Pfc. Justin Driese was one such case. Soldiers who knew him continue to honor him by posting on his Myspace page, a sort of living memorial, now maintained by his parents, Walden explained.

Life before and after combat

Now veterans of combat in the 21st century, Walden and Smyth, like many Soldiers, have found a new appreciation for life in general.

On returning home from combat Soldiers are no longer the person they departed as. Often they are unconcerned with the seemingly petty issues of everyday life after experiencing the realities of war, Walden said.

The transformation of Walden began when he enlisted after 9-11 having grown up wanting to be a Soldier, he said.

Despite serving on his third deployment, Walden has finished two-and-a-half years of a bachelor's degree in American history from American Military University, he said.

In the case of Smyth, college came before the military.

"You go to college. There are girls there.

There's a lot of beer. Then you don't care about your classes somehow," Smyth explained.

After two years at Purdue University, Smyth enlisted in the Army to become disciplined and find some direction in life, he said.

"You got to take your life somewhere. I didn't want to be 30 and still be single working at TGIFridays. Who wants to do that?" Smyth said. "The Army definitely helped me realize that I can do something with my life on the outside."

Life as a Soldier

Far from resenting the adversity of a precarious life downrange, Soldiers often embrace the adversity. Many live the motto: "Whatever doesn't kill me, can only make me stronger."

Walden and Smyth are no exceptions. Their adopted philosophy is: "It could always be worse."

"You always have a benchmark. I've suffered more. I've been in worse situations than this," Smyth said.

Often warped by portrayals of war on television and cinema, civilians don't see the countless hours spent on patrol or understand what it means to know one Soldier in the unit who will never step foot on American soil again. Smyth knows there are two wars: the war seen from a far and the war experienced on the ground.

Without someone to talk to and laugh with about life downrange, the totality of it all could be unbearable. Fortunately for Soldiers, like Walden and Smyth, they have one another, time to kill and a place to do it - the crow's nest.

Mission Near Impossible

Soldiers Still Parent From a War Zone

By Spc. Jeffrey Ledesma
1st Cavalry Division Public Affairs

VICTORY BASE CAMP, Iraq - Parenting is a challenging task in the first place, but parenting from a long distance is even more difficult, which leaves parenting from a war zone, over 7,000 miles away, next to impossible.

For Capt. Randy Jones and his wife, 1st Sgt. Carolyn Jones, parenting their three children while deployed to the worn-torn Iraqi capital has been a learning experience that has been anything, but easy.

"As soon as I found out I was deploying, we started talking about it, and there was a lot of talking about it, getting them mentally prepared," said Carolyn, the first sergeant of the 21st Combat Support Hospital at Camp Cropper. "Making sure they had a routine. They had a nanny."

So by the time Carolyn's mother Maria Lawson came to help with the children they were able to work together to continue the already established steady routine for their two daughters 9-year-old, Raleigh and 7-year-old, Alana, and their 5-year-old son, Gannon,

"They needed to maintain a routine. I am the one who decided to join the Army, not the kids, so their lives shouldn't have to be revolving around the Army," native of Placentia, Calif., Carolyn said.

"There are three kids at home without a mom and dad so it's important that their lives stay consistent, that they feel secure, so hopefully, when they look back at their lives they don't feel like we turned their lives upside down every time we got deployed," she

When Carolyn deployed Randy, the operation maintenance Army budget officer with the 1st Cavalry Division, inadvertently became a single father.

"It was like having two jobs, when everyone else would come home after work to relax," Randy said. "I would get home and there would be dance practice, baseball practice, cooking dinner, checking all their school work and by the

time I went to bed it was eleven o'clock at night."

And when deployment drew closer and closer, Randy said, the long hours that are spent preparing to deploy meant less time with the kids.

Randy deployed the day after Alana's seventh birthday in October 2006.

"If it wasn't for my mom (Patricia Council) and my mother-in-law there's no way we could have gotten through this. They have been taking turns watching the kids while we've been gone," Randy said. "They helped out a lot and without their help it wouldn't have been possible."

The Army husband and wife team understood the importance of maintaining stability. They kept their three children in a routine allowing them to do the activities they enjoy, attend the same school and jump into their own beds in the place they call home.

But for Carolyn, the biggest challenge was to let go of the control she was accustomed to having, from choosing what they eat, to what they watch, to what time they go to bed.

"I am strict," Carolyn admitted. "I think they don't need to spend too much time watching (television) or playing video games.

So trying to maintain a relationship with the children despite the separation was not easy especially with the passing of each milestone in each of their lives, said Carolyn.

"One of the hardest things for me is when I know they're sick, because when they're sick, you want to be there the most to give them that extra love," Carolyn said.

"When they're recognized at school for their grades, or when they have a dance competition, (because) you know they want to look out and see their mom in the audience and I'm not there," she said.

Although time was lost, the Army duo maintained communication with the strokes of keyboard and dialing the numbers on a telephone.

"Being big on routine I called every Sunday and they know I am going to call them every Sunday," Carolyn said. "I talk to my mom almost daily on the computer so she can



(Photo by Spc. Jeffrey Ledesma, 1st Cavalry Division Public Affairs)

Capt. Randy Jones and his wife, 1st Sgt. Carolyn Jones, hold up a photo of them and their three children the day Carolyn left for Iraq, six months before Randy left October 2006, near Camp Cropper April 14. let me know what's going on in their lives."

Days before jumping onto a plane to head back home, Carolyn discovered her husband's unit was going to be extended for up to three months, which meant three more months without a husband and a father.

"The road is hard because I'm going home to go back to being a single parent now for nine months instead of six months," Carolyn said.

Father, Son; Brothers of War

By Spc. Shea Butler
7th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq - During a 39-year stint in the Army, 1st Sgt. Eddy Dickinson with 877th Engineer Battalion Alabama National Guard is still coming across career firsts.

This isn't his first deployment. Not even his first war. He is a Vietnam veteran and served in Iraq during the initial invasion. He returned to Iraq in 2006 to find many things have changed in the country, but the biggest difference between this tour and last is this time the Brilliant, Ala., native brought a piece of home with him - his son.

His son, Sgt. Leif Dickinson, also with 877th Eng. Bn. Ala. National Guard said "It's nice to have my dad here. It's a whole different support channel, and it's better than just having your friends to lean on."

"We have endured many hardships together since we have been here, and it is good to have my son to talk to," Eddy said.

Eddy has another son with him on this deployment as well. Though he is not blood related, Sgt. Shaun Mattern, with 1169th Eng. Bn., served as Eddy's saw gunner during

there first deployment to Iraq.

"I raised him during his first deployment. He was a young scared (private first class) then," Eddy said jokingly. "He would get nervous and I would give him hooah-hooah speeches. He was probably thinking, 'Who is this old fart?'"

"I still think that," Mattern joked.

Mattern, a Huntsville, Ala., native is lucky to have Eddy and his real dad, Staff Sgt. David Francies with him on this deployment for support, he said.

Both father and son teams describe the experience as being a good one.

"Having my son here is a blessing and a curse," Francies said. "The parental side of me worries about him but the selfish side appreciates his company."

Francies and Eddy agree; they have always had very close relationships with their sons.

"This deployment has only strengthened our bond," Eddie said.

Both families are set to redeploy to their home state of Alabama this coming fall.

Eddy will be faced with yet another career first... retirement. He will be trading in his Army Combat Uniform for his world's greatest grandpa shirt.



(Photo By Spc. Shea Butler, 7th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

Fathers Staff Sgt. Francies (far left), with 1169th Engineer Battalion, Alabama National Guard, and 1st Sgt. Eddy Dickinson (far right), with 877th Eng. Bn. Alabama National Guard (far right) sit with their sons Sgt. Shaun Mattern (top left), of the 1169th Eng. Bn., and Sgt. Leif Dickinson with 877th Eng. Bn., at Camp Liberty in western Baghdad June 18.

Inspections Protect Soldiers, Country

By Spc. L.B. Edgar,
7th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

CAMP VICTORY, Iraq - Before you pack up to head home, give your belongings a thorough once over or you and your unit may spend even longer in Iraq, according to the division program manager for customs of the Multi-National Division - Baghdad and 1st Cavalry Division.

Weapons and explosives are the two primary items prohibited for returning Soldiers. Just because it's not on a Soldier's person, does not mean they will not be held accountable, said Sgt 1st Class Raoul Rodriguez of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cav. Div.

However, Soldiers are authorized to bring home helmets, head coverings, bayonets, uniforms, uniform items, canteens, compasses, rucksacks, pouches, load bearing equipment, flags, military training manuals, books, pamphlets, posters, placards and photographs, said the College Station, Texas native.

But Soldiers are not authorized to return with items that clearly pose safety or health risks, such as non-U.S. weaponry to include: weapons, weapons systems, weapons' parts, scopes, ammunition, cartridge casings, explosives and knives with an automatic or gravity opener such as switchblades, spring knives and butterfly knives. Club-type weapons such as blackjacks, brass knuckles and nunchakus are also prohibited, Rodriguez said.

The list of what is prohibited and what is authorized is based on General Order Number One and restrictions imposed by the United States Department of Agriculture, he said.

The USDA restrictions are meant to decrease the flow of invasive species into the United States, Rodriguez said.

"There is a huge issue with invasive species going back to the United States," he



(Photos by Spc. L.B. Edgar, 7th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

Indianapolis, Ind., native Maj. Michael Fenchak, a billeting officer with 38th Division Command, 1st Cavalry Division, packs his belongings following a customs inspection on Camp Victory in western Baghdad June 15. Every piece of Soldiers' equipment and all their personal belongings pass through customs en route from Iraq to the United States.

said. "Invasive species cost the United States billions of dollars every year trying to fight and eradicate pests that come back, everything from beetles to plants that have no natural counter to them."

Invasive species are responsible for the spread of diseases such as hoof and mouth disease, as well as the loss of crops and dairy, Rodriguez said.

Consequently, Soldiers are prohibited from returning with animals, animal parts or plants. To ensure a minimal amount of dust and dirt is brought back, Soldiers should clean their equipment and personal belongings

prior to packing, he said.

The Customs Border Clearance agents, trained by agents of the USDA, ensure Soldiers abide by the regulations during the loading their unit's metal shipping containers, Rodriguez said.

"We're here to ensure the safety of the container and the personnel as well as the financial well-being of the United States," he said.

Although ammunition and explosives are generally prohibited, there is an exception for Soldiers who endure a significant emotional event. For those Soldiers who have a brush with death, one piece of shrapnel and one bullet without the casing and brass is authorized as souvenirs, Rodriguez said.

In the event a Soldier is wounded by shrapnel or rounds, whatever comes out of the Soldier's body is authorized, he said.

"You can take back stuff that gets removed from your body. So if you get injured by shrapnel or you get shot and you get that material taken out, you can take that back. But it has got to be put into a container by a medical professional. The container has to have the Soldier's information as well as the medical professional's information," Rodriguez said.

In both cases, the shrapnel can be no larger than 10 inches, he said.

The limitation of one bullet and one piece of shrapnel for Soldiers who have a close call but survive unscathed is a policy meant to protect the Soldier's well-being, Rodriguez said.

"What we don't want is to encourage Soldiers to go out and find stuff on the battlefield. That just opens them up to another

opportunity to be harmed," he said.

Another limitation on what items can bring home concerns DVDs. Due to intellectual property rights and property-right protection, Soldiers may take back no more than one copy of a locally-purchased DVD, Rodriguez said.

In order to document items headed for home, Soldiers should fill out a DD Form 1750 because it protects them in the event the convex is lost or damaged, said 1st Lt. Randy Cuyler, a customs officer with 38th Division Command, 1st Cavalry Division.

Other tips include not packing hand sanitizer as it contains alcohol and could explode since the interior of the metal shipping containers often reaches 180 degrees on the ocean. Laptops can also be damaged by the heat, aerosols could explode and, generally, items which swell under heat should be avoided or placed in zip lock bags, said the native of Buchanan, Mich.

Typically, the process of customs certification involves a layout of gear, followed by a sweep through of dogs trained to identify the scent of drugs and explosives. A briefing is followed by an amnesty period. Then the inspection commences before the conexas are finally loaded under supervision, Cuyler said.

To ensure a smooth transition back home, team, squad and platoon leaders should pre-inspect their Soldiers' belongings and gear, Rodriguez suggested.

"The most important thing we can do is get the first-line leaders involved," he said.

Rodriguez said for specific answers to questions or concerns, Soldiers should consult their unit's customs program manager and unit movement officer.



Maj. Michael Fenchak, with 38th Division Command, 1st Cavalry Division, checks his packing list prior to a customs inspection on Camp Victory in western Baghdad June 15. Every piece of Soldiers' equipment and all their personal belongings pass through customs en route from Iraq to the United States.

Cavalry General Explains Timeline

Home
From Page 1

high confidence in the accuracy of the outlines given to Soldiers and their familymembers earlier this month.

He urged the more than 1,500 people in attendance to use this relatively accurate depiction of the division units' redeployment timeline as windows to when they should be expecting their Soldiers to come home, but warned that specific dates and flights are things that must be protected to make sure the Soldiers can safely return.

With the additional three months added to this tour in Iraq, many people are asking "Will my Soldier be home for Christmas?" which Brooks deemed the "famous, historical question" for all Soldiers serving in a combat zone.

"As we get closer, I'd say probably around the 45-day window before redeployment, we'll be able to get more specific on what flights are going to come," Brooks said. "It all depends on what flights are going to move and on what dates."

In addition to dismissing the rumors of further extending troops on the ground, the general also explained the reasoning behind the three-month extension to the deployment.

The Department of Defense's logic behind the 15-

month deployment and increasing Soldiers' time in country was to provide more time at home and that 15 months was calculated as about the right time to provide that extra dwell time, Brooks said.

"(However,) we are still in an Army that has to be responsive to whatever our nation calls us to do," Brooks added.

The deputy commanding general reached out by adding how much he appreciated the patience, the understanding, and the many sacrifices that have been made by the families back home and the Soldiers here in Iraq.

"The nature of a deployment beyond 12 months means that everybody will miss two of 'something special' dates, and I know that, for many of you, this is yet another in a lengthening series of missing something special dates," Brooks said.

"This stage in a long deployment can be very challenging, and the uncertainty associated with extended deployments adds to that," he said.

"You've been very strong and we appreciate that, and we still have a little bit further to go, but we're confident that you're going to make it with flying colors, just like the units here are," he added.

For the next town hall meeting, the 1st Cavalry Divisions rear detachment plans on having a live visual shot of Fort Bliss making interaction that much more real for the participants.



(Photo by Spc. Jeffrey Ledesma, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

From Baghdad, Brig. Gen. (promotable) Vincent K. Brooks, the MND-B deputy commanding general for support gives an update on the current situation for 1st Cavalry Division troops deployed in Iraq and their families back home during a live town hall meeting June 26.



(Photo by Sgt. Cheryl Cox, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

With standing room only, hundreds of First Team Soldiers and family members piled into the Ball Room at the Fort Hood Catering and Conference Center June 25 as Brig. Gen. (promotable) Vincent K. Brooks, the 1st Cavalry Division deputy commanding general - support, answered questions from family members and discussed the redeployment dates for First Team Soldiers via satellite from Baghdad, Iraq.

Wedding Another First Team First

By Sgt. Robert Strain
1st Cavalry Division Public Affairs

FORT HOOD, Texas - "I do." Those two small words have been spoken throughout generations, marking the beginning of a new life for the couple who speaks them.

For one couple who spoke these words June 16 at the 1st Cavalry Division's headquarters building here, they reached not only across the generations, but across thousands of miles, as well.

First Team intelligence analyst and Sacramento, Calif., native Spc. Matthew Ludwig and Honolulu native Lilani Keikiaina tied the knot through a video teleconference ceremony broadcast from Fort Hood to Ludwig in Baghdad.

Ludwig and Keikiaina have been together for two years, first meeting each other at the intelligence school at Fort Huachuca, Ariz., in 2005, Keikiaina said.

She explained that she was at a doctor's appointment at the hospital on Fort Huachuca, and Ludwig was the driver sent to pick her up.

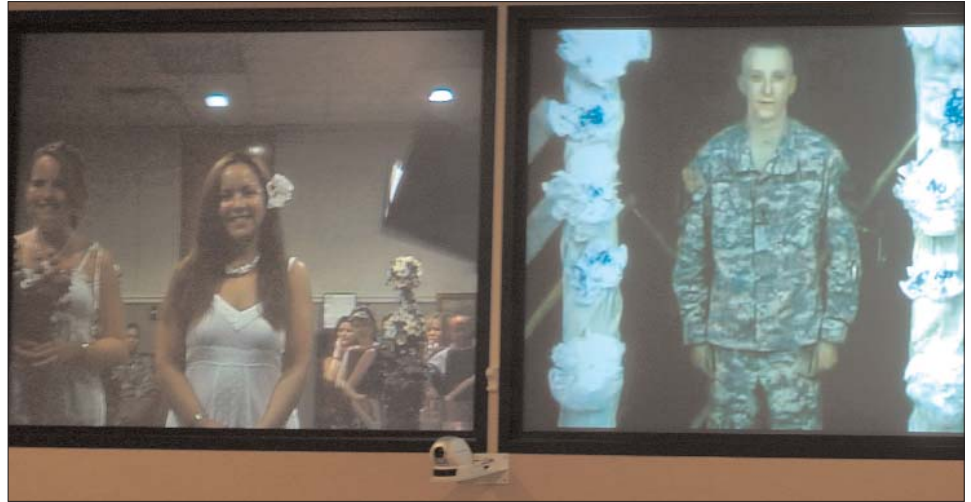
"I asked him if he was my coachman, picking me up with the white chariot," Keikiaina laughed, referring to the white vans driven by unit duty drivers.

After that they started getting to know each other and soon became best friends, but it wasn't until after their training at Fort Huachuca that the couple started dating each other.

Keikiaina was stationed with the 201st Military Intelligence Battalion at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, and Ludwig was stationed with the First Team here.

"So, he started coming down [to San Antonio] on the weekends, and I would come up here and visit him," she said.

During that time, Ludwig got to know Keikiaina's two



Two video teleconference screens show Lilani Keikiaina (left), and Spc. Matthew Ludwig, with the 1st Cavalry Division in Baghdad, during their wedding ceremony June 16 at the division's headquarters building on Fort Hood, Texas. Because he could not be present for the official ceremony, the couple plans to renew their vows in a large, more traditional wedding on their first anniversary.

daughters Corina, 13, and Cierra, 7.

Keikiaina explained that they had planned on waiting until after he returned from Iraq to get married, but when the extension was announced they decided to go ahead and do it now.

For Ludwig, June 16 holds a very special meaning. This year would mark his grandparents' 51st wedding anniversary.

Unfortunately, they both passed away before realizing their dream of seeing their grandchildren get married,

Keikiaina said.

They even went ahead and bought wedding gifts for all their grandchildren when they did get married.

In order to honor his grandparents, Ludwig always wanted to get married on the 16th of June.

With Keikiaina's two children and the difference in time between Texas and Baghdad meant that when the couple got married, it meant that Ludwig also became a father on Father's Day there in Baghdad.

Keikiaina described the ceremony as bittersweet. She was glad to see Ludwig, who she hadn't seen since his rest and recuperation leave in February, but at the same time he was still thousands of miles away.

The ceremony, which was brought together by the efforts of the family readiness group of the division's intelligence section, had started out as a small ceremony using webcams at the house of Mandi Stai, the section's FRG leader.

Keikiaina is a Solider now, but will be making the transition to civilian later this summer when she gets out of the Army.

"I wanted to make sure I was a part of helping her through that transition [from Soldier to spouse]. She didn't have access to all of the stuff that we had, she didn't have the webcam, she doesn't have the FRG support, she didn't have anything," Stai said.

The FRG wanted to ensure that Keikiaina was welcomed into the First Team family properly, and let her know that they are there for her.

"We just kind of thought that it's tough enough starting out with being apart," said Molly Kaufman, an FRG member and one of the coordinators of the wedding.

"If there's a way that we as a family readiness group and as a rear detachment rear command can make a family's life a little bit easier for something special like this, then we're going to do whatever we can," Kaufman said.

After vows were exchanged and the ceremony was complete, the newlyweds were given time to talk to each other using the VTC, although Keikiaina said there wasn't much to tell each other - other than "I love you."

As a final surprise to the newlyweds, the unit sponsor - Toyota of Killeen - donated a three-day honeymoon getaway for the couple at Lake Tahoe, Calif., in February, after he returns from Iraq. The couple plans to renew their vows on their first anniversary next June 16 during a big ceremony with all their family and friends.



(Photos by Sgt. Robert Strain, 1st Cavalry Division Public Affairs)

Corina Keikiaina, 13, shoves a piece of wedding cake in her mother Lilani's mouth after the wedding ceremony between Lilani and Spc. Matthew Ludwig, and intelligence analyst with the 1st Cavalry Division, June 16 at Fort Hood, Texas. Corina had to stand in for Ludwig during the cake cutting, who is currently deployed to Baghdad with the First Team. Keikiaina and Ludwig were married in a ceremony that was broadcast via video teleconference to Ludwig's location in Iraq.

What to do With Water?

'Lobo' Battalion Takes a Break at Camp Taji

By Spc. Nathan Hoskins
1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - Drink it, jump into it, swim in it, and anything else a Soldier surrounded by sand can think of.

That, along with some other fun activities, was what Soldiers of the 2nd "Lobo" Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, were doing on their organizational day, June 14.

"(Organizational day) is a chance for Soldiers to get out and enjoy themselves away from work. It kind of fosters a competitive attitude between the companies, but in the end, of course, we're all one team," said Capt. Thomas Whipple, commander of Company E "Renegades," 2-227th.

The Lobos participated in a four-on-four basketball tournament, horseshoes, volleyball and the much anticipated pool events, said Whipple a Lyndonville, N.Y., native.

Among the pool events were the relay race, the biggest splash competition and the belly flop competition, said Stafford, Va., native Spc. Erica Drew, a radio communications security repairer for the Renegades.

"The belly flop (competition) is judged by the biggest splash, technique and how much pain is perceived to be given" said Drew, who consequently won the event.

While deployed, a lot of Soldiers may feel like they are repeating the same day over and over, but this fun-filled day pulled them from their daily routines, said Drew.

"(The organizational day) really breaks up the redundancy," she said. "I would normally be staring at a radio hoping it will do tricks."

Sacramento, Calif., native Spc. David McKenna, an aviation operations specialist and battalion jokester, felt the

organizational day was a much needed stress reliever.

"I would much rather be having fun out here (than in the office). I understand you have to take (your job) serious, but sometimes you just have to let loose," he said after chasing people to try and give them hugs while wearing a gross amount of sunscreen lotion.

After the relay race was finished and large amounts of water was displaced by the biggest splash contest, bellies turned pink due to the belly flop contest.

The cringes of pain were evident not only by those participating, but also in those who were poolside, watching.

Once all the events came to a close, there was a tie between Co. E and Co. D, 2-227th, which was decided by a race across the length of the pool by the commanders of the companies.

The Renegade commander, Whipple, took on New Orleans native, Capt. Craig Dupuy, commander of Co. D.

After the waves subsided and the thrashing of legs and arms came to a halt, Whipple took home the win in the pool events for his company only to be challenged at a game of poker.

Yet, it wasn't all fun and games. The Lobos took time to remember the brigade's fallen heroes by conducting a missing man formation.

The activities in the pool nearly stood still as the formation of five helicopters composed of one CH-47 Chinook at the lead and four UH-60 Black Hawks, passed nearby.

As the birds made their second pass, one of the Black Hawks broke ranks and flared up out of the missing man formation in tribute to the fallen Soldiers.

Although many of the Soldiers will feel the results of their day in the sun during their next shift, it appears, by the



(Photo by Spc. Nathan Hoskins, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

(Top) Pfc. Stephen Bartling, with Co. D, 2nd Bn., 227th Avn. Regt., 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div., tries to win the belly flop competition during the Lobo's organizational day at Camp Taji, Iraq, June 14. (Background) Spc. Gregory McCarter, with Co. D, 2nd Bn., 227th Avn. Regt., 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div., brings in the win for his company in the four man relay race during organizational day June 14.

smiles on their faces, that it was well worth it, said Whipple.

"I'm enjoying myself, but more importantly my Soldiers are enjoying themselves," he said. "It gets Soldiers out, gets them physical, (and) lifts their spirits."

Oregonians Cheer Favorite Team in College World Series

By Staff Sgt. Jon Cupp
1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq -- When they say they're Beaver fans they're not talking about Jerry Mathers or the Cleaver clan.

Sgt. Jessy Lakin, a targeting noncommissioned officer with Headquarters Company, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division and Capt. Amanda Doyle, brigade provost marshal, are talking baseball-- college baseball to be precise.

The Beavers they have on their minds are the ones from Oregon State University who shut down the North Carolina State Tarheels two nights straight to win the College World Series which was played in Omaha, Neb. June 23 - 24.

Lakin and Doyle caught the series through streaming video on a computer and both stayed up into the early morning hours of June 24-25 here to catch the games.

"It was excellent having the ability to watch the games, unfortunately at odd hours, but we made it work," said Doyle, who explained that the games started at 3 a.m. here.

"It was worth it just to watch them win," said Lakin, who said game one in the series lasted until about 7 a.m. in the morning. "I still came into work the next day at 8 a.m., but getting to actually see the games was great, last year I could only listen to the games on the radio. I really wish I could be there to actually



(Photo by Staff Sgt. Jon Cupp, 1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

After the Oregon State Beavers score a run, Sgt. Jessy Lakin, forward observer, Headquarters Company, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, and Capt. Amanda Doyle, the brigade's provost marshal, give each other a high-five on Camp Taji, Iraq June 25 during game two of the College World Series.

see the games in person."

The two die-hard Oregon State University baseball fans--Doyle from Sio, Ore. and Lakin from Philomath, Ore. have hometowns that are

just a few miles from the college which is located in Corvallis, Ore. and are practically next door neighbors. Many of the members of Doyle's family to include her grandmother and

cousins are from Philomath which happens to be Lakin's hometown.

"It's been really fun. I sent a photo of myself with Lakin to my grandmother and she got a kick out of seeing him," said Doyle, explaining that not only was it good to be working in the same place as a fellow Oregon State fan but also someone who practically came from the same town. "He knows all of my cousins so it was good to push that back to the families."

Doyle and Lakin's love of Oregon State University's sports teams is deeply rooted and the two follow the school's football and basketball teams as well.

"I'm borderline fanatical but I'd have to say that my family is completely fanatical," added Doyle explaining that she's the average fan as opposed to the ones who run around painting themselves or wearing cheese heads like folks in Green Bay, Wis. have been known to do.

This year's College World Series marked the second year in a row that Oregon State's baseball team won the series.

"It's good to have that kind of distraction," Doyle said of the games, explaining that with the long hours and stress in Iraq, it was good to be able to take a break. "Getting behind your home team gives you a feeling of normalcy."

"It's nice to know that you can fight for freedom here and still have people back home who are free to play baseball," said Lakin.

Ballers Win Championship Over Headhunters , 38-26

By Sgt. 1st Class Kap Kim
2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE PROSPERITY, Iraq - When the "Ballers" big center Swayne Jordan of Jacksonville, Fla., drew a foul and went to the line after a lay up with a lit-



James Daniels flies past Brandon Jones during the Black Jack Basketball Championship game on FOB Prosperity, Baghdad, Iraq June 17.

tle under seven minutes left in the basketball championship game, that proved to be enough to take the first-ever outdoor crown here June 17 with a final score of 38-26.

The Ballers, a team comprised of Soldiers from throughout the 2nd Brigade Combat Team went up against the "Headhunters," a team made up mostly of Soldiers from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion.

The Headhunters came into the to championship game undefeated. They cruised through the week-long competition. The Ballers, on the other hand, entered the game with one loss.

"This was a tough loss for us," Lavan Dawson Jr. said after the game. "They came in as the underdogs because they had to win two."

Although the Headhunters considered their opponents to be underdogs, most spectators chose the talent-stacked Ballers to take it all.

"We already knew what we had to do to win," said Sebastian Robinson of Atlanta. "So, we sat down and made some position changes. I was the point guard, and then we decided to make Captain [Mark] Fraser the point guard."

"1st Lt. [Dennis] Williams took over and said he'd coach," said the Fort Gaines, Fla., native said. "All the players came together to accomplish the win. That's what champions do."

The Ballers have become accustomed to winning. They have won just about every tournament they've entered since arriving to Iraq. They have the shiny, team uniforms with numbers that are sewn on, and they have the age-defying Daniels who accounts for a majority of the teams points.

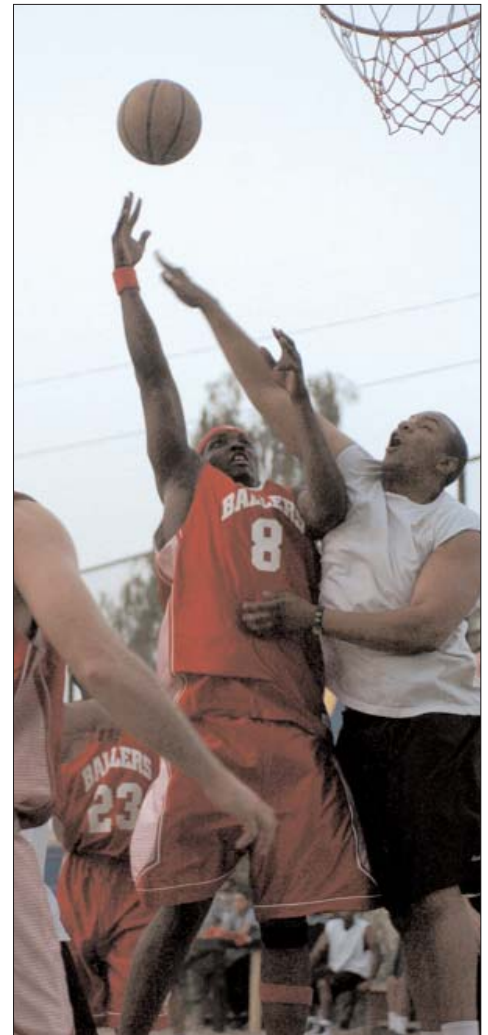
Daniels attributes their winning ways to fundamental teamwork.

"We just have that team chemistry," he said. "We play well together because we've been playing together for four or five months now."

"We felt that we had the momentum; the monkey was on their back," Daniels said. "We felt that if we could rile them in the first quarter, we would have both games. So, we minimized our turnovers."

Entering halftime, both teams were tied at 20, but a combination of fierce offense and heads-up defense left the Headhunters frustrated and confused.

Their strategy limited the Headhunters to a mere three baskets in the entire second half.



(Photos by Sgt. 1st Class Kap Kim, 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

The Ballers' center, Swayne Jordan tries to put one in past Brandon Jones during the Black Jack Basketball Championship game on FOB Prosperity, Baghdad, Iraq June 17.

Unique Perspective on Famous WW II Battle

Standing on the large marble platform, looking out into the ocean, the air was almost heavy. I could almost feel the death as I looked down at what is now called the "suicide cliffs" at the Peace Memorial Park in Okinawa, Japan.

Though, it was almost three years ago, I can still remember how I felt standing there after walking through the walls and walls of people who died in World War II at the park. The stone slabs were chiseled with the names of every nation's losses, not just Japan's. In a very visual sense, it made me see the true horror of war. The unity of all those names emphasized the fact that no life was more important than the next.

Being a Soldier, airman, sailor or Marine is one of the greatest gifts we can give the United States, but what about other nations? Isn't it safe to say that it would be just as honorable for someone to serve their country? I

Random Reviews

Sgt. Nicole Kojetin



am sure they have families praying that their service member would return from war victorious, too.

"Letters from Iwo Jima," directed by Clint Eastwood, tells the story of the Japanese Soldiers defending their homeland against the invading Americans during World War II. They were completely outnumbered on that volcanic island, and by fighting from underground caves they were able to hold their ground for nearly 40 days.

General Tadamichi Kuribayashi (played

by Ken Watanabe) used unprecedented tactics, for the Japanese military then. Instead of having his troops stay in place and die when an area had fallen, he chose to rally his troops to put up another fight. Instead of having the troops all face a certain death on the beaches he pulled his them into the mountains.

We also were shown the perspective of a Japanese infantryman, Saigo (played by Kazunai Ninomiya). We were shown his thoughts on the war and the things that he spoke of were no different than what any American G.I. might have said (though in a different language).

They weren't just killing machines. They were still people with families, with dreams, who wanted to go home. Just like us.

This movie was incredibly sad and serious. The tone throughout brought you to the impending doom of the troops on the ground. The scenes were all grey. It made you wonder at

times whether or not it was in black and white.

The lead into the battle was a little slow, but when the Americans landed the speed picked up. Another fault was that, in the movie, it felt like the battle only lasted a couple days when in fact it lasted more than a month.

I have a lot of personal kudos for this film. After living in Japan for three years, it was comforting to hear the Japanese language again. This is probably a drawback for many, though, since it means reading subtitles in order to watch the film.

Another aspect that made this film strike home, is that my husband, who was in the Marines, walked the beaches of Iwo Jima (not during WW II, mind you). In fact, we have a little of the black sand in our house.

I knew the story. It was just good to see it in motion, especially from a different perspective.

(4 out of 5 stars!)



(Photo by Maj. Sean Ryan, 2nd IBCT, 2nd Inf. Div. Public Affairs Officer)

Truly Saintsational!

Spc. Trevor York, a native of Amarillo, Texas, and member of the 2nd Infantry Division's 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team's aviation element, poses with nine New Orleans Saintsations cheerleaders during a Morale, Welfare and Recreation tour to Forward Operating Base Loyalty in eastern Baghdad June 22. The cheerleaders performed dance routines, skits and conducted autograph/photo sessions for the Soldiers.

Slammin' Sammy Goes Deep for #600

BAGHDAD - Buried by the Barry Bonds boondoggle and lost on the lousiest team in the league, Sammy Sosa went deep against his old team June 20 to become the fifth player in major league history to reach 600 career home runs.

Number 600 came in the fifth inning on a 1-2 pitch from the Chicago Cubs' Jason Marquis. Sosa's Texas Rangers even won the game, something they haven't done much of this season. The Rangers, through June 22, have the worst record in the majors.

"It was a cutter I left up in the zone," Marquis told the AP in a post-game interview. "I went away from my strength and he made me pay for it. Other than the fact that it cost us the game, it doesn't really matter."

Marquis joined a good crowd. More than 300 pitchers have served up Sammy his long balls over the years. The first victim was none other than "The Rocket," Roger Clemens, way back in 1989 in Boston's Fenway Park.

Back then, Sosa was also a Ranger - and a five-tool talent headed for stardom. He could run, he could hit, he could hit with power, he could catch and he had a plus-arm better than many a right fielder in the pro game. He ended up achieving his stardom with the Cubs, and helped the "Big Mac,"

Trigger Pull

Master Sgt.
Dave Larsen



Mark McGwire reach the record books in their duel to delete Roger Maris' single season home run record. The pair brought fans back into the seats, too, a year after a players' strike and owners' lockout did what even World War II couldn't do - cancel a World Series.

Sosa and McGwire were the face of baseball - McGwire stoic and serious; Sosa playfully professional by contrast.

But the road to baseball immortality got bumpy. First, Sosa is found with a corked bat and is suspended. Later, he argues with new manager Dusty Baker and finds himself leaving town for greener pastures - Camden Yards in Baltimore. There, Sosa never hit his weight and found himself out of a job and out of baseball.

The Rangers brought in Sosa, 38, for a cheap look in spring training. This was the team that drafted him as a gangly kid out of

the Dominican Republic. Eighteen years later, they brought him back in what many (myself included) believed to be a publicity stunt to sell spring exhibition tickets to snow birds.

Surprisingly, Sosa not only made the team, but he hit with authority and won the starting designated hitter slot in the line-up. He's been a bargain for the Rangers, with an un-Sosa-like annual salary of just \$500,000. (I know, we the fans are all thinking, "What? ONLY a half-million dollars? How can he make ends meet?!")

"Slammin' Sammy" has hit better than most expected. Through 62 games, he's hit 12 home runs and is seventh in the American League with 53 runs batted in. Still, he's only hitting .242, more than 30 points below his pedestrian career average.

The question concerning Sosa isn't how many more years he'll play, or if he'll challenge for 700 home runs. He won't. The real question remains whether or not he'll end up enshrined in baseball's Mecca - the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, N.Y.

Sosa played in an era when it seems nearly every power hitter was a "juicer." The fact anabolic steroids weren't banned by baseball until years of abuse by its players is really immaterial to me, and to many fans.

They were still illegal.

Some steroids are still used for medicinal purposes, but getting an extra 30 pounds of lean muscle mass and an extra 30 feet on your average fly ball just doesn't seem to meet the valid medical reasoning test in my book.

Sosa has reached his personal milestone. He's proven that he still has some skill left. He's the best \$500,000 player in the big leagues, thus far.

But Sammy Sosa isn't a Hall of Famer. He cheated the game and he cheated himself. Four other players have reached the amazing mark of 600 career homers before Sosa - Babe Ruth, Willie Mays, Hank Aaron and, of course, Barry Bonds. The first three are baseball immortals; the last two are poster boys for better living through chemistry.

Personally, I don't want to see either steroid slugger enshrined in Cooperstown. Call me a baseball purist. Call me old school. But don't call on me to applaud either one of these guys.

Want to get something off of your chest (of a sports-related nature)? Shoot us an email at david.j.larsen@mnd-b.army.mil. Your comments may find their way into a future sports column.

Go, Brewers, go!