



'Man's Best Friend' Saves Lives in Diyala

Page 18



Coalition Forces Reclaim Jamea'a During Operation: Rogue Thunder

Page 16



Kindi Neighborhood Re-Opens Kindergarten

Page 15

Crossed Sabers

Volume I, Issue 19

Telling the MND-Baghdad Story

Monday, Aug. 20, 2007



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

It's a Dirty Job!

Pfc. Kevin Johnson, an infantryman with 1st Platoon, Company C, 2nd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, walks through Ur, a neighborhood within Baghdad's Adhamiyah District, July 21. (See page 27 for story)

Residents Oust Terrorists From Mosque

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

BAGHDAD - Fed-up with violent and indiscriminate terror tactics, a group of more than 80 residents of the Adhamiyah District on the east side of the Iraqi capital banded together to oust suspected terrorists from a local mosque Aug. 5.

The uprising led to a string of events over the next 12 hours that ultimately resulted in the arrest of 44 suspected terrorists and the capture of three weapons caches.

The initial take-over of the Abu Hanifa Mosque occurred at approximately 2 p.m., apparently triggered by news that terrorists had murdered two relatives of a prominent

local sheik. As the news spread, angry residents joined the sheik to storm the mosque, long-believed to be a sanctuary for terrorists operating in the area, and ousted the suspected terrorists inside from the building.

Iraqi Army troops from the 1st Battalion, 1st Brigade, 11th Infantry Division responded quickly to control the situation and secure the area around the mosque.

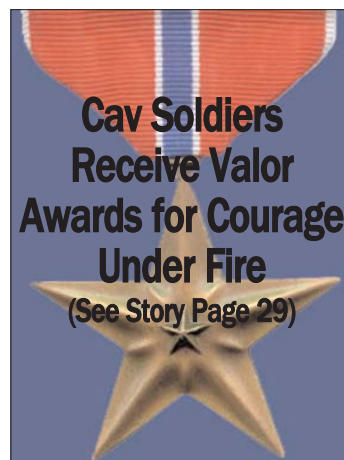
Residents led them to several individuals among those ousted from the mosque, who were suspected of being involved in terrorist activities. Thirteen suspects were eventually detained.

After order was restored, the Iraqi Army received a tip about a weapons cache

hidden in the vicinity of the mosque. At approximately 7 p.m., Iraqi forces returned to the Abu Hanifa Mosque and uncovered a massive illegal weapons cache in an outside courtyard. The cache contained several already-assembled improvised explosive devices, dynamite, mortars, rockets, landmines, bomb-making materials and various weapons.

Shortly after midnight, acting on information volunteered by Adhamiyah residents, Iraqi forces and Coalition Forces from the 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Infantry Division, attached to the 82nd Airborne Division's 2nd Brigade

See **Cache** Page 3



Commanding General's Mid-Tour Advice

Multi-National Division Baghdad continues to excel in this campaign to bring security and stability to the nation of Iraq. To that end, each and every one of you, regardless of our service, your duty position, your level of responsibility or your place on the battlefield is contributing more than you can imagine. For that, you should be justifiably proud.

As most of us have reached the midpoint of this deployment, now is a good time to cover some key points that we all need to keep in mind.

At the time of this letter 50% of Baghdad is in the Control / Retain stage of the Baghdad Security Plan--and the surge has really just now begun to show its full effects. There are fewer innocent Iraqis being murdered for purely sectarian reasons, and markets which were once targeted by indiscriminate killers are now safe and thriving. More and more Iraqis are turning from the rule of the gun toward the rule of law.

They are now embracing their Iraqi Security Forces and beginning to respect and have trust in the efforts of their fellow citizens in uniform.

Iraqis who once aligned themselves with militias are turning from those ways of the insurgent and are instead taking up arms against al Qaeda and the insurgent and militia support systems that are trying to continue their plague of destruction and dominance over the Iraqi populace. Through your selfless service we

Pegasus 6 Sends

Maj. Gen.
Joseph F. Fil,
Jr.



continue to take away the enemy's ability to control neighborhoods and brutalize the population.

Every day we are working together to place power into the legitimate hands of the average Iraqi. These successes are directly attributed to your efforts.

Our continued success in this endeavor is founded in our shared Army Values, our battle tested Warrior Ethos, and in the teamwork that drives us towards a common goal. Everything we do, every patrol we take, every "T" wall we put up, every time we give medications to a villager or repair or install some essential service, we are all working together as a team toward the ultimate goal of a lasting, safe, secure and Iraqi-led nation. It is through the sustenance of discipline, standards, fundamental leadership and teamwork that we will continue to succeed in all our missions.

We are an incredible organization. We make an awesome fighting force and we are winning the military aspect of rebuilding Iraq. We all know that this is not a time to back off our resolve. I am

charging the leaders within MND-B to look at their formations--their battalions, companies, platoons, squads, teams and buddy teams--and make an honest assessment of how you can improve. Evaluate each of your missions and your SOPs and determine where we can do better to continue the success we have enjoyed so far. Most importantly--Leaders, where you find weaknesses in those teams you must fix them. Everyone down to the last Soldier, Sailor, Airman or Marine must avoid complacency. The surge of additional forces into Iraq is complete. We are now engaged in a surge in operations, throughout Iraq, with the most important fight being yours . . . the fight to secure and stabilize Baghdad. Maintain your focus. This requires discipline to continuing the hard job we have been given and the dedication to give 100% of ourselves to each other and toward mission accomplishment.

Our Families have also made incredible sacrifices since we left, and through our efforts I know we will honor those sacrifices.

Deployment is not easy: we have each missed anniversaries, birthdays, births and deaths of loved ones. Our continued dedication to this mission makes those sacrifices worthwhile.

The last several months have been challenging, and I expect the upcoming months will be just as challenging. There are those who have made the ultimate

sacrifice for this cause and we all know that those lives were not given in vain. Our prayers go out to the Families of our fallen; they have suffered the most in this campaign. We will honor those Warriors by continuing this noble struggle as the professional war fighters that we have trained so diligently to be.

We have also had many warriors suffer wounds while serving here in Baghdad. For those who have been evacuated from Iraq, their thoughts remain with us here. Some have already rejoined us and others are striving to do so, or to be healed well enough to greet us as we return home. As a group, our wounded brothers and sisters are an inspiration to those of us who continue the daily mission here in Baghdad. Keep them in your thoughts and reach out to them when you can.

In closing I want to tell you that I am extraordinarily proud of this Division and so is America. We come from diverse units, backgrounds and ethnicities, we have a multitude of specialties and war fighting capabilities and yet we have melded together into an impressive force which is reigning in the establishment of security on some of the most contested ground on the face of the earth. I am honored to be one of you, to be in your midst. I am honored to lead you and I appreciate your efforts and the sacrifices you and your families have made.

FIRST TEAM!

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(Photo by Staff Sgt. Bronco Suzuki, 2nd IBCT, 2nd Inf. Div. Public Affairs)

Brig. Gen. John F. Campbell, the deputy commanding general for maneuver of the Multi-National Division - Baghdad and 1st Cavalry Division, greets an east Baghdad resident during a battlefield circulation Aug. 6.

Baghdad News Briefs

Terrorists Discard Infant After Murdering Mother, Uncle

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

BAGHDAD - Iraqi National Police rescued an infant girl from a garbage receptacle in the southwestern portion of the nation's capital July 25 after terrorists shot and killed the child's mother and uncle.

The child was discovered in the trash by troops from the 1st Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 1st National Police Division after residents reported that a woman and man were shot and killed by masked gunmen in the Saydiyah neighborhood of West Rashid.

The child was immediately taken by police to the nearest joint security station where medics treated her wounds.

"You can see bruises on her back from the hand that squeezed her ribs as he carried her," said Lt. Col. M. Troy Bentley, 2-1 National Police transition team chief.

The girl was evacuated to the combat support hospital for further treatment.

Two of the child's siblings were found and placed with another uncle for care. The Iraqi National Police are investigating the shooting.

Cache Seized, Suspect Detained in the Yarmouk Neighborhood

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

BAGHDAD - Multi-National Division - Baghdad Soldiers seized a cache of weapons and improvised explosive device-making materials and detained a man connected with the cache in the western Yarmouk neighborhood Aug. 7.

Soldiers from Battery A, 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery Regiment came upon the cache just before midnight while searching houses during Operation Firecracker. The operation was launched to seek out a suspected IED-cell in the area.

The Soldiers detained one Yarmouk resident connected to the house where they found the cache. He is a suspected IED cell member, and remains in custody for further questioning.

The troops uncovered two AK-47 assault rifles, approximately 200 AK-47 rounds, three 9V batteries, one 9mm pistol, two hand-held radios, numerous wires and electronic connectors and switches, a large metal funnel lined with ball bearings, and an additional container of ball bearings, which can be used to create a more lethal shrapnel effect during an IED explosion.



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

Hundreds of ball bearings were discovered as part of a munitions cache uncovered in the western Baghdad neighborhood of Yarmouk by Soldiers from Batt. A, 2nd Bn., 32nd FA Regt.



(U.S. Army photos)

Soldiers from the 1st Bn., 1st Bde., 11th Iraqi Army Div. celebrate the discovery of a weapons cache seized from the Abu Hanifa Mosque in Baghdad's Adhamiyah District Aug. 5. The troops uncovered the weapons after angry residents stormed the building and threw out suspected terrorists.

Angry Adhamiyah Residents Help Uncover Weapons Cache

Cache

From Page 1

Combat Team, mounted a combined cordon and search operation of the Al Assaf Mosque in the nearby Maghrib neighborhood.

The mosque was entered and cleared by the Iraqi Soldiers, who took three suspects into custody.

Immediately afterwards, Iraqi and U.S. forces returned to the Abu Hanifa Mosque area to investigate reports of additional weapons caches. Iraqi soldiers again entered the building to search the mosque compound and the cemetery behind

it.

They discovered two more weapons caches, which contained two IEDs, 16 mortars, two hand grenades, a sniper rifle, remote detonation devices, radios and more than a dozen weapons.

Twenty-eight suspects were taken into custody.

"I think this was a turning point," said Lt. Col. Jeff Broadwater, commander of 3-7th Cavalry.

"The people of Adhamiyah have made their stand, and they've showed by their actions that terrorists are not going to be able to come into their backyard and engage in violent acts any longer," he said.



Weapons and munitions are laid out for inventory after soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 1st Brigade, 11th Iraqi Army Division seized weapons caches from the Abu Hanifa Mosque in Baghdad's Adhamiyah District. The weapons were uncovered after angry residents stormed the building and threw out suspected terrorists Aug. 5.

'Operation Banzeen'

Unit Ensures no Illegal Activity at Gas Station

By Spc. Courtney Marulli
2nd IBCT, 2nd Inf. Div. Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE RUSTAMIYAH, Iraq - Operation Banzeen has been launched by Company D, 2nd Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment, and is meant to ensure that no one affiliated with illegal militias is taking gasoline to sell it on the black market.

Company D, 2-16, currently attached to 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, kicked off its operation at the Mashtal gas station. Company C is watching over the Rustamiyah gas station.

1st Lt. Thomas M. Warth, a platoon leader for Co. D, said the Madhi Army militia had been using these gas stations in the area as a way to get money in order to buy weapons, explosively-formed projectiles and to train snipers.

Warth, a native of Manhattan, Kan., said Co. A used to raid the gas station once a week, but once they would leave, militia members would come back in and continue with their operations.

Under "Operation Banzeen," the plan is to have the two companies show up at their respective gas stations daily, staying there for several hours to have a presence.

"I think it's actually working, too, because the people used to cut each other off and there was chaos at the gas sta-



(Photo by Spc. Courtney Marulli, 2nd IBCT, 2nd Inf. Div. Public Affairs)

Company D, 2nd Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment has been providing a constant presence at the Mashtal Gas Station as part of Operation Banzeen. The operation's focus is to have a constant American presence at the gas station and the Rustamiyah Gas Station in order to keep the Madhi Army militia members from obtaining and selling gas illegally on the black market.

tion," he said.

The people at the end of the line would wait all day and never make it into the gas station.

Now, there is fluidity to the traffic and everyone can come and get the gas they need, according to Warth.

With the Coalition presence and assistance by some members of the Iraqi Security Forces, the insurgents have not been able to use the gas station and pocket

the money they used to.

"They are losing money, Wrath said, which means they are not able to produce as many EFPs.

"The people who run the gas station definitely want us there," he said.

Since the Americans started showing up, Wrath said the gas station owners haven't seen the insurgents come through.

"The gas station is too important to

them (the Mahdi Army) to blow it up," Wrath said.

He added the American presence is already helping the neighborhood, and that the presence will continue for the time being.

"The people like it," he said.

"Before they would get charged more by the Mahdi Army and pushed around. Not anymore," he said.

Honoring Our Fallen Heroes

Pfc. James Adair, 1-28 IN, 4th BCT, 1st Inf. Div.
Pfc. Daniel Agami, 1-26 IN, 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div.
Spc. Juan Alcantara, 1-23 IN, 3rd BCT, 2nd Inf. Div.
Pvt. (2) Michael Baloga, 6-9 Cav., 3rd BCT, 1st Cav. Div.
Pfc. Benjamin Barlett Jr., HHC, 4th BCT, 1st Inf. Div.
Staff Sgt. Michael Bechert, 1-18 IN, 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div.
Pfc. David Bentz III, 1-64AR, 2nd BCT, 3rd Inf. Div.
Maj. Sid Brookshire, 1-64 AR, 2nd BCT, 3rd Inf. Div.
Sgt. William Brown, 2-227 AV, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div.
Spc. Derek Calhoun, 2-8 Cav., 1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div.
Spc. Joe Charfauros Jr., 1-64 AR, 2nd BCT, 3rd Inf. Div.
Pfc. Zachary Clouser, 1-26 IN, 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div.
Pfc. Andre Craig Jr., 2-16 IN, 4th BCT, 1st Inf. Div.
Sgt. William Crow Jr., 2-16 IN, 4th BCT, 1st Inf. Div.
Sgt. Chris Davis, 2-69 AR, 3rd BCT, 3rd Inf. Div.
Pfc. Steven Davis, 2-12 IN, 2nd BCT, 2nd Inf. Div.
Pfc. Jason Dore, 2-5 Cav., 1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div.
Pfc. Camy Floretil, 1-28 IN, 4th BCT, 1st Inf. Div.
Pfc. Richard Gilmore III, 1-26 IN, 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div.
Spc. Daniel Gomez, 1-26 IN, 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div.
Spc. Zachariah Gonzalez, 2-3 IN, 3rd BCT, 2nd Inf. Div.
Pfc. Cody Grater, 407 BSB, 2nd BCT, 82nd Abn. Div.
Sgt. Nicholas Gummersall, 1-23 IN, 3rd BCT, 2nd Inf. Div.
Sgt. 1st Class Rosales Gutierrez, 1-26 IN, 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div.

Pfc. James Harrelson, 2-16 IN, 4th BCT, 1st Inf. Div.
Pfc. Anthony Hebert, 1-26 IN, 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div.
Pfc. Charles Heinlein Jr., 2-3 IN, 3rd BCT, 2nd Inf. Div.
Pfc. Cory Hiltz, 2-12 IN, 2nd BCT, 2nd Inf. Div.
Spc. Josiah Holloper, 6-9 CAV, 3rd BCT, 1st Cav. Div.
Spc. Joel House, 2-8 CAV, 1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div.
Sgt. Darren Hubbell, 1-64 AR, 2nd BCT, 3rd Inf. Div.
Sgt. 1st Class Julian Inglesrios, 130th EN, 1169th EN.
Pfc. Alfred Jairala, 2-3 IN, 3rd BCT, 2nd Inf. Div.
Sgt. Giann Joyamendoza, 2-12 IN, 2nd BCT, 2nd Inf. Div.
Spc. Kareem Khan, 1-23 IN, 3rd BCT, 2nd Inf. Div.
Spc. Shin Kim, 2-12 IN, 2nd BCT, 2nd Inf. Div.
Pfc. Christopher Kube, BSB, 2nd BCT, 2nd Inf. Div.
Sgt. Gene Lamie, 3-7 Cav., 2nd BCT, 3rd Inf. Div.
Pfc. Daniel Leckel, 1-28 IN, 4th BCT, 1st Inf. Div.
Pfc. Thomas Leemhuis, 1-26 IN, 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div.
Spc. Charles Leonard Jr., 1-8 Cav., 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div.
Spc. Eric Lill, 2-17 FA, 2nd BCT, 2nd Inf. Div.
Spc. Darryl Linder, 1-12 Cav., 3rd BCT, 1st Cav. Div.
Spc. Braden Long, 1-4 Cav., 4th BCT, 1st Inf. Div.
Sgt. Stephen Maddies, 473rd, 1st Cav. Div.
Sgt. Jimmy Malone, 2-8 Cav., 1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div.
Sgt. Michael Martinez, 2-12 IN, 2nd BCT, 2nd Inf. Div.
Sgt. Alphonso Montenegro, 1-26 IN, 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div.

Staff Sgt. Michael Moody Jr., 2-69 AR, 3rd BCT, 3 Inf. Div.
Spc. Christopher Neiberger, 1-18 IN, 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div.
Staff Sgt. Daniel Newsome, 1-8 Cav., 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div.
Pfc. Micahel Pittman, 1-4 Cav., 4th BCT, 1st Inf. Div.
1st Lt. Daniel Riordan, 2-8 Cav., 1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div.
Spc. Cristian Rojasgallego, 2-3 IN, 3rd BCT, 2nd Inf. Div.
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Sgt. Ryan Wood, 1-26 IN, 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div.
Spc. Dustin Workman Jr., 2-12 IN, 2nd BCT, 2nd Inf. Div.
Spc. Donald Young, 1-5 Cav., 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div.

Former Son of Iraq Reflects on Changes in His Native Land

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

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - Like many immigrants before him, Rudy Lirato had a dream for his family—a dream firmly rooted in the ideals of freedom and democracy—when he left his native homeland of Iraq 30 years ago.

Now serving as an interpreter and U.S. contractor who works with the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division here, Lirato left Iraq in 1977 with his wife for Windsor, Ontario, Canada.

"I had just gotten married to my sweetheart and knew that I would be drafted into the Iraqi Army and that there was no future for me here," said Lirato. "I filed for a visa with the Canadian embassy and my uncle had sponsored my mom and then my mom, in turn, sponsored me."

Prior to his immigration to Canada, Lirato had just graduated from Baghdad's Al-Zafarani Technical College with a degree in automotive engineer design.

At the time, Saddam Hussein was only the vice president of Iraq, but Lirato explained that Hussein was the man "behind the curtain" pulling the strings and actually in control of what was happening in the country.

A few years later, in 1980, Hussein ruled Iraq completely, giving Lirato a reason to ensure that his father and other family members, still living in the totalitarian nation, made it safely out of the country.

"We had to get them out of Iraq because people were being beaten and killed for no reason. They would disappear if they criticized the Baath Party. They would be picked up by intelligence and you would never see them again," he said. "You would never think about asking the government what happened, because if you did, you would disappear, too."

During his years in North America, Lirato, now a grandfather, and his wife raised four children. For his first two years on the American continent, Lirato worked odd jobs to make ends meet.

After saving money, he was eventually able to open his own convenience store and later a chain of them along with a doughnut shop franchise and a pizzeria. Selling the franchise business 18 years later, he began an Italian restaurant with three satellite stores

for pick-up and delivery.

He was truly living the American dream, being successful in business, he said.

Eventually, after nearly three decades in Canada, Lirato and his family settled in Phoenix.

In 2004, he left the restaurant business behind because he saw the opportunity to help his former homeland after Sadaam Hussein's regime fell in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"The reason I came here was because this nation needed help," he said. "The main reason I came to work with the Army was I believed in them and what they are doing as far as their wanting to help the people out of the goodness of their hearts."

"The Coalition Forces helped Iraq get rid of a dictator, so their coming into Iraq was an excellent thing and many of the Iraqi people had been asking for U.S. help for years to get rid of Sadaam," said Lirato.

Over his three years working with Coalition Forces, Lirato said he's seen the good that they have been doing to help Iraq. In his current position for the 1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div., Rudy translates as a member of the brigade's embedded provincial reconstruction team assisting them with current efforts to include reconciliation.

"They've been doing a thousand percent in trying to reach out to the people," he said. "I couldn't believe how much they were doing and at first, they basically just offered an open check to help the Iraqi people get back on their feet."

Lirato has helped Coalition Forces to refurbish and refurbish schools, work on water projects, electrical stations and other major undertakings.

Some of the larger missions that Lirato has assisted have included accompanying a 45-foot trailer filled with medicine into the city of Mosul, Iraq. In addition, when he was working in Mosul, he saw the Coalition donate \$50,000 to help renovate a mosque.

"I've worked in efforts in Iraq that have involved thousands and thousands of dollars, giving free food rations out to the people," he said. "There have been a lot of people out there in the U.S. and other nations with big hearts making donations to help Iraqis."

One of the things that really surprised Lirato was the humane way in which Coalition troops and Iraqi Security Forces treat insurgents when they are captured as enemy combatants. It was an eye-opening experience, he said, as compared to the old days



Rudy Lirato (right), a U.S. contractor and translator currently working for the 1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div.'s Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team, and Maj. Steve Espinoza, brigade civil affairs officer for 1st BCT, stand in front of a legal building after attending a reconstruction meeting with local Iraq government leaders north of Baghdad July 20.

under Hussein.

"When Sadaam captured his enemies, he would give them a slap in the face and a punch in the stomach and then send them to their deaths in meat grinders—after days and days of torture," said Lirato. "When the Coalition Forces capture insurgents, suspects are given a toothbrush, food and water and humane treatment. Officers tell their troops not to yell, but be as nice as they can."

"Now, terror suspects are assured of getting a fair trial," added Lirato, explaining that there is a noticeable difference between Iraq as a democracy, opposed to when it was under a totalitarian regime.

Another impression that sticks with Lirato, he said, was how much the Coalition troops go out of their way to respect cultural differences inherent in Iraqi society.

"They have a great respect for and really do care about what happens to the people here," said Lirato. But, he said, there needs to be a lot more participation on the part of Iraqis to move the country forward towards democracy.

"Reaching the younger generation will be key as they are the future of Iraq," said Lirato. "Iraqis need to recognize that U.S. and Coalition Forces are there to help them and that they should grab the opportunity that's at their doorsteps. The Coalition Forces will not be here forever."

"Freedom isn't free, it has cost the Iraqis and coalition precious souls for a good cause," he added.

With so many different people living in Iraqi society to include Kurds, Shia, Sunni, Tarakaman, Yezedy and Christians, one of the keys to success in Iraq will be bringing all of the different groups together and uniting them, according to Lirato.

"They need to take seriously what they have in their hands and start following a different path, first to help their country and their families," Lirato said. "If they don't they will be living in a lot worse situation than they are now."

"But hopefully they will awaken and put their differences aside, and take one united way to successfully live in prosperity," added Lirato.

Lirato said he believes very much in the type of democracy and freedom that he and his family have experienced since moving to first Canada and then, the United States—he hopes one day people in Iraq can have a similar type of freedom to pursue their own dreams.

One of the proudest moments in his life, he added, will come when he finally becomes a U.S. citizen in a few short months.

"I can't wait to tell the judge, the president of the United States, the congress and everyone else 'In God we trust,'" said Lirato. "It's going to be a big honor for me and for my family."



(U.S. Army photos)

Rudy Lirato (right), a U.S. contractor currently working for the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division's Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team, poses for a photo with a U.S. Soldier and some children in Mosul, Iraq in 2004. Lirato, who is a native of Iraq and now resides in Arizona, has worked with coalition forces for three years and said he hopes to help the Iraqi people realize their own dreams of democracy.

Iraqi Army and Coalition Troops, Work With Volunteers at Baghdad Control Points

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

SAB AL BOR, Iraq - Soldiers from Battery A, 1st "Red Lion" Battalion, 37th Field Artillery Regiment have been working with Iraqi Army troops from the 2nd Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division (Mechanized) to help neighborhood watch volunteers learn to manage traffic control points near here in an effort to curb insurgent activities.

The Battery A and Iraqi Army troops spend their time at the traffic control points assisting the volunteers, who are Iraqis from the local area, with searching vehicles and keeping traffic flowing smoothly throughout the area, as well as protecting Coalition Forces, Iraqi Security Forces and the local civilian populace from insurgent attacks. The volunteers have their own weapons and they are working together with the Iraqi Security and Coalition Forces against a common enemy.

"Things have gotten better here as we build trust with both the volunteers and the Iraqi Army," said Capt. Michael Englis, commander, Battery A and a native of Easton, Conn. "We've been working together to make sure that roadways are secure, and so far, it's been working well."

According to Englis, attacks in the area are down thanks to the efforts of the neighborhood watch volunteers working in cooperation with Iraqi troops and Coalition Forces. For the most part, the volunteers work the TCPs by themselves with very little help from the Iraqi Army or U.S. troops.

"They're doing a really good job, and you know, we (Coalition Forces) could do patrols all day, but it's important for Iraqis to take over. That's what they're doing here, they are taking the initiative," said Englis. "The volunteers working with the Iraqi Army to keep the road ways free of improvised explosive devices are important to the future of this country. It's going to help set the conditions for the Iraqi Security Forces and volunteers to take over."

The volunteers currently are not paid for their services and are simply concerned citizens who grew tired of attacks on their neighborhoods and their families. They just want a better way of life for their communities, free of insurgents and sectarian violence, said Englis.

"They work long hours in the hot sun without payment," said Englis, whose Soldiers oftentimes bring water and food out



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

Pvt. Josh Tullock, with Battery A, 1st Battalion, 37th Field Artillery Regiment, pulls security at a traffic control point near Sab Al Bor, Iraq while area neighborhood watch volunteers search a vehicle.

to the traffic control points for the volunteers. "Eventually, many of them will get jobs in the Iraqi Security Forces as Iraqi Police or Iraqi Army troops."

Local tribal leaders, sheiks from both Sunni and Shia areas, are working toward the reconciliation process. They met on Camp Taji, Iraq July 16. The meeting helped to arrange setting up the neighborhood watch programs over the past few weeks.

According to Englis, not only does having the volunteers working in the area with Coalition troops and Iraqi Security Forces play a role in operations, but it has helped to build camaraderie, a sense of pride in the Iraqis and boosts morale for Soldiers.

"It really brings a smile to my face to see all those Iraqi flags out there. It shows that they, the volunteers and Iraqi troops, care and they are taking pride in their country and in helping their people," said Englis. "Our Soldiers enjoy working with the Iraqis."

"For my Soldiers to see the local nationals out there, it gives them a different perspective helping them to see that not all Iraqis are bad or are insurgents," he added. "Our Soldiers see that the Iraqis are willing to make sacrifices for their country and communities and that's done wonders for the morale of the Soldiers. The Soldiers now realize that they're not the only ones making sacrifices or risking their lives."

Pvt. Josh Tullock, an artilleryman with Battery A, who hails from Monroe City, Mo., said he has definitely seen a difference in how things are now as opposed to when he first arrived in country.

"The Iraqi people are doing a lot of good here and have been a real help to us," said Tullock. "Things definitely look a lot better than when we first got here. We must be doing good, because the volunteers are out here helping us. We've been getting a lot more support from the Iraqi security forces and the Iraqi people, and I think the local populace likes us more now."

Spc. John Akins, a medic for Battery A, who said he has given more medical care to area residents during his time in country than to Soldiers, said he too, has seen a change.

"These days you see a lot more of the local nationals waving at us and jumping around when they see us," said Akins, who hails from Halls, Tenn. "When the Iraqi people see the Iraqi volunteers out there, they become more cooperative during vehicle searches and you see that they want to help us out. It's helped us

to build more trust with them. They see that we want them to take over, so that they have control over what happens in their own country."

One of the testaments to the efforts of the volunteers working with the Iraqi and U.S. troops, Englis said, has been just bringing back a sense of normalcy to the local populace.

"Many of them say that they feel safer now," he said. "(They) are happy that they can do things in their communities again, like going shopping."



An Iraqi Army officer (center) from the 2nd Bde., 9th Iraqi Army Div. (Mechanized) and Capt. Michael Englis (right), commander, Batt. A, 1st Bn., 37th FA Regt., talk with neighborhood watch volunteers at a traffic control point near Sab Al Bor, Iraq July 29.



While on a mission with Soldiers from Batt. A, 1st Bn., 37th FA Regt. to visit neighborhood watch volunteers at a traffic control point, an Iraqi soldier from the 2nd Bde., 9th Iraqi Army Div. (Mechanized) gives a peace sign from atop his T-72 tank near Sab Al Bor, Iraq July 29.



(U.S. Army photo)

General Fires Big Gun

Brig. Gen. Vincent Brooks, deputy commanding general for support for the Multi-National Division-Baghdad and 1st Cavalry Division, prepares to load an M109A6 Paladin howitzer for firing at Camp Taji, Iraq July 31. Brooks fired the artillery piece while also meeting with troops from the 1st "Dragon" Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment whose Paladin battery has fired more than 3,500 rounds in support of combat operations in Iraq since their arrival in late 2006.

Caches, Car Bomb Factory Found, Kidnapping Victim Freed

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

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - Multi-National Division Baghdad Soldiers located multiple weapons and munitions caches, located a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device factory and rescued a kidnapping victim in northwest Baghdad July 26.

While conducting patrols in the area around Tall Yusuf village of Abu Ghraib, Soldiers from Company A, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment from the 1st "Ironhorse" Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division located five weapons and munitions caches.

The caches consisted of mortars, anti-aircraft guns with ammunition, containers filled with high explosives, and other improvised explosive device-making material. The weapons, ammunition, and IED material were destroyed by an explosive ordnance disposal team.

Battery C, 1st Battalion, 37th Field Artillery Battalion conducted an air assault to relieve Co. A, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment at the cache sites and continued to patrol the area. While conducting their patrol the Soldiers discovered a VBIED factory, which contained several vehicles in different



(U.S. Army photo)

A rocket-propelled grenade launcher and a machine gun with rounds, pictured above, were just some of the weapons Soldiers from Company A, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment uncovered in six different weapons caches near the Tall Yusuf village of Abu Ghraib, Iraq July 26.

stages of completion.

While searching the building, a kidnapping victim was discovered. The victim claimed he was kidnapped in the Abu Ghraib area after visiting his relatives there. He said the persons responsible were agents of Al Qaeda, and they had kidnapped him because

they believed he was a spy for the "1920 Brigade." The 1920 Brigade is a former Sunni group that had rejected the government of Iraqi, but has recently made overtures to reconcile with the government and the Coalition to defeat Al Qaeda in Iraq. The victim claims he had been kidnapped for

almost four days, and that he had been tortured.

After the man had been rescued, Battery C, 1st Battalion, 37th Field Artillery Battalion requested aviation assets destroy the vehicles and the building which was being used as a car bomb factory. Aviators from the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cav. Div., destroyed the vehicles and a fixed-wing aircraft dropped a 500-pound bomb to destroy the building.

Battery C, 1st Battalion, 37th Field Artillery Battalion evacuated the kidnapping victim by helicopter back to Camp Taji where his wounds were assessed by Coalition doctors.

Noting that the victim had no serious injuries, Soldiers from the 115th Brigade Support Battalion, convoyed the victim to Camp Liberty. From there, Soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment returned the man to Abu Ghraib to be reunited with his family.

The 1st "Ironhorse" Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division is conducting Operation Iron Blitz, a series of missions in northwest Baghdad, to eliminate the ability of Al Qaeda and Jaish al Mahdi special groups to use the area as a staging ground for attacks into central Baghdad.

Thousands of Miles Away, Troops in Iraq Take Part in Sturgis Bike Rally

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

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - Soldiers from the 1st "Ironhorse" Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division here attended the Sturgis bike rally at Sturgis, S.D.

Well, not exactly.

But thanks to a live satellite feed and the ability to watch events at the rally via streaming video, the Ironhorse Soldiers had the next best thing to being at the extravaganza which draws more than a half million motorcycle enthusiasts each year to the small burg of Sturgis—a town with a population of about 6,000 people.

The Aug. 6 live video feed allowed Soldiers the opportunity to see events happening in Sturgis. Through a satellite connection, bikers at the rally in Sturgis could see what the Soldiers were doing.

The event was sponsored by the Broken Spoke Saloon which provided live entertainment for the troops in the form of a band along with motorcycle-themed events which Soldiers on Camp Taji watched on a big screen.

Soldiers who are bikers took the



A rock band made up of 1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div. troopers plays on Camp Taji, Iraq Aug. 6 during a live satellite feed with bikers at the Sturgis Bike Rally in Sturgis, S.D.

opportunity to give shout outs to fellow bikers in Sturgis as well as to send messages to their families.

The Ironhorse Brigade also provided some live entertainment to its troops in the form of a rock band here which played for 30 minutes just prior to the events in

Sturgis kicking off.

"This type of event brings peoples spirits up and their morale, giving us a little taste of home," said Pfc. Valentin Alvarado, an infantryman, Headquarters Troop, 1st BCT, who hails from Roswell, N.M. "The fact that the folks in Sturgis

took the time to set this up for us shows that they appreciate what we're doing out here."

"It feels nice to be a part of something like this. The only thing missing is some barbeque and it would feel exactly like home," said Pfc. Thomas Gutierrez, also of Hqtrs Trp. and a Lockport, Ill. native.

Gutierrez and Alvarado, who although not motorcycle bikers, are part of a low-rider bicycle club on Camp Taji and they showed off their highly polished bikes via live video to the folks in Sturgis.

"We like to show off our bikes and we think it's great for our bike club to be able to have the opportunity to participate in this," said Gutierrez, who explained that the club takes great pride in their bikes in much the same way that motorcycle enthusiasts take pride in their machines.

"Being able to interact with folks (in Sturgis) makes us feel good, especially with us being out here in a combat zone," said Sgt. Chris Delacruz of Company B, 1st Brigade Special Troops Battalion, who is also a member of the low-rider club. "It helps to break up the monotony of working eight to 12 hours a day with no days off and allows us to relieve a lot of stress."



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

Low-rider bicycle enthusiasts, all Soldiers from the 1st "Ironhorse" Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, on Camp Taji, Iraq prepare for a chance to speak with bikers at the Sturgis Bike Rally in Sturgis, S.D. via a live satellite feed Aug 6. Pictured from left to right are Los Angeles native Pfc. Mario Morales, Company B, 1st Brigade Special Troops Battalion; Pfc. Valentin Alvarado of Headquarters Troop, 1st BCT, who hails from Roswell, N.M.; Lockport, Ill. native Pfc. Thomas Gutierrez also of HHT, 1st BCT, and Sgt. Chris Delacruz, Co. B, 1st BSTB, and a native of Colorado Springs, Colo.

Iraqi Army, Garryowen, Gives Day of Healing to Shat Al Taji Residents

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

SHAT AL TAJI, Iraq -- Iraqi Army medics from the 2nd Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division (Mechanized) and Soldiers from the 1st "Garryowen" Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment shared in a Coalition healthcare outreach project here Aug. 4 to bring medical care to villagers.

The village, which is beginning to recover from rifts caused by sectarian violence, thanks to the assistance of neighborhood watch volunteers who are working with local leaders, Coalition Forces and Iraqi Security Forces to rid the area of insurgents, has seen very little in the form of health-care, so the joint medical effort offered a rare opportunity according to Capt. Andrew Solares, squadron surgeon for 1-7 Cavalry.

"We're building friendship and trust here more than anything else," said Solares, who hails from Gainesville, Fla. "We're working to make a good contribution to the commu-



An Iraqi Army medic from the 2nd Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division (Mechanized) gives a comic book, soccer ball and tee-shirt to an Iraqi boy during a joint medical effort with troops from the 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment at Shat Al Taji, Iraq Aug. 4.

nity and hopefully the local sheiks appreciate what we're doing and see that we're here to earnestly help the people."

During the joint medical effort, four Iraqi Army medics, an Iraqi doctor, medical personnel from Garryowen as well as from Charlie Medical Company, 115th Brigade Support Battalion saw patients in several different treatment rooms in a make-shift clinic set up in a local school.

"Our Soldiers who are getting the chance to work with their Iraqi counterparts are looking at this as a very positive experience," said Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Anderson, a Garryowen medical platoon sergeant, and Fayetteville, N.C. native. "The Iraqi Army's contribution to these medical efforts is growing and you can see that they feel good knowing that they're helping their own people."

"For our Soldiers it allows them the opportunity to learn from the Iraqis as they learn from us," added Anderson. "It gives them significant knowledge into the different ways the Iraqi medics operate and helps them to understand a lot about cultural differences and beliefs. These events are beneficial both to the development of the Iraqi medics and our own medics as well."

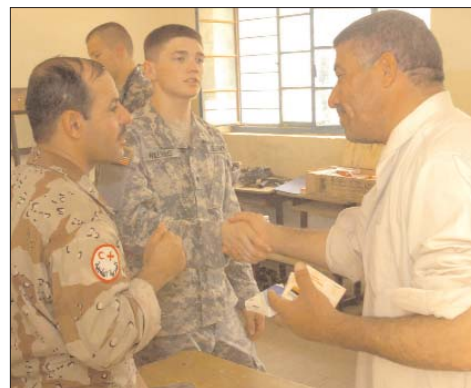
Soldiers from Troop C, 1-7 Cavalry, who operate out of a nearby combat outpost, also lent a hand to the effort, providing security, transportation and bringing in supplies.

Out of respect for the Iraqi culture, 1-7 Cavalry provided female Soldiers to escort female Iraqi patients to treatment rooms, a duty that Spc. Angela Herkshan of the squadron's Darkhorse Troop, Forward Support Company, said she takes pride in doing.

"I enjoy helping the people and it makes me feel good to know I'm doing my part in showing the Iraqis that we care about them and their culture," said Herkshan, a native of Sells, Ariz.

Over the course of the joint medical effort, medical specialists saw more than 400 patients who had ailments ranging from dehydration to headaches, colds, cuts and other minor illnesses.

The Garryowen medics who participated in the event said they enjoyed helping both the residents of the village



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

An Iraqi Army medic (left) from the 2nd Bde., 9th Iraqi Army Div. (Mechanized) and Spc. Nathan Williams, a medic for the 1st Squadron, 7th Cav. Regt., bid farewell to an Iraqi patient after giving him medication in Shat Al Taji, Iraq during a joint medical effort in the village.

and their Iraqi Army counterparts.

"We've built a lot of camaraderie with the Iraqi medics and it always feels good working with friends," said Spc. Nathan Williams, who hails from Lucerne Valley, Calif. "Seeing and treating all the kids can really pull at your heart strings."

"The Iraqi Army medics are making progress toward transition and we know the Iraqi people will be left in better hands when we eventually leave Iraq," said Spc. Jack Rosfeld, who hails from San Ramon, Calif. "Helping them as well as the people here--it makes us feel like we are truly making a difference."

"We hope that in the people's eyes that we don't leave a negative impression on them but rather that we are making a big impact on their lives for the good," added Rosfeld.



Just prior to moving medical supplies into a school where a make-shift health clinic has been set up, Iraqi Army medics from the 2nd Bde., 9th Iraqi Army Div. (Mechanized) talk next to their field litter ambulance at Shat Al Taji, Iraq Aug. 4.

Cavalry Unit Maintains its Focus With Only Weeks Left in Iraq

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

BAGHDAD - From the markets of Al Doura to the streets of Al Rashid to the neighborhoods of the Karkh District, troops from the 1st Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment have found themselves in some of the most dangerous neighborhoods in the Iraqi capital.

After more than a year patrolling and surviving the mean streets, the squadron finds itself on the downhill slope toward their home at Fort Lewis, Wash. Although many of the Soldiers are counting down the last remaining days, they still patrol the streets of Karkh.

Patterson, N.J., native 2nd Lt. Michael Patti has only been with the troop for about six months. When he heard who he was going to be attached to, he expected a less-than-friendly welcome from troops who had been moved several times, fought through many battles and had just gotten word of an extension.

To his surprise, he fell into the platoon seamlessly. He could hardly believe the troops had so much discipline and morale still left in them after months of hard fighting.

"I thought I was going to walk into a unit that was beaten down, tired and angry

about getting extended," he said. "I haven't seen anything like what I expected. Leaders do a great job keeping the Soldiers heads in the fight even this late in the game. Fourteen months into this and they're still a force to be reckoned with."

Patti credits leaders in general, but he extends a special thanks to those in his platoon. He said that leaders like Sgt. Brandon Bashore make all the difference while they're out in the streets.

Bashore, a Kokomo, Ind., native said he understands that going home is something they all think of, but knows complacency has no place while out on the streets.

"There's a big difference between being comfortable and being complacent," Bashore said. "We're comfortable in what we do because we've been doing it for so long, but being complacent would mean that we wouldn't care. You have to take things seriously out here. No matter what happens out here, we all have to make it back together."

Bashore said that recently he's been able to focus on his troops a little more thanks to improvements made by the Iraqi Army company they patrol with.

"I'm able to keep better control of my Soldiers because the IA has really stepped



Staff Sgt. David Forney, Lebanon, Ore., native with Troop A, 1st Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment, attached to the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, scans an alleyway while his Soldiers enter a house being searched by Iraqi Army soldiers during a patrol in Baghdad's Karkh District Aug. 2.

up lately," he said. "They've become quite an asset to us and the community."

Patti also noticed a big change in the Iraqi soldiers since he arrived to the unit and began the joint patrols. He said what was once an unmotivated unit has turned

into something the people can be proud of.

"There were a lot of problems with the IA when I first arrived in April," he said. "We would show up to the outpost the IA would be manning and have to wait for them for an hour before they'd be ready to go out on a patrol. Sometimes there'd be only six of them in one truck that would come out with us."

Now, when the "Death Stalkers" arrive to the outpost dozens of Iraqi troops stand up, ready to go, in full uniform. Since the Iraqi soldiers began improving, so has the relationship between the two forces.

Patti said that their relationship has almost grown into a friendship, but it doesn't end there. Traffic control points are improved, search techniques have been passed on and etiquette are just a few more things that Patti and Bashore have noticed improvements in.

"When you treat people with respect like the IA have been doing lately, word gets around and people start to work with us a little more," Bashore said.

The platoon recently wrapped up an ongoing operation aimed at cataloging all the military-age males in the area. Spc. Jacob Campbell said that having good relations makes the job much faster and easier.

Campbell, a Newton, N.C., native who was trained on the identification system, noticed that people welcome the troops into their homes now, whereas in times past the people wouldn't want to be seen talking to American or Iraqi troops.

Joint patrols, clearing operations and building good relations has proved to be a "triple edged" sword, according to Patti. While he and his troops hope to leave a lasting impression on the Iraqi soldiers they worked with, and the community they helped secure, he said the level of professionalism and discipline will remain where it is until the day they step on the plane headed to Fort Lewis.



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

Pfc. Roger Montague, a Ramah, N.M., native with Troop A, 1st Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment, attached to the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, hangs out with a new buddy during a joint patrol in Baghdad's Karkh District Aug. 2.

Hospital Opens New Cardiac Care Unit in Central Baghdad's Karkh District

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

BAGHDAD - Healthcare in Iraq took a major step forward with the recent completion of the new cardiac care unit at the Ibn Al Batar Hospital, located in the Karkh District of the capital city.

The renovation of the cardiac care unit is part of the ongoing efforts of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division to restore and improve the hospital, which has undergone several renovations due to damage it has received since 2003.

"The new cardiac care unit is an intensive care unit where patients who either just had catheterization or are worried they're having a heart attack or are in need of some kind of intensive care can go and get continuously monitored and cared for if anything happens," explained the brigade's surgeon, Lt. Col. (Dr.) Margret Merino. "It provides special cardiac heart services for the entire Baghdad area, and that includes cardiac catheterizations, open heart surgeries and pediatric congenital heart defect surgeries."

Merino, who is originally from Buffalo, N.Y., said that the most important feature of the new CCU is its centralized cardiac monitoring system.

"One of the major things for this unit is that it has centralized cardiac monitors, which means that all the beds are hooked up to monitors, and all those monitors are watched constantly at the nurses' station, which is in the middle," she said.

"It basically just provides them state-of-the-art cardiac care and allows them to offer very modern types of procedures," she added.

Work on the Ibn Al Batar Hospital began with the reconstruction of the building that houses the CCU by the 4th BCT, 4th Infantry Division (Mechanized) during its deployment, and the project was taken over by the Black Jack Brigade when it arrived in Baghdad last year.

The addition of the centralized monitoring equipment



(Photo by Sgt. Robert Yde, 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

The commander of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, Col. Bryan Roberts, visits with a young boy during a tour of the Ibn Al Batar Hospital in Baghdad Aug. 2. The hospital recently opened a cardiac care unit.

was the last step in the completion of the CCU, which according to Staff Sgt. Robert Thompson is the first phase of a larger, three-phase project.

The second and third phases, which include the reconstruction of buildings within the hospital complex that will serve as training areas and specialized care units, are being addressed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, explained Thompson, a native of San Diego who is with Co. B, 97th Civil Affairs Battalion.

Since being damaged during the initial bombing campaign of Baghdad in 2003, Ibn Al Batar has suffered numerous setbacks, but Thompson said the hospital's administrator, Dr. Hussein Ali Hilli has continued to work with Coalition Forces and Iraq's Ministry of Health to repair and improve the hospital.

"He's totally dedicated to the facility. This is the third time he's had to go through building the hospital," Thompson said of Hilli.

Merino said that Hilli's dedication to rebuilding his hospital and maintaining a well trained staff has made the brigade's and the hospital's partnership very productive.

"Dr. Hussein been shown to be a very dedicated physician and a very good hospital administrator; So it's an easy hospital to support because he puts everything together," she said. "One of the reasons that he's been very successful there is that he's able to take care of his staff. He provides them a place to live, food and stuff like that. So he has a very highly qualified staff. It's one of the best hospitals that we've seen in the Karkh area."

It is not only the residents of Karkh or even Baghdad that will benefit from the new cardiac services that the hospital can now provide. People from throughout Iraq will be able to take advantage of the facility's unique services, and according to Merino, even though the CCU

has just started seeing patients, it's already at capacity and has a long waiting list for others hoping receive treatment.

"It's one of the few, if not the only cardiac center, in Iraq that provides everything - all types of cardiac care," Merino explained.

"So they not only get patients from Karkh, but they get patient from all over the greater Baghdad area and Iraq. Some hospitals might do open heart surgeries or they might do catheterizations, but this one specifically does all the cardiac services," he said.

Through international partnerships developed by Hilli, the hospital is also taking steps to continue to build upon the services it can provide.

Merino said that some of the children in the hospital have been diagnosed with congenital heart disease, which requires a very specialized and complex type of surgery that Ibn Al Batar cannot always accommodate.

"They have a training program that's just starting right now where some of his physicians are going to fly to another country to get training especially for this type of cardiac surgery, and then his hospital will be able to do that kind of surgery," Merino said.

Hilli has also developed a cooperative medical partnership through the International Organization of Migration, which allows small children that his facility cannot treat to be moved to and treated by hospitals in Jordan and India.

"Basically, if you want to see what's right, what you look for in a health care facility, this is the example," Thompson said of Ibn Al Batar.

"Once everything is complete, they'll be able to show their own ministry what right looks like and what efforts have been accomplished, and it will become a model for the ministry itself to mirror for other facilities," he said.



Patients at Ibn Al Batar Hospital in Baghdad rest in the facility's recently opened cardiac care unit Aug. 2.

Baghdad Zoo Reopens Aquarium

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

BAGHDAD, Iraq - After more than eight months of being nothing more than an empty building at the Baghdad Zoo in Zawra Park, the zoo's aquarium was reopened July 23.

Reopening the aquarium was just one of several ongoing projects that Soldiers with the 15th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division have been working on since March when they began supporting the Zawra Park complex.

According to the battalion's projects manager, Capt. Amy Cronin, this was one of the easier projects that the 15th BSB had taken on because the only thing keeping the aquarium from being open was the lack of a power source.

"It was just one of those low hanging fruit type projects because the only thing we had to do was provide a generator," the Carlisle, Pa. native explained. "They had the means to get the fish. They had the contractor and paid for all the fish to be delivered here. The building was already in great shape, so it was just such a shame to see it closed down just because it needed power. It was a very simple project for us."

Cronin said that after taking over as the battalion's projects manager she conducted an initial assessment of Zawra Park, and the zoo's management told her that their biggest issue was power generation.

She said that they requested four generators to be used to supply power throughout the park and that one of these generators was used for the aquarium project.

The contract for setting up the genera-



(Photos by Sgt. Robert Yde, 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Ahmed Wali watches fish swim at the brand new aquarium at the Baghdad Zoo, which opened July 23.

tors was given to Ali Latef, and he said that within three weeks of receiving the contract his crew had the generators installed and power was once again being supplied to the building that housed the old aquarium.

Latef added that to help drown out the distracting noise of the generators, concrete slabs were constructed around them.

Within a week of having the generator up and running, zoo employees began refilling the empty tanks with fish purchased at a

market in Baghdad.

Dr. Belal Abed Alrozaq, a veterinarian who helped with the process of restocking the aquarium said that he was happy to see the aquarium reopened and pleased with the final results.

He said that for many Iraqis, the only knowledge they have of fish comes from those that they eat and he is hoping that the new aquarium will help educate visitors about marine life.

"It is a wonderful place where every body can watch the fish and learn more information about the fish," he said.

The aquarium is home to 15 different varieties of fish, mainly different types of goldfish and tetra, as well as a desert tortoise. While the aquarium does not contain any exotic or tropical fish, Cronin said that just the fact that it is now reopened is a step in the right direction.

"This is progress," she said. "Just being able to open up another exhibit at the zoo for people to visit is a great thing."

According to the zoo's director, Adel Salman Mousa, the addition of the aquarium is one of the most important projects that the zoo has completed and it will add to the experience of coming to the zoo.

With the aquarium now open, Cronin said that she and the management of the zoo and Zawra Park will focus on several other projects that are either ongoing or in the works.

Currently, many of the buildings within the zoo, which were maintained on the inside but were deteriorating on the outside, are being repainted in bright colors.

Cronin said that the next major project will be improving the horse stables in Zawra Park, which are right across the street from the zoo.

"They've got 27 horses and they don't have enough horse stables for them right now

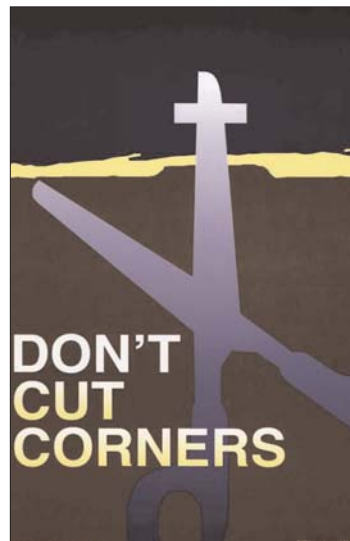
so we're going to be adding on another 20 stalls," she said.

Future projects that Cronin said are being discussed include expanding the lion and bear habitats to provide these animals with space more fitting for their size, and the construction of a walk-through bird sanctuary that would house free flying birds.

"It makes me feel great," she said. "I couldn't have asked for a better project. It was already nice when we came here and everything that we do just improves it. The Iraqi people have a nice place to visit so we're going to continue as long as we're here. We've got a lot of projects that are in progress and a lot of them that are going to be coming through and being funded in the next couple of months so this place will just continue to grow and improve."



Adel Salmon Mousa, the director of the Baghdad Zoo and Capt. Amy Cronin, the project manager for the 15th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, cut a cake at the grand opening of the zoo's aquarium July 23.



Troops Provide Dental, Medical Aid to the Residents of Janeen

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

BAGHDAD - While in many countries basic dental and medical care may sometimes be taken for granted, for most Iraqis, services such as these are luxuries that are often times unavailable or unaffordable.

To help mitigate this issue, Soldiers from the 3rd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, conducted a dental and medical assistance mission in a small village near the neighborhood of Janeen July 27.

More than 100 people received treatment during the humanitarian aid mission, which was conducted in conjunction with dentists from the Iraqi Army.

"Today we came to provide medical care for the local nationals and our goal was to restore families and help them with the care that they don't get on an every day basis," explained Capt. Leon Richardson, the physician's assistant with 3-82 FA.

The San Antonio native said that the battalion tries to conduct missions like this at least once every two months, but if time allowed, they would like to be able to do them more often.

"We want to try to pick it up and get out here a little bit more because there's a lot more that needs to be done," he said.

One of the residents, who the Soldiers had worked with before, volunteered the use of his property for the set up of their make-shift clinic.

Richardson set up in a small shaded corner outside the house, while the brigade's dentist, Capt. Christine Ford and her assistant, Spc. Lisa Beasley, used the living room to see their patients.

Along with Ford, two dentists from the

Iraqi Army, 2nd Lts. Omar Khan and Saleh Faris, were also on hand to provide assistance.

"We were taking care of immediate problems, particularly pain issues, which were mostly extractions," Ford, a native of Seattle, explained. "Most of the patients we saw were mostly tooth pain or gum pain, all coming from poor oral hygiene."

Ford explained to each of her patients how to properly care for their teeth and handed out toothbrushes after treating them.

She said that while it was good that they were able to offer some help, there were several limitations to the type of services she could provide.

"Since we can't bring all our equipment we couldn't do regular fillings or anything like that," Ford said. "It was basically extractions, maybe a quick cleaning or nothing. So our realm was very limited."

Richardson agreed with Ford about the limitations of the types of care he could provide, saying that the best he could do for most people was give them something to try to alleviate whatever pain they were dealing with.

"We're just here to treat symptoms," he explained. "Because we can't do a whole lot, we just give them something to help them with the pain. If there's some emergency, we may do some small procedure, but other than that it's just pain control - relieve the symptoms and make them feel better."

He said the most common problems he saw were joint and abdominal pain and allergies, and although he can't cure everybody, just being able to provide a little assistance is a good feeling.

"Whenever you can relieve pain from any patient, it doesn't matter, Americans or local nationals, it's a great feeling," Richardson said. "We touch lives and people



Seattle native, Capt. Christine Ford, the brigade dentist for the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, treats a young girl during a humanitarian aide mission in Baghdad's Janeen neighborhood July 27.

leave feeling better."

While Ford and Richardson attended to the patients, Soldiers from Battery A, 3-82 FA maintained order and security outside.

Sgt. Frank Kautz, a native of Pittsburgh, said that he enjoys taking part in these humanitarian missions, particularly his interaction with the children.

"I love children and I've always loved children," he said. "I like to see smiling faces on kids. The reason I play the games with them and play around with them is it gives them a little entertainment and let's them know we're friendly and doesn't give them a

bad impression of us."

While their parents were waiting to be seen, Kautz and other Soldiers organized games for the children and handed out small prizes to the winners.

"Any humanitarian mission that I'm a part of I feel good about myself because I know we made a difference," Kautz said. "It gives the people a good impression that Americans are not here to be harmful, they're here to help, and that's why I always feel good every time I'm a part of something like this. I know I'm here helping people and the people know we're here to help."



(Photos by Sgt. Robert Yde, 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

2nd Lt. Omar Khan, an Iraqi Army dentist, looks at a girl's teeth during a humanitarian mission in Baghdad's Janeen neighborhood July 27.



2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. dentist, Capt. Christine Ford, administers a shot to a boy's gums before performing a tooth extraction during a humanitarian aide mission in Baghdad's Janeen neighborhood July 27.

Troops Keep Forward Operating Base Prosperity Safe

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE PROSPERITY, Iraq - As a cook, Spc. Christopher Johnson knew that during his tour in Iraq the only part of the country he would likely see would be the forward operating base where he lived and worked.

Every other month, though, Johnson takes a break from his normal duties in the dining facility and climbs up into one of the towers that line the perimeter of FOB Prosperity. During the next 30 days, he will make this climb into his tower almost daily and from there watch over the downtown Baghdad streets that run alongside the FOB.

A native of Baton Rouge, La., Johnson is just one of several Soldiers from the 15th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, who split their time alternating between their normal duties and pulling FOB security.

"In my normal job, I'd be in the kitchen working crazy hours. Here I work a 12-hour shift, and I have to wear all my gear, which I'm not really used to wearing being in the kitchen, but it's a good chance to be kind of separated from everybody else and see new things," Johnson said. "You get to see a little bit more action from up there. I see how it looks outside the FOB."

Soldiers from throughout the 15th BSB took on the responsibility of guarding the base soon after arriving to FOB Prosperity from FOB Falcon in March. During their month of guard duty, the Soldiers face long days compounded by the weight of their gear, which they bear for hours at a time, and of course, the extreme heat of the summer.

Despite these ordeals, Johnson said he enjoys his time in the towers. He said that changing jobs every other month helps to break up the monotony of doing the same thing day after day for months at a time.

"It's sort of like a break from your normal job," he explained. "You get away from it. That's how everybody kind of feels about it. You get away from your section for a little bit, and you come back and you feel better."

While force protection may not seem like a typical

mission for a support unit, 1st Lt. Anna Rosenberg, the force protection officer-in-charge, said that the battalion started preparing for the duty while still at Fort Hood, Texas and gained invaluable experience while running the base defense operations at FOB Falcon.

She said that once they arrived at FOB Prosperity they were able to quickly take over the operations of the FOB's towers and entry gate and began making changes to provide better security for the base as well as the Soldiers who were pulling guard duty.

"With the state the camo screening was in, the Soldiers were visible from the perimeter," said Rosenberg, a Portland, Ore., native. "The first thing that we wanted to do was make Soldiers less visible from the outside and that really became our top priority."

In order to accomplish this first task, they installed sniper screening around the tower, which makes the Soldiers virtually impossible to see from the streets below.

"Getting the sniper screens up was very important," Capt. Michelle Ramos, the Headquarters Company commander for 15th BSB said. "It makes it a little more difficult for the Soldiers to see, but it does its job and you cannot see in. Nobody can tell if there's a Soldier up there or not, and that was the goal. The Soldiers are protected, and they can't be targeted by a sniper or anything else."

Once the sniper screening was in place, the next big project was repairing the floors according to Sgt. 1st Class Cesar Barriaybartolo, the force protection non-commissioned officer-in-charge. They also added an air-conditioned break room for the guards.

"We've invested a lot of money into these towers just to keep them safe for our guys," said the Gatesville, Texas native.

"It's not much, and they still have to wear their gear, but it's a break they can take in some cool air and get away from the heat a little bit," Ramos said, adding that the idea for a climate controlled break area in the towers came from the Soldiers.

Ramos said that after the addition of the climate controlled rooms and repairs had been completed to the screening and flooring in the towers, they were able to focus their attention on making improvements to the



Spc. Cory Lettles, 15th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, checks a contractors ID card at the main gate of Forward Operating Base Prosperity in central Baghdad July 24.

FOB's entry point.

"The biggest thing that you want to do in security is increase stand off," Rosenberg explained, "so we're pushing the perimeter of the FOB out, and we're moving the personnel and vehicle search area out several hundred meters."

Rosenberg said that while these projects will help to improve security, the bulk of the responsibility still falls on the shoulders of the Soldiers who man the gates and towers, and that is why she and Barriaybartolo do all they can to make sure that their Soldiers are well trained.

"There's different training times set up so that all the guards are properly trained before they go out there," she said.

While the training is important, Barriaybartolo said that keeping the Soldiers' morale up is just as important so they don't lose focus. His sergeants-of-the-guard will constantly check in with the Soldiers on duty to provide ice and water and see if there are any issues that they can help with, and he said that from time to time, officers and senior NCOs from the 15th BSB will randomly choose a tower and relieve the guards for a couple of hours.

"We'll go out there and hang out with them for a couple of hours," he said. "When there are special meals at the DFAC (dining facility), we'll go relieve them so they can enjoy a good lunch or dinner. We talk to them a lot because if we don't we're going to lose the focus on this mission and we can't do that."

Ramos said that improving the day-to-day life of the guards has been an ongoing project, and that ultimately what she would like to see is the shifts being cut down from 12 hours to eight.

"We would love to get to eight hour shifts," Ramos said, "but with other mission requirements it just hasn't been possible and the best we've been able to do is incorporate eight extra Soldiers with each shift now. That way people get a day off every week or so. The Soldiers are happy with it and so far it's working very well."

Although their shifts are long and, as Barriaybartolo admitted, can be boring, he said the Soldiers are making the best out of a tough assignment.

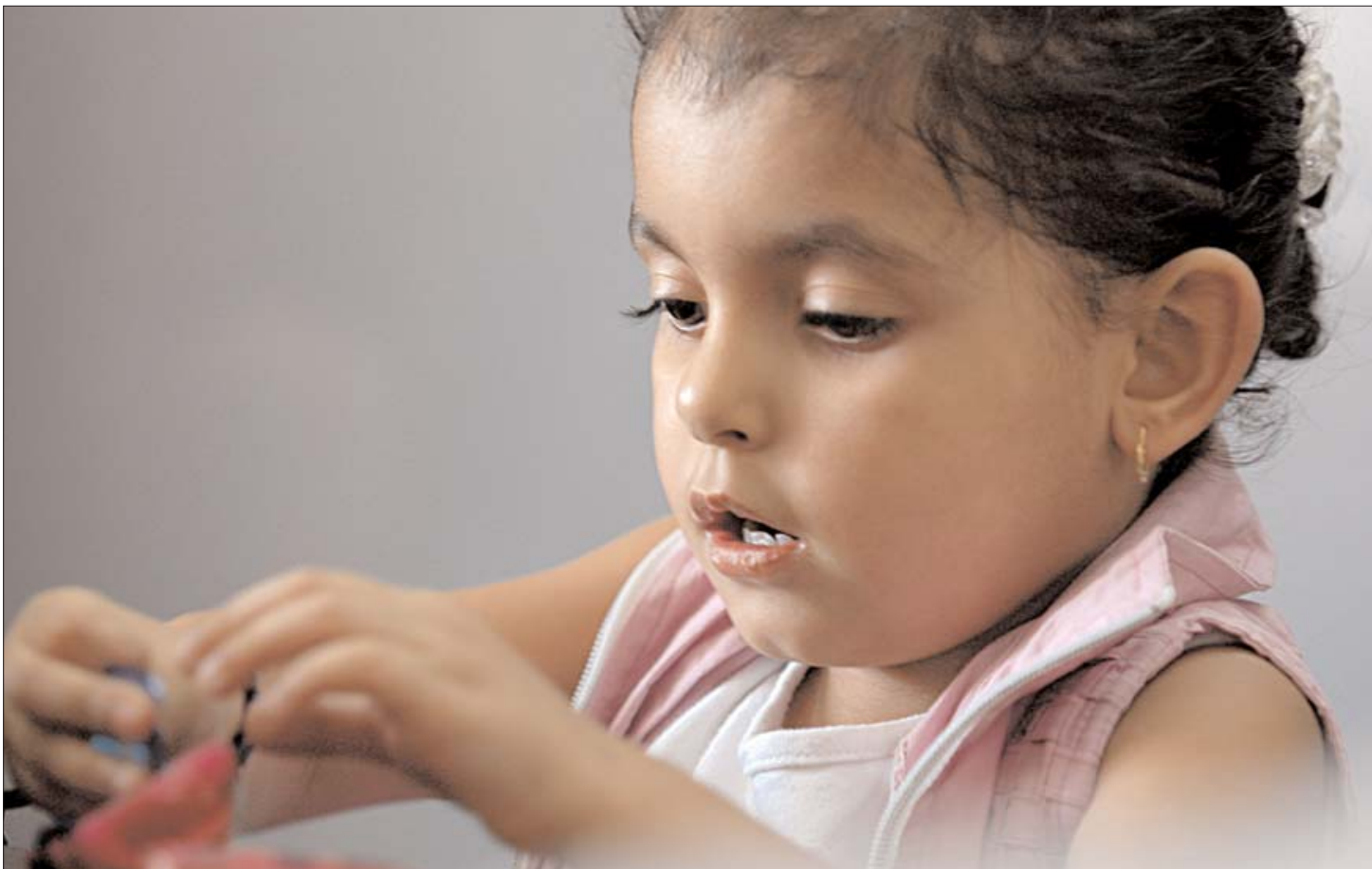
"They're allowed to have study materials and military newspapers up in the towers, and we've actually had an NCO and a Soldier win the boards," he said. "We've had three promotions where Soldier from the towers came out and did very, very well. All that has happened because they're making the most out of their time up there."

"Every shift is a hard shift, no matter what time it is, but they do it and make the best of it," he added. "These guys are the eyes and ears of the FOB and they do the job very well."



(Photo by Sgt. Robert Yde, 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Sergeant-of-the-Guard, Staff Sgt. Joaquin Villegas checks the rifle of Spc. Shenika Wilson before she begins her guard shift at Forward Operating Base Prosperity in central Baghdad July 24.



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

Huda, 4, makes some last-minute decorations before the grand re-opening ceremony of the Waoud Kindergarten School in Baghdad July 22.

Kindi Neighborhood Re-Opens Kindergarten

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

BAGHDAD - Waoud kindergartners, 4-year-old Huda and her sister, 6-year-old Sara,

waited all day in their fancy dresses and stood in the Baghdad heat to perform the most important duty they'd ever faced: their job was to carry a small pair of scissors that would be used for the ribbon-cutting ceremony

at their newly, renovated school.

On break from school, she showed up with her mother, one of the school's teachers. When the team of Kindi Neighborhood Advisory Council bigwigs showed up in their sweat-ringed shirts and ties, she got up out of her seat and handed them to the chairman, Hassan Al-Kharsan who cut the ribbon in front of a small crowd.

The reopening of the kindergarten was a "big change" to what the school was like during the last 16 years, said Al-Kharsan.

"Overall, I'm very happy," said Batool Shaker, the school's vice headmistress. "The renovations make us all very happy especially the furniture and the color; it's a happy color."

The school, which houses around 250 children in 12 classrooms, was in need of much repair to not only the structure, but also the playgrounds. So, the Kindi NAC sought out contractors who would do the work to their liking.

The renovations included new floor tiles, furniture, new soil and grass in the playgrounds, new playground gym sets, new bathroom and water pipes, and a fresh, new paint job with contemporary cartoon characters.

According to Shaker, there are only a few

other changes the staff said they'd like to see. She said a vehicle to transport the children and pick up their food and milk would be really nice.

Waoud Kindergarten sits in an area currently patrolled by Company E, 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, attached to the 4th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division.

According to Capt. Greg Turner, Co. E's commander, Kindi, through its strong NAC, has great potential.

"They've got the best LNO (liaison officer) and a great community," said the Butler, Pa. native.

Co. E's 1st Platoon and elements of 4-9 Cav. were on hand to attend the ceremony.

"This is your day," Lt. Col. Patrick Matlock, 4-9 Cav.'s commander told Al-Kharsan. The Chico, Calif. native said the NAC and the workers did a great job seeing the project through to the school's reopening.

Whatever forward progress was made by the Kindi NAC, 6-year-old Sara was just happy that one day she can go back to her newly-renovated school.

"I'm going to play games, sing songs and have fun," Sara said. "I felt happy and excited."



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

Kindi Neighborhood Advisory Council chairman, Hassan Al-Kharsan cuts the ribbon during the grand re-opening ceremony of the Waoud Kindergarten School in Baghdad July 22.



Sgt. 1st Class Jeff Lay provides security while his teammates from the 3rd Battalion, 5th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army, Military Transition Team - composed of members from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division - inspect a new traffic control point in Al Jamea'a July 23-24.

Coalition Forces Reclaim During Operation Rogue

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

BAGHDAD - As Operation Arrowhead Ripper moves along in Diyala, ever so quietly, Operation Rogue Thunder swept through a section of the capital in hopes of ridding the area of anti-Iraqi forces for good.

The 3rd Battalion, 5th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army, their Military Transition Team and Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, cleared Al Jamea'a of caches, bombs and insurgents while helping to ramp up security efforts to reclaim the area terrorized and bullied by Al Qaeda.

The terrorists in the area had been ruthlessly controlling every action of the people according to Maj. Chris Norrie, the transition team's commander. Women were forced to cover their faces, men were arrested for seemingly nothing and children weren't even allowed to play soccer in the streets.

Al Jamea'a used to be occupied by white-collar professionals until the insurgents began the scare tactics that led to many of the well-off residents leaving their homes. Many of the mansion-sized homes in the neighborhood are empty, and as Capt. Peter Kilpatrick said, the empty homes are seen as an opportunity for insurgents to move in.

"Only 30 percent of Jamea'a was occupied," said the Bronx, N.Y. native. "The vacancies made it vulnerable."

Several caches had been found during previous operations around the Najra Mosque area. During the first day of this operation, the streets and shops around the Najra Mosque were empty. A few people cautiously came out to see the Humvees, tanks and Iraqi Army vehicles stage. This would begin the lengthy process of securing the area.

Iraqi soldiers began setting up traffic control points along the street to inspect vehicles. Meanwhile, in another section of the neighborhood Soldiers were busy setting up observation points to over watch the area known for its high number of roadside bombs.

This area is of particular importance for the Soldiers of the 1-64th Armor. They had lost several of their comrades to deep-buried improvised explosive devices in recent times. The observation towers and combat outpost being

placed in the neighborhood therefore deterring any would sion.

During the ramp up of houses for caches. One cache found in one of the abandoned

Sgt. Kenneth Swartwood the Coalition forces move. combined presence of Iraqi people just how important the

"1-64th came in with of Texas, native said. "A big re of the partnership with the 1. The civilians feel a lot better as secure."

After many of the new of the Iraqi Army battalion, speaker to make an announce

He let it be known to the to make a change for the bet ple and that they have not o

"Almost immediately, Raheem said. "These peop oppressed them for so long.

Raheem commands on soldiers he commands are v tion team made sure that the sionalism.

Now that the security Coalition Forces in the area v

"We've established sev think locals would have fel next to the mosque without

Raheem said that many ence in the area is good and t



1st Sgt. Joseph McFarlane, the top noncommissioned officer in the 3rd Battalion, Military Transition Team from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, 1 Iraqi boy while checking out the end results of Operation Rogue Thunder in Al Jamea'a.

n Jamea'a e Thunder

would give them constant presence in the area
d-be bomb placers from accomplishing their mis-

security measures, several teams were searching
he of more than 50 60mm mortar rounds was
ed houses.

ad said that many of the residents are happy to see
into their neighborhood. More importantly, the
s and Americans working together proved to the
ne area's security was.

pen arms to the [Iraqi Army]," the Corpus Christi,
ason Adel and Jamea'a are good now is because
A. They actually worked with them hand-in-hand.
r when it's a partnership. They feel like it's twice

security measures were in place, the commander
Col. Raheem went to the mosque to use its loud-
ement to the people in the neighborhood.

e people that the Coalition Forces were in the area
ter. He said that security will improve for the peo-
nly God watching them, but the entire Coalition.

"people began to come out of their homes,"
le deserve to live in peace after Al Qaeda had

e of the largest battalions in the area. Many of the
ery new to life in the army, but he and the transi-
y conducted themselves with the utmost profes-

measures are in place, Kilpatrick said that the
will have 24-hour surveillance over the entire area.
eral static positions," he said. "However, I don't
t comfortable with putting a [Coalition Outpost]
help from the Iraqis."

y of the locals feel that having a combined pres-
that it helps gain the trust of the people even faster.



5th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division's
oses at a game of "mercy" to a young
a'a July 23.



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

Sweat trickles down the face of an Iraqi soldier from the 3rd Bn., 5th Bde., 6th Iraqi Army, during Operation Rogue Thunder in Al Jamea'a July 23. (Background) Iraqi soldiers from the 3rd Bn., 5th Bde., 6th Iraqi Army Div., begin constructing a traffic control point near the Najra Mosque in Al Jamea'a July 23.



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

1st Sgt. Joseph McFarlane, the 3-5-6 Military Transition Team's top noncommissioned offer, Maj. Chris Norrie, commander 3-5-6 MITT, and a few of their Soldiers check out the placement of a watch tower erected during Operation Rogue Thunder in Al Jamea'a July 23.

'Man's Best Friend' Saves Lives in Diyala

By Spc. Ryan Stroud
3rd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

MUQDADIYA, Iraq -- A group of Soldiers need to clear a tall, dark building, possibly housing terrorists in the city of Muqadadiya, just north of Baqouba, Iraq.

The Soldiers have received reports of booby-traps in the area and are unsure if the building itself is a trap. What are they to do?

This is where the Soldier's four-legged friend, Nero, comes in.

Nero is a military working dog serving with Staff Sgt. Zeb Miller, his handler, at Forward Operating Base Normandy, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom 06-08. Nero's job - search the building, its doorway and the surrounding area, making sure no explosives are around to harm the Soldiers trying to clear the building.

With Nero's efforts, and the efforts of many other military working dogs serving in Iraq, Soldiers' lives are being saved every-day.

"Our job out here in Iraq is mainly searching for explosives," said Miller, a member of the 7th Security Forces, U.S. Air Force, attached to 6-9 Armored Reconnaissance Squadron, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division.

"Our job is to make a Soldier's job go

faster," Miller, a native of Johnson City, Texas, said.

"A dog can search for explosives ten times faster than we can because he can smell it," he said. "Plus, if the dog smells the explosives, it could save a Soldier's life."

Miller started working with Nero in March after he volunteered to serve in Iraq. Once arriving, the two became close, inseparable friends.

"I've had Nero since March when I volunteered to come to Iraq," said Miller. "This was a nice change being out here at FOB Normandy with the Army because the Air Force is more force protection. Out here with the Army, I get to go out on missions and take part in the war."

But before the duo can take part in missions, Nero has to exercise and train to stay on top of his game.

"On a normal day, we try to train the dogs to keep them [prepared for missions]," Miller said. "I will take explosives out and train the dog in searching and finding. We also have a dog obstacle course that we take the dogs out to keep them [healthy] and active."

"At night, I'll take Nero out and we'll walk around fenced areas so he can sniff around; simple things to keep the dogs ready," he continued.

These training techniques keep Nero

fresh and ready to go when he's need for a mission into the heart of danger, something Miller and Nero are used too.

"Our big thing is palm grove searches and weapons cache searches," Miller said. "That's really big for us; those are the main things we look for on missions - buried weapons."

"Nero will also search doorways and buildings before Soldiers will breach it," Miller continued. "[Insurgents] try to booby-trap doors and Nero can search the door to find any explosives waiting."

But Nero can also be used for other tasks to help out the units in 6-9 ARS.

"Nero is also trained to find people," said Miller. "One mission, we went searching for IEDs and also searching through houses. Nero just took off running behind one of the houses and into the palm groves."

"What we guess happened is he smelled someone who had just left the house but [was gone]," Miller continued. "We found fresh tracks in the ground, so someone might have been there waiting until they heard Nero coming."

With Nero on a mission, Soldiers can trust him to smell and sense things they couldn't imagine. Nero becomes a living weapon, just like the Soldiers, ready to quickly "get his prize."

"They say one dog is worth about ten

Soldiers, not in their capabilities, but in their senses," said Miller about the importance of military digs during a mission.

"These dogs, while searching for explosives and other weapons, can turn a [several] hour job into one hour worth of work," he said.

But what also makes Nero an interesting military dog, is unlike some, Nero is extremely friendly, something Miller is happy with.

"The first thing [trainers] tell you is this is not a dog, it's a piece of equipment," Miller explained. "But it comes down to each handler in how they treat their dog."

"The way I see it, if I love the dog, he will love me; and in return, he will work for me and possibly save me when I need it," he said.

"You're not supposed to let others pet the dog either because it's a bond challenge," continued Miller. "But, I'd rather let the Soldiers pet and play with him so they are comfortable around Nero when we go out on missions."

"I also think this helps Nero in case something was to happen to me out here; another Soldier could take him and he would be okay without me around to guide him," he said.

But Miller has no worries at all about Nero. Miller says Nero knows who his owner is and will listen when called upon.

"I know Nero will listen to me even with others around," said Miller. "Once you spend every day together, he knows who I am; he will listen to me if I tell him to do something."

Though Nero is a calm, mannered dog, Miller said he has commands for Nero which will instantly switch Nero from the polite dog he is into an attack-mode destroyer.

"They're two words I could use to have him immediately start barking at you and if you show any fear, you would get bit," he said. "These dogs are amazing; they are incredibly smart."

When the deployment is over and it's time to go home, there is a chance Nero will have to retire, though Nero himself will probably have a few years of service left before it's his time. In these cases of retirement, the hard-working military dogs will go through a series of tests to make sure they are ready for life outside the combat zone.

"The dogs have to go through a physiological evaluation," said Miller.

"They test the dog with situations like neighbors fighting. They test the dog to see what he will do and to make sure he will be safe around others," he said.

"It's hard to let go of your dogs," Miller somberly explained. "The first dog is always the hardest. But after the dog retires, there's a possibility that you can keep your dog."

Until its Nero's time to retire, he will continue to provide his services to those serving overseas with him; saving lives on each mission he partakes in.



(Photo by Spc. Ryan Stroud, 3rd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Staff Sgt. Zeb Miller, 7th Security Forces, U.S. Air Force, attached to 6-9 Armored Reconnaissance Squadron, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, pets his military working dog, Nero. Nero specializes in locating explosives and helping Soldiers before they enter a building by "sniffing it out" before the Soldiers breach the door on missions.

Women MPs Rock the Streets of Baqouba

Spc. Ryan Stroud
3rd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

BAQOUBA, Iraq -- These intense group of mission ready, mission capable Military Police and Soldiers are a well-respected group in their company. They are some of their battalion's best.

They are Team Leaders, humvee drivers and gunners, risking their lives everyday to protect the city of Baqouba and train the future Iraqi police officers to serve and protect their Iraqi brothers.

These Soldiers, these MPs, fight, sweat and bleed like every infantryman out there. Their missions always have them outside the wire facing dangers at every curve. But they won't falter or fade away.

They're tough, they're ready - and by the way, they're females.

In the U.S. Army, women are not allowed to serve as infantrymen or in any other major combat positions, but these females found a way to get out with the "boys" and serve side-by-side in combat situations.

But if you think you can get under their skin with comments about women not being "man" enough to serve outside the wire, think again. These female Soldiers won't even give you the time of day.

They're too busy busting the bad guys.

"At this point, you just have to laugh at them," said Staff Sgt. Erin Donaldson, about the naysayers who talk down about her sisters serving with her in the 571st Military Police Battalion, attached to 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, during Operation Iraqi Freedom 06-08.

"There's a lot of the infantry guys out there who have no idea what we do out here," continued the Pocono, a Pennsylvania native. "They think all we do is pull them over in the States.

"But there are some [Soldiers] who really do respect us and what we do out here," Donaldson said. "The others just

have blinders on [over their eyes], they don't get it and that's fine. It doesn't bother me anymore."

"It doesn't bother me anymore either," added Spc. Toni Moses, also a member of 571st MPs and a native of Pensacola, Fla. "I've been told too many times that I'm too small, too short to do anything. But once they see me [outside the wire] they finally get it... we mean business."

It's this attitude which drives these Soldiers everyday. Sex has nothing to do with their confidence level; they are Soldiers ready to complete the mission, whether it is working hand-in-hand with the IPs or conducting patrols.

"I try to get to know the IPs we work with," said Moses. "They tell us things that they want and need to learn and we try to do our best to help them out. Of course we can't give them everything, but it's nice to hear what they want to accomplish and try to help them the best we can with that."

While stationed in the dangerous Diyala province, these Soldiers have experienced everything that could be thrown at them. From improvised explosive devices to small-arms fire, these female Soldiers keep moving toward their objectives, wanting nothing more than the feeling of an accomplished mission.

"We've seen everything that could be thrown at us," said Moses.

The MPs have also been hit with the tragedy of losing fellow members of their team, but they move out everyday, ready for what might face them.

"It's not that we're not scared when we roll-out, it's that we know what's out there," said Cpl. Heather Olk, a platoon leader in 571st MPs.

"We know what to expect and we spend a lot of time preparing for those things [that could harm us]," she continued. "Accomplishing the mission and getting our guys back safe is the most important part of our



Staff Sgt. Erin Donaldson, 571st MP Bn., attached to the 3rd BCT, 1st Cav. Div., supervises a fellow Iraqi police officer while he was training another IP on how to properly hold his weapon during reflexive firing drills in Tahrir, a neighborhood of Baqouba, Iraq, Aug. 1.

day."

"I just look at my Soldiers for inspiration to keep moving," added Donaldson. "If they're out there then I'm [going] to be out there with them."

And don't think these MPs have special needs outside the wire; they make it just fine on their own.

"I've had males try to do things for me out on missions," Olk said.

"I don't expect my Soldiers or anyone in my squad to do anything for me that I can't do. That doesn't set a good example as a leader if I was to do so," she said.

"My team leader won't let anyone help me, which is good because it makes me stronger," Moses added. "Unless it's something I don't know, there's no need to think I need to be taken care of. I can pull my own weight."

At the end of the day, these female Soldiers, who are teamed up and work alongside other male Soldiers, experience the same feeling and emotions infantrymen do after a long day and need the same chances to relax and let some steam out.

"I think that because our unit is small, we've bonded with everyone and we can lean on someone when we need it," said Moses.

"Everyone is always there for you. We've learned that it is good to talk about things and to get it out, and [in return] this helps us prepare for our future missions," she said.

"Knowing you've got people who care about you really helps out here," she said.

Until their time in Iraq is finished, these MPs will go out everyday and give it their all. And to those who refute and disapprove of these female MPs conducting missions outside the wire, these Soldiers offer a bit of information.

"We can do the same things as other MPs and infantrymen do, if not better," Moses confidently concluded.

"I think every time we've been presented with a challenge, we've risen to it, and we'll keep rising to them," she said.

"Open your eyes a little bit," added Donaldson. "If you don't believe what we do, come outside the wire with us on a patrol. You'll see."



(Photo by Spc. Ryan Stroud, 3rd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Staff Sgt. Erin Donaldson, 571st Military Police Battalion, attached to the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, shows a fellow Iraqi police officer how to properly hold his weapon during reflexive firing drills in Tahrir, a neighborhood of Baqouba, Iraq, Aug. 1.

Operation Hoplite Clears Had Maksar

Multi-National Division - North PAO

DIYALA RIVER VALLEY, Iraq - Iraqi Army and Coalition Forces in the Had Maksar area of Diyala province targeted al-Qaeda operatives and other terrorist forces during a three-

day operation beginning Aug. 4, in a continued effort to deny the enemy the use of any perceived safe havens in the Diyala River Valley.

Taking advantage of the increased forces in Diyala, the 1st Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 5th Iraqi Army, partnered with Soldiers from the 5th

Squadron, 73rd Cavalry Regiment, attached to 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, conducted Operation Hoplite in the Had Maksar area, resulting in five enemy killed and ten suspected terrorists detained.

"This operation is imperative as it not only denies al-Qaeda's freedom of maneuver, but provides a safe and secure environment for the people living in the lower portion of the Diyala River Valley," said Col. David W. Sutherland, commander of Coalition Forces in Diyala. "Citizens of Had Maksar were extremely pleased with the presence of the Iraqi Army, clearly showing the security forces are having a significant positive impact on the population as they continue to fight for their country."

During the operation, two house-borne improvised explosive devices were discovered and destroyed; two weapons caches were discovered; four IEDs were discovered and reduced; and one al-Qaeda vehicle was destroyed.

Attack helicopters from the 25th Combat Aviation Brigade began the operation, with an air assault of Soldiers from 5-73 Cav. into the main objective areas. The IA and CF conducted a thorough search of the objective areas, to include a detailed cordon and search of each village and clearance of the palm groves.

"We developed a detailed plan in conjunc-

tion with some of the local leadership, which provided the ability to isolate, kill and capture the al-Qaeda elements who began to seek shelter and safe haven in the village," said Lt. Col. Andrew Poppas, 5-73 Cav. commander. "As the enemy continues to seek shelter, we will find them, target them, and ultimately bring them to justice."

After observing armed men trying to escape the objective area, attack helicopters from 25th CAB engaged and killed five terrorists. Ten suspected terrorists detained during the operation were transferred to a facility for further questioning.

The weapon caches consisted of rocket-propelled grenades, artillery munitions, mortar tubes, IED-making material and assorted small-arms munitions.

"Our forces will remain aggressive and persistent in targeting the enemy forces throughout Diyala," Sutherland continued. "The people continue to recognize the hatred and destruction al-Qaeda offers, which is another indicator that the terrorists have no safe haven in Diyala."

Following the clearance of the Had Maksar area, the IA constructed a patrol base to maintain a permanent presence, further denying the enemy's abilities to target the citizens of the Diyala River Valley.



(Photo by Pfc. Ben Fox, 3rd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Staff Sgt. Adam Jeter, 5th Squadron, 73rd Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, talks to Iraqi Army soldiers about clearing palm groves near Had Maksar, Iraq, a town in the Diyala River Valley, Aug. 5.

Iraq's Prime Minister Visits Diyala for First Time

Multi-National Division - North PAO

BAQOUBA, Iraq - Iraq's prime minister, Nouri al-Maliki, met with the governor of Diyala, provincial leadership, key tribal leaders, Diyala's Iraqi Security Force leadership and senior Coalition officers during a meeting at the Baqouba Government Center, July 26.

"The prime minister's visit is vital, not only for the government and security officials, but for the people of Diyala to see that their effort in achieving peace and fighting against terrorist groups does not go unnoticed," said Col. David W. Sutherland, commander of Coalition Forces in Diyala province.

The visit, which focused on current operations in the province as well as provincial-level government issues, was Maliki's first trip to Diyala province since taking office.

"This is a great day for Diyala province because the prime minister is among us," said Ra'ad Hameed Al-Mula Jowad Al-Tamimi, governor of Diyala.

"We are here to thank all the excellent efforts by you (the government and security officials), and we also came to thank the people of Diyala," Maliki said in his opening remarks. "We can say that the suffering of Diyala people is ending; and we in the central government appreciate all your efforts."

During the meeting, Maliki addressed the peoples' ability to rise above terrorism, assuring those present that the central government will continue to work closely with the provincial government and is committed to the people of Diyala.

"This province suffered a lot from the outlaws," Maliki said. "They wanted it to be a huge grave yard, but we wanted something else for Diyala - and we succeeded when the Iraqi army, Iraqi police, tribes and all other people found out what the terrorists are really made of."

"We are fighting against the terrorists and we will prevail," Maliki added, before discussing the importance of trib-



(Photo by Sgt. Serena Hayden, 3rd BCT, 1st Cav. Div.)

Ra'ad Hameed Al-Mula Jowad Al-Tamimi, governor of Diyala, addresses concerns with Iraq's Prime Minister, Nouri al-Maliki, at the Baqouba Government Center, July 26, during Maliki's first visit to Diyala province since taking office.

al reconciliation.

"Iraq is not only for some people, it's for everyone," Maliki said. "We cannot ignore our nation and we have to be united in our efforts to build Iraq."

"The tribes have to support the government in its war against the terrorists - they play a big role," the governor added.

"Iraq, with all its (rich resources) and people, can eliminate all kind of threats," Maliki continued. "We will all work together for the prosperity of this country and we will not let

anyone interfere with our affairs or with the political process."

"The ultimate success of Diyala lies in the hands of the people," Sutherland said. "Today's meeting continued to prove that the governments, both central and provincial, care greatly for the peoples' safety, security and well-being."

"The will of the government drives the hope of the people," Sutherland continued, "and I hope today's visit, along with recent operations throughout Diyala, continue to restore that hope - a hope that the terrorists tried to destroy, but couldn't."

1st Air Cav Pilots Recognized for Daring Rescue

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

BAGHDAD - Four Apache pilots from 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division were among 12 who received awards July 27 for the July 2 rescue of two Task Force Marne pilots downed by enemy fire.

The awardees gathered at the Victory Base Complex, Iraq, to receive their awards from Gen. David Petraeus, the Multi-National Forces-Iraq commander.

Tumwater, Wash., native Chief Warrant Officer 3 Allan Davison and Del Rio, Texas, native Chief Warrant Officer 2 Micah Johnson, both AH-64D Apache attack helicopter pilots for Company A, 1st "Attack" Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div., received Distinguished Flying Crosses.

Davison and Johnson helped the two downed OH-58 Kiowa helicopter pilots from 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, by landing in a hostile area and evacuating them with their Apache, said Davison.

An uncommon event unfolded as



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

Chief Warrant Officer 2 Micah Johnson (right), an AH-64D Apache pilot for Co. A, 1st "Attack" Bn., 227th Avn. Regt., 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div., shakes hands with General David Petraeus, the Multi-National Forces-Iraq commander, during an awards ceremony at Victory Base Complex, July 27.

Johnson, the front seat pilot, let one of the Kiowa pilots take his seat in the Apache while he and the other Kiowa pilot strapped themselves to the outside of the aircraft and

sat on the wings, said Johnson.

"It looked like they were both in pretty good shape, but one of them kind of looked like he had been through enough, like he was

a little shocked, as I would be, too. I told him to get in front," he said.

Once the pilots were strapped in, Davison, the pilot in command, took off and headed to Baghdad International Airport where the pilots were dropped off.

While this was taking place, their Apache wingmen were circling above with Kiowa helos providing security.

These two pilots, Fairfax, Va., native Chief Warrant Officer 2 Seung Choi and Montgomery, Ala., native Chief Warrant Officer 3 Troy Moseley, were awarded Air Medals for their efforts.

Although awarded medals and recognized by the top commander in Iraq, the pilots' greatest reward was finding the downed pilots alive.

"We've seen a lot of aircraft shoot-downs," Johnson said in an interview after the rescue.

"Everyone that we've all probably seen, it's resulted in burning aircraft and black smoke and usually catastrophic loss of life. If not loss of life, then there have been serious injuries. Just to see those two alive, it was amazing. It was great," he said.

Lieutenant 'Takes Reins' of Brigade for a Day

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

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - For just one day, a 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, lieutenant hung up her hat as a company executive officer and tried the hat of brigade commander on for size.

Although she didn't get the chance to lead the brigade in a major operation or change any brigade policies, 1st Lt. Michelle Geffert, executive officer for Company F, 615th Aviation Support Battalion, did get a glimpse into what her brigade commander's days look like.

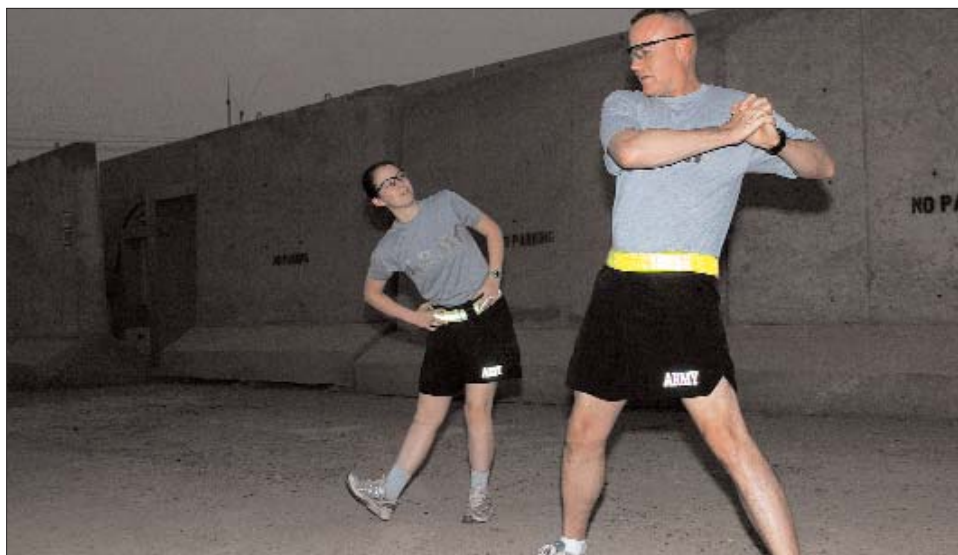
"As a lieutenant, I don't get a lot of insight into what the brigade commander actually does, so, for me, it was all new," said Geffert, a native of Estacada, Ore. "I had an idea that he goes from meeting to meeting to meeting, but you actually see him interacting with the people and his role as a leader of Soldiers - as a leader for the officers to give them valuable guidance as well as acting as a positive face for our brigade to the outside world."

"The goal for this is recognition by their peers that they're doing well and also a chance for them to shine in front of the battalion staff and brigade staff," Shanahan said. "Lieutenant Michelle Geffert this time did a great job. She spent some time finding out about it. She studied hard. She interacted very well with the battalion commanders, asking them some tough questions. I think she surprised a couple of folks, and that's what it's all about."

Geffert was the second lieutenant to act as brigade commander for a day, following then 1st Lt. Rob Massey, 3rd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st ACB.

"This is our second iteration of brigade commander for a day; Rob Massey did a great job," Shanahan said of Massey, who is now a captain. "What he brought back to his unit was a perspective of some of the challenges that we have here at the brigade headquarters - very different from what he had experienced as a platoon leader. It really broadened his vision.

"That's the same thing with Lieutenant Michelle Geffert (this gave) her a little bit different perspective and something that she can take back to her peers, something she can take back



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

Col. Dan Shanahan, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div., commander, right, and 1st Lt. Michelle Geffert, left, executive officer, Co. F, 615th Avn. Support Bn., 1st ACB, warm up for a run during physical training July 18.

to her Soldiers - in fact to her leaders - and share her experience and make their organization a little bit better. I think that's one of my goals in this is to share that perspective."

"The brigade commander for a day program is a good example for our young officers to see what the future holds for them," Shanahan said. "These are some tremendous men and women that are in this brigade and (the program gives them) the opportunity to spend some time shadowing me and finding out what it is to be a brigade commander."

Although he didn't know whether Geffert planned to stay in the Army long enough to be a brigade commander, he said the experience and her time in the Army would still be

beneficial.

"I didn't put her on the spot to ask her what her goals were," Shanahan said. "I think one thing the Army does is it creates leaders for America. If she chooses the Army to be her profession and stays for 20 or 30 years as I have, that's great. If she's here for five or 10 years and can learn and bring back to America the things that she learned in the Army, that's a great goal. That's something that our Army does very very well, is build leaders for America.

"We've got a great Army. We always have; we always will, because of the young leaders that are coming up. This is another great example of a future leader that we have in our Army."

Artillery Soldiers Search for Elusive Enemy

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

BAGHDAD - Over six months into his deployment, artilleryman Pfc. Brandon Tripp has yet to move his Howitzer, let alone fire it. His M-4 rifle, on the other hand, has not received a day off since its owner stepped foot in Baghdad.

On patrol in the western section of the capital, Tripp stops to speak with residents, play with children and look for anything to indicate signs of the elusive enemy. The out of sight antagonist hides within a few million citizens in an urban jungle making capture more difficult than finding the proverbial needle.

Tripp, a 26-year old native of Jackson, Ohio, is not alone. Soldiers working throughout Baghdad to improve security face an enemy who does not fall under a flag, wear a uniform or fight under an organized command structure.

This morning, Tripp's eyes are on the watch for any sign of danger as he walks down the streets of Hateen, a neighborhood within Baghdad's Mansour District, with his unit, 4th Platoon, Battery A, 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery Regiment. The mission is to search the homes of residents with the assistance of troops from the 6th Iraqi Army Division, said the battery's commander, Capt. Brian McCall.

By the end of the operation, the Soldiers had searched approximately eight blocks of the neighborhood and confiscated a few contraband weapons. Simply removing a few rifles and hand guns off the streets did not necessarily make the mission a success. But the time the Soldiers used to talk with residents about helping them expel the enemy in hiding was, said McCall, a native of Junction City, Kan.

"By getting out and talking with the local populace, we've been able to build a good rapport and as a result they've passed us tips, which have helped us find IED's and guys who are causing trouble," McCall said. "A lot of times people are nervous talking to us on the street. So, we'll quietly hand



A sign attached to the humvee informs residents of an email address and phone number to call with security concerns to Coalition Forces in the western Baghdad Hateen neighborhood July 26.

them a card in a handshake. It doesn't look like they're being complicit but they're encouraged to call."

McCall said his phone rings off the hook thanks to tip cards and the signs attached to the battery's humvees, which advertise an email address and phone number for information.

To improve the chances of residents making a call or sending an email, the troops frequently hit the sweltering streets.

Operating in Hateen for more than seven months, Tripp takes every opportunity on patrol to make small talk with residents, he said.

"A lot of people in the neighborhood remember our names," he said. "I think that helps."

Yet, no matter how much Soldiers like Tripp think they know the people, they are never really certain who is truly a friend or foe. The unauthorized weapons the Soldier's rou-

tinely confiscate could be for defending the home or killing Soldiers.

"We talk to them once a week and then all of a sudden, we go in on a raid, and find 10 AKs in their house," Tripp said, explaining that many Iraqis feel the need to stockpile weapons for protections. "You just don't know who to trust."

Under such conditions cultivating trust is an uphill battle. But fortunately many of Hateen's educated residents understand violence is not the way ahead for Iraq, McCall explained.

However, there are groups opposed to progress in Hateen. Cells of al Qaeda in Iraq and Jaish Al Mahdi, commonly referred to as JAM, a militia loyal to radical Shiite cleric Muqtada Al Sadr, operate in Hateen, he said.

As Tripp and his fellow artillery Soldiers were patrolling the streets of Hateen, Lt. Gen. Raymond Odierno, the commander of Multi-National Corps - Baghdad, recently told reporters Iraqi and Coalition Forces are making progress against insurgents and extremists in Baghdad.

"The surge of Coalition Forces had an impact in denying sanctuary to al Qaeda in Iraq and Shia extremists," Odierno said.

According to McCall, Hateen is one of those sanctuaries.

The neighborhood is very affluent, composed primarily of educated Sunni residents and professionals such as engineers, doctors and school teachers. But it also houses financiers and planners, who masquerade as professionals, but are essentially the brains behind many operations against the government of Iraq and Coalition Forces, McCall said.

"They're very quiet and they don't do very many things in their own backyard per se. We have not found any large caches in our area. Nor has any intelligence led us to believe there are large groups of fighters (in Hateen)," McCall said. "It makes it a lot harder to find (them) because they are smart and can cover their tracks."

In addition to the insurgent and extremist cells bent on destabilizing Hateen, Tripp and his unit are also combating sectarian violence.

A dispute between two families in the neighborhood has caused sectarian strife. Violence between the families has escalated to reprisal killings, bombings and collateral damage, McCall said.

"They've started to fight amongst each other," he said. "While it may not be al Qaeda or JAM, it's still violent action in our neighborhood that's causing problems. So we're trying to bring the killers to justice."

In addition to policing the neighborhood, artillerymen like Tripp, are asked to work toward the reconstruction of Hateen's essential services, including the restoration of electricity, sewerage and trash pickup, McCall said.

"We're artillerymen, so we're used to firing Howitzers," McCall said. "But our Howitzers haven't moved out of the motor pool the whole time we've been here."



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

Pfc. Brandon Tripp, 26, an artilleryman with, Battery A, 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, observes children in the western Baghdad Hateen neighborhood July 26.

Troops Discover Explosives for Third Time

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

BAGHDAD - The dilapidated, bombed-out structure ominously towered over the impromptu meeting of the patrol-wearied Soldiers from Company C, 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment.

Fatigue, the heat of Iraq in August and a 4:30 a.m. wake-up worked against the would-be searchers, but the foreboding building would not provide a convenient inventory of its contents.

It was up to them to pick it apart - again.

The acting platoon sergeant gave the word to execute: "Clear this one and then we'll take a rest," directed Staff Sgt. Christopher Hoerschelman, a native of Maquoketa, Iowa.

A few minutes later Akron, Ohio native Pfc. Shane Shivley, a squad automatic weapon gunner with 2nd Platoon, picked up a seemingly harmless plastic bag full of shopping bags. He removed what seemed like refuse, uncovering more than Iraqi trash. He called out for assistance.

Shivley's find was homemade-explosive powder, or "HME" as Shivley said, using its acronym. He put the bag of lethal white powder on the ground, backed away and stood guard over his potentially deadly discovery.

The Soldiers commenced leaving no stone unturned and 'Zasko,' a military working dog and his handler, Air Force Staff Sgt. Jacob Holm, came to assist.

Using the find as a reference point, Zasko went to work, nosing around for explosives.

"The dog had never found or even seen HME before. So the handler was really anxious to get his dog to smell it for the first time. The dog licked it and started drooling everywhere," Hoerschelman said. "The dog keyed one of my guys to a bag with the HME and propane cylinder in it. He was never trained and never smelled HME until today. Within five minutes he found a propane cylinder full of it."

All told, the search netted a couple blasting caps, some plastic explosives, 15 pounds of HME in plastic bags and bottles as well as a five-gallon propane tank filled with the explosive powder.

In addition, the abandoned property yielded some timers and wire used to rig explosives, which Soldiers refer to as "death

chord," Hoerschelman said.

The homemade explosives should not have come as a surprise to the Soldiers. They made similar discoveries at the same address twice before.

The first time a patrol, acting on a tip from locals, turned up a laundry list of IED-making materials: 25 pounds of C4, air defense artillery rounds, four 10-pound blocks of homemade explosive, 30 blasting caps and an undetermined amount of death chord, all inside the building, Hoerschelman said.

Then approximately two weeks later, the Soldiers uncovered 20 to 25 pounds of HME, prompting a detonation of the building to deter future use as an explosives cache site, Hoerschelman said.

Roughly three weeks later the Soldiers stopped by the now rubble-strewn, but still-standing structure to see if the third time was a charm, and if the insurgents had finally tired of using the site for explosive storage.

No such luck, Hoerschelman said.

According to Ocala, Fla., native Capt. Daniel Cannon, Company C's commander, the three finds by his 2nd Platoon Soldiers illustrate a trend in western Khadra, a primarily Sunni neighborhood in the Mansour Security District.

"Every abandoned house is a possible cache for us," Cannon said, estimating his Soldiers find at least a small cache in one out of every five abandoned buildings in Khadra.

Made from household chemicals and fertilizer, homemade explosive is the most common find in Khadra, Cannon said.

So far, Hoerschelman estimated his platoon, alone, is responsible for finding 10 caches, all in abandoned buildings. The most dramatic was 250 to 300 pounds of HME, likely a manufacture site. Seven 100-pound bags of nitrogen-containing fertilizer, solvents to breakdown the fertilizer, HME drying on the roof, death chord, timers, a rocket-propelled grenade, some small-arms ammunition and motion sensors used to trigger explosions were also found; all of which pointed to a production site.

"They've changed from munitions to HME," Hoerschelman said. "We're finding the stuff. We're never finding the people. We can't catch them red-handed, making, transporting or placing it. Hopefully, we can keep finding it as fast as they're making it."

The desperate, but resourceful insurgents basically use anything they can get their hands on. The crackdown in Iraq's capital has made homemade explosive an attractive weapon,



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

Pfc. Ivan Gallegos, with Co. C, 1st Bn., 64th Armor Regt., 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, pauses for a rest in front of an abandoned building in western Baghdad Aug. 2.

Hoerschelman explained.

"It's harder for them to move munitions because of 'the surge.' They just make the explosives themselves and use the same initiation devices," Cannon said.

The problem is less the HME, itself, which is concocted from household items and nitrogen-containing fertilizer, and more the abandoned houses, which provide sanctuary for insurgents and their HME stockpiles.

In order to combat the insurgents' use of empty homes and abandoned homesteads, Cannon and his Soldiers are targeting buildings to regularly search. As a long-term solution, Cannon hopes Khadra's population stabilizes.

"The local nationals do a very good job of giving us information about suspicious activity," Cannon said. "Legitimate families inside of houses mean protection for not only the neighborhood, but for us."

"Patriots" Host Small Business Seminar in Yarmouk

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

BAGHDAD - A Multi-National Division-Baghdad unit hosted a small business seminar in the western Baghdad

neighborhood of Yarmouk Aug. 1.

Soldiers from Battery B, 2nd "Patriots" Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery Regiment, has been looking for ways to stimulate economic activity in Yarmouk since the battery took control of the area

in early March.

For the past several months, Capt. Jayson Morgan, the battery commander, has been telling local merchants about the small business micro-grant program run by Coalition Forces, but the process of securing a grant turned out to be too complicated for many local businessmen.

The seminar, hosted by Bravo Battery in conjunction with 2nd Battalion, 5th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Infantry Division, was held in the banquet hall of the Yarmouk Health Club.

Dr. Faleh al-Mansour, chairman of the Yarmouk Neighborhood Advisory Council, recommended the location for the seminar and assisted in publicizing the event throughout the area, along with Sheik Samir, the Imam of a nearby mosque.

Both community leaders attended the event to act as liaisons between the attendees and Coalition Forces.

The main purpose of the seminar was to give local businessmen a guide to applying for small business micro-grants. Local entrepreneurs can apply for grants of up to \$2,500 to help start new businesses or expand existing ones. Loans in large

er amounts are also available if the businessman applies and meets certain requirements.

To help explain the more technical parts of the application process, two representatives from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), spoke during the seminar.

1st Lt. Alex Barnett, 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery's civil military officer and battalion manager of the micro-grant program, also addressed the application process.

Forty-nine men and three women attended the seminar; a number which far exceeded Morgan's expectations.

The turn out is evidence of the burgeoning popularity of the micro-grant program. By the end of the seminar, three businessmen were already filling out applications, with two dozen more applications distributed for later use.

"This is just the beginning," said Morgan after the event. "I've been getting calls all day from Iraqis about when we're having the next one. Clearly the word has gone out that today's seminar was a success."



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

More than 50 Iraqi business leaders attended the Small Business Micro-Grant Seminar in the Yarmouk neighborhood of Baghdad Aug. 1. The seminar gave local businessmen a guide to applying for small business micro-grants to start or improve on local businesses.

'Black Lions' Create Iraqi Army Medals

By 1st Lt. Charles Wyatt
1st Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment

BAGHDAD - It wasn't too long ago that the 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment "Black Lions" out of Fort Riley, Kan., established operations in southwest Baghdad.

Staff Sgt. Christopher Duran, part of Company E, the forward support company for the Black Lions, has become a liaison between the battalion and their Iraqi counterparts. Duran, trained as a cook, has proven to be a valuable asset to the Black Lions at their Joint Security Station by working with and training Iraqi Army soldiers - and creating medals for them.

The medals created by Duran were made by the same person who used to make medals for Saddam Hussein, with each medal being hand-made in Baghdad.

"I think the medals are a good idea," Duran said. "I hope they catch on across the Iraqi Army."

The development of a way to reward the battalion's Iraqi counterparts for courageous acts in combat has become a hit at Joint Security Station Black Lion.

Iraqi Army soldiers now participate in award ceremonies where Duran's newly-developed awards are pinned on soldiers for extraordinary acts, mirroring U.S. Army ceremonies.

On June 30, the commanding general of Multinational Forces - Iraq, Gen. David



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

Gen. David Petraeus, commander of Multi-National Forces-Iraq, speaks at an awards ceremony for three members of the Iraqi Security Forces in southern Baghdad, June 30. Petraeus was the first to present the Iraqi Army medals, designed by a Soldier with the 1st "Black Lions" Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment. s

Petraeus became the first person to pin the Red Crescent Medal, the Iraqi National Defense Medal, and the Northwest Rashid Hero's Medal on Iraqi Army soldiers.

The Red Crescent Award is equivalent to the Purple Heart, the Iraqi National Defense Service Medal is equivalent to the Bronze

Star, and the Northwest Rashid Hero's Medal is equivalent to an Army Commendation Medal.

Upon landing at the Black Lion Joint Security Station, Gen. David Petraeus, the commanding general of Multi-National Forces-Iraq, made his way into the 3rd

Brigade, 2nd Iraqi Army Division headquarters building where he awarded three Iraqi Army soldiers for acts of bravery in combat.

Duran's creation of ISF awards has been a tremendous achievement in building relationships between U.S. soldiers and Iraqi Security Forces.

Tomahawks Team up With Iraqi Doctors for Medical Mission

By Spc. Ben Washburn
4th IBCT, 1st Inf. Div., Public Affairs

BAGHDAD - Since the start of the war, many Iraqis have not received quality healthcare because of security concerns. Soldiers from the 2nd "Tomahawk" Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division, attached to the 4th Brigade, 1st Inf. Div. at Forward Operating Base Falcon in the south side of the city, conducted a mission to provide free health check-ups to Iraqi citizens in the Mahmudiyah neighborhood of Baghdad.

Despite the triple-digit temperature, Iraqis were lined up outside waiting to be seen. While inside the house, it was even hotter with all the medics, patients and doctors crowding inside.

"The hardest challenge was dealing with the heat. Not having central air, or fans, or something to try and help cool down not just us, but the patients. We had a lot of kids and a lot of older folks and their body temperature doesn't regulate as easily as ours," said Staff Sgt. Tamika Eaddy, a senior medic with Company C, 610th Brigade Support Battalion.

Iraqi doctors came on their own, without American escort or protection to work for free to help the people of their community. One medic said the role they played was crucial.

"We had cooperation from the Iraqi doctors that came to assist us," said Sgt. Naomi Sankitts, a medic from "Charlie Med."

"It went smooth because we need some interpreters, but with medical knowledge. By them being there, it helped us to assist the Iraqis even better," said the native of Lakeland, Fla.

The doctors and medics saw well over 100 patients during the day.

They treated everything from dehydration, stomach pain, and respiratory problems, to name just a few cases. For Memphis



(Photo by Spc. Ben Washburn, 4th IBCT, 1st Inf. Div. Public Affairs)

Pvt. Joshua Haggard, from Homestead Falls, Ohio, checks the blood pressure of an Iraqi child during a medical mission July 29 in Mahmudiyah.

native Staff Sgt. Anthony Chaney, the treatment noncommissioned officer for Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2-23rd Infantry, the mission was rewarding in two ways.

"Personally, it makes me feel good to give something back to someone who has less," he said. "As a Soldier, it just

felt good to do my job."

Anyone that goes outside the wire knows about Iraqi children. Most missions aren't focused on helping them, but the mission today was different. Being able to help the children of Iraq is a gratifying experience for 1st Lt. Brian Coaker, the medic platoon leader from New Boston, Mich. for HHC, 2-23rd Infantry.

"Hanging out with the kids, seeing the smiles on their faces, passing out toys, and then seeing the gratitude of the parents for getting their kids taken care of, I think that was the biggest reward," he said.

The 2-23rd knew that many Iraqi women would show up. "Charlie Med" stepped up to support the mission, providing two female medics.

"As a female and a senior medic, I was in charge of helping with seeing the female patients, making sure there was a female in the room, a chaperone, or someone they felt very comfortable with and not just all males," said Eaddy, a Florence, S.C., native.

The mission was long, the temperatures high, and the patients were numerous. But the mission also went off without a hitch Coaker said.

"I think overall the mission was a success. We were able to bring two local doctors in to help with the treatment. We saw about 130 patients in a four-hour period. I think overall it went pretty well," the platoon leader said.

Eaddy said the mission showed a desire for a peaceful future for Iraq by all sides.

"This mission made a big difference to me," she said. "Once I got there and saw how appreciative the people were, and that they weren't all malicious people, it kind of helped me get a perspective on not everybody's a bad person in Iraq. I know bad things do happen, but when you do things like this it helps them realize that not everybody in America is a bad person either."

Electronic Training Tool Aids Soldiers in Combat

By Spc. Courtney Marulli
2nd IBCT, 2nd Inf. Div. Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE LOYALTY, Iraq - Training for combat is hard to simulate due to its very nature. One never knows what will be around the corner or down the alley when out on the streets of Baghdad. But, with the aid of modified real weapons, electronics and scenarios built from experience, Soldiers can get the feel for combat from the safety of their base.

The Engagement Skills Trainer 2000, is a computer operating system utilizing real weapons that have been modified so they don't fire real bullets, but are electronic. A large movie screen displays a number of real-world scenarios and the system records where Soldiers were firing and how many targets they hit and miss.

July 1 was when the system opened for public use and several groups have come through, said Louis H. Lee Jr., the EST 2000 Training Facilitator.

Lee, a native of Waynesville, Mo., and a retired first sergeant, was in the military for 25 years and has 30 years experience on the weapons systems. He also learns new tactics from Soldiers that come through and passes that knowledge on to other groups so everyone learns to look at things from more than one angle.

"I had 14 or 15 teams come through and all but one found it a great advantage in coming through the system," he said.

Lee has almost every weapon that is on the installation, to include Mk-19 rifle, M-4 rifle, .50-caliber machine gun, M249 squad automatic weapon, 240B crew serve weapon, M203 grenade launcher, M-9 pistols, AT-4 anti-tank weapon and M16A4 rifles.

Each weapon's firing piece was replaced with electronics to simulate shooting and the recoil. Lee said those he has worked with say the system is great at reproducing the effect of firing in sector.

The three prominent differences of using the system versus actually firing, Lee said, is that the recoil of each weapon is only 85 percent to 90 percent of what the real one puts out, the sound is loud but not as loud as firing a real weapon and there isn't a gunpowder smell.

Other than that, Lee said the system can create almost any scenario a team wants to ensure they get enough practice on without having to risk their lives or cost their unit money for ammunition.

"So far, all the Soldiers and teams who have come through have said it helped them," he said.

The EST 2000 isn't just for those in combat arms positions. It is also a great learning tool for support military occupations that only go outside the wire on occasion, for those who don't fire their weapon regularly and also for those who want practice before they go to a range to qualify.

Aside from scenarios, the system can also set up for Basic Rifle Marksmanship to enable Soldiers practice at hitting targets.

"It doesn't cost what it costs sending rounds down range," Lee said.

Lee said combat support Soldiers that



(Photo by Spc. Courtney Marulli, 2nd IBCT, 2nd Inf. Div. Public Affairs)

The Engagement Skills Trainer enables Soldiers to practice combat maneuvers and basic rifle marksmanship. Members of the 761st Ordnance Company, Explosive Ordnance Disposal, practiced their team tactics to stay sharp on their combat tactics. Pictured (left to right) are: Sgt. Joseph J. Bryant, an EOD team member and a native of Baldwinsville, N.Y.; Pfc. Danny M. Bauer, an EOD team member and a native of Rochester, Minn.; Sgt. 1st Class Josh T. Toone, the EOD platoon sergeant and a native of Enid, Okla.; and Staff Sgt. Chris J. Taul, an EOD team leader and a native of Belen, N.M.

have utilized the system before going to a range noticed a major improvement in their firing ability. Some Soldiers who had problems grouping and zeroing accomplished that with only six rounds after using the system, Lee said.

Aside from BRM, there are two other modes of the EST 2000 to include collective training, which focuses on team commands; and also shoot and no shoot scenarios that let Soldiers practice their escalation of force tactics and rules of engagement.

It's also a great training aid for units that receive a new Soldier and want to let that Soldier see what it's like out on the streets of Iraq. Lee said that Soldier can be told what to expect, but he can come in and see for himself and practice his reflexive fire without putting himself or anyone else in danger.

Working with Soldiers is something that Lee is proud of.

"I love it," he said. "I learn from them. It's great."

Some of those Soldiers who used the system are with the 761st Ordnance Company, Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD).

Staff Sgt. Chris J. Taul, an EOD team leader and a native of Belen, N.M.; Sgt. 1st

Class Josh T. Toone, the EOD platoon sergeant and a native of Enid, Okla.; Sgt. Joseph J. Bryant, an EOD team member and a native of Baldwinsville, N.Y.; and Pfc. Danny M. Bauer, an EOD team member and a native of Rochester, Minn., all have used the system more than once to work on reflexive fire and team tactics.

Bauer said he thought the training was helpful, especially when he was utilizing the .50-caliber machine gun because the EOD team recently had crew served weapons attached to their vehicles.

"It'll definitely make it a lot easier than it was," he said.

Since arriving in country, Bauer said he hasn't shot any weapons, so it's nice to come to this training simulator and be able to get practice in and stay sharp on his shooting skills.

"It's always nice to practice," he said. "You can never get enough practice on that. It's a lot better to practice in here before seeing the real thing and doing something wrong."

Taul said he thinks the program helps a lot because no matter how much one goes outside the wire, you can't always practice reflexive fire and maneuvering.

"The guys go out 10 times a day but they

don't get shot at all the time," he said. "It's nice to practice adjusting fire."

Taul said it's nice to take his team to practice on the system because it allows him to let them practice being the team leader for certain scenarios in a safe environment.

"Everyone kind of gets to see the different concepts," he said. "See what each other is looking at."

As a non-commissioned officer, Taul said the EST 2000 is a great tool for anyone, regardless of MOS or how often they fire their weapon. He said when someone is in combat support, they don't get to practice their Soldiering skills stateside, so using a system like this is invaluable.

Currently, Lee is working on being able to simulate firing from a turret and from behind concrete barriers.

Lee said each unit stationed at FOB Loyalty pitched in and helped create the room where they EST 2000 system runs.

The EST 2000 is available from 1000 to 2100 in the basement of Building 2. Units and individuals can schedule training time. Walk-ins are welcome to train as long as there isn't a scheduled training event at that time.

Iraqis Build Program for Displaced Persons

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE LOY-ALTY, Iraq - The city of Baghdad, despite a population of more than six million, is not your typical city. Unlike a city like New

York, which seems to absorb thousands of extra people without feeling the pinch or incurring any turbulence, displaced persons arriving in Baghdad neighborhoods is causing local governmental leaders to take action.

Thousands of displaced persons arriving in neighborhoods throughout Iraq became a

big problem in early April. Areas like Zafaraniyah received close to 4,000 displaced persons in that timeframe and the residents in the Baladiya area of Karada in eastern Baghdad received their fair share, as well. Both areas were not ready to receive the displaced persons, who sought shelter, food and medical attention, and quickly.

Reaction was slow in responding to the demands of the displaced persons because most residents don't understand the process. In Karada, district council members, under the leadership of the chairman, Dr. Muhammad, vowed to do something about it in a structured manner to ensure they were not caught off guard again.

As one resident stated, "It doesn't matter where they come from, we have to help them, as we are all human beings."

On July 22, after months of detailed planning, workshops were arranged to teach residents the art of mediation and conflict management, according to their representative. "After all, feeding and housing thousands of extra people is hard enough, but it is extra difficult with problems Iraqis face daily with security," the representative said.

Mediation is one of the most important

aspects regarding displaced persons because international organizations are able to come to the aid of the area and people with money and supplies, but that does not guarantee everything in the community will be in sync. Mediators need to be able to communicate the needs of the citizens while keeping in mind the best interests of the displaced persons.

"We have to work together and cooperate," an international aid representative told the recent class of 40 individuals. "The money is sometimes limited, but we can assist you and act on the important needs according to the budget."

The limited resources sometimes make this process even more difficult and the Baladiya residents voiced their opinions to ensure they had money for all displaced persons to be medically cleared first, disarmed, and then integrated into the community.

The mediators also have to be accepted by both the community and the international organization itself. The workshop not only helps educate the new mediators, but gives them compact discs with pertinent information, as well web sites to access more information and contact numbers.



(Photo by Maj. Sean Ryan, 2nd IBCT, 2nd Inf. Div. PAO)

Residents of the Baladiya area in the Karada District of eastern Baghdad come together in workshops to learn the process of mediation and conflict management July 22 to help the residents and international organizations come together to properly care for displaced persons.

Iraqi Explosive Ordnance Disposal Unit Progressing Quickly

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE RUSTAMIYAH, Iraq - After three months of training, some Iraqi explosive ordnance detachment troops are almost ready to operate independently.

Soldiers of the U.S. Army's 761st Explosive Ordnance Detachment have mentored members of the 1st Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division on the particulars of finding and safely detonating explosive devices. The Iraqi Soldiers are gradually completing a checklist of items that, when finished, will enable them to stand on their own.

Capt. Cynthia Garceau of Uptown, Mass., a platoon leader for the 761st, said the Iraqis have come a long ways in three months of training.

"They're way ahead of where we thought they would be," she said. "They're very receptive to all the training and all the information we put out. We have their undivided attention. They're very hard workers."

The Iraqis adapted well to the methodical instruction methods, Garceau added.

"It goes through crawl, walk, and run phases," she said. "First, we told them what ordnance identification was about. Then we went through the basics of identification, evacuation, and security, and slowly built them up to running a full-scale operation."

And as the Iraqis soldiers progress, Garceau and her Soldiers continue to hammer home the fundamentals.

"We show them, then say, 'Now you try it and set it up,' and we just make little corrections here and there. We're teaching new stuff out but still drilling in what was already taught them," she said.

The Iraqis ran their first operation in June, with the U.S. along as observers only. "It was text book," Garceau said. "Everything we taught them...they did exactly as we would have done it."

In late July, the Iraqis got rid of almost 100 pieces of unexploded ordnance in a controlled detonation, and Garceau praised their performance.

"That was a good one," she said. "The next step is turn over a mission to them, and the long-term goal is to turn over



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

Capt. Cynthia Garceau, a platoon leader with the 761st Explosive Ordnance Detachment, along with Soldiers of the 1st Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division, prepares munitions for a controlled detonation in eastern Baghdad. Members of the 761st have been training 1-9th Soldiers for three months on EOD procedures.

the entire mission. We have a checklist of tasks for them to be trained on, and we'll continue down that list."

Staff Sgt. Joseph Munoz, a platoon sergeant from Edinburg, Texas, agreed that the Iraqis are showing steady progress. He cited the multi-ordnance controlled detonation as an example.

"It was successful," he said. "We've done small-scale demo shots with them but nothing of this size. It went very well. They have their own EOD school, which you go through four levels before graduating. Two of they guys here have graduated and are out here training the younger guys. Having

that experience really pays off."

If they continue at their current pace, the Iraqis could be ready to operate independently by the end of September, according to Munoz.

"In the next 45 days, we should have them operational," he said.

In fact, there's one area they greatly exceed the Americans. The two EOD teams meet each Thursday for soccer and the Iraqis are undefeated.

"They beat us," Garceau said, "and they don't even have their shoes on."

Sewage Removal Project Underway in Adhamiyah

2nd BCT, 82nd Abn. Division Public Affairs

BAGHDAD - Soldiers from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division recently joined up with local leaders in Baghdad's Adhamiyah District to begin a long-term project to remove sewage from the streets and improve hygienic conditions for residents.

The project started on July 31, when troops from 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, escorted local sewage trucks to areas of Adhamiyah where waste was severely backed-up, forming pools of contaminated water, commonly referred to as "blackwater," in streets throughout the neighborhoods.

"The removal of raw sewage and black water from the streets of Adhamiyah decreases the health risks of hepatitis and dysentery within the community," said 1st Lt. Chadwick Knight, the squadron's targeting officer.

"This project will also help area beautification by removing an unwanted eyesore," he said.

Knight said that his unit has noticed raw sewage accumulating in streets throughout Adhamiyah due to broken or blocked sewer lines.

By working with local leaders and contractors, Soldiers from the 3-7th are creating a project that will remove the waste from the area, disposing it into an approved sewage dump site outside of Suleikh.

In addition to limiting the risk of health hazards to Adhamiyah residents



(U.S. Army photo)

Workers remove sewage and waste from the streets of Baghdad's Adhamiyah neighborhood July 31 as part of an ongoing project to improve the quality of life for residents sponsored by the Neighborhood Advisory Council and the 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division.

by removing sewage, Soldiers from the 3-7th are initiating other improvement projects designed to remove abandoned vehicles from the streets and improve the conditions of local roads.

The unit has recently approved a contract hiring 14 citizens from the commu-

nity to assist in the repairs.

Knight said that local leaders are thrilled to work with his unit in developing projects to improve their communities.

The neighborhood councils are very supportive of our unit's recent efforts within the community," Knight

said.

"The squadron is working hand in hand with local leaders, contractors and other members of the community to address the needs of the people, and improve the quality of life in a timely manner so we can see positive changes in this area," he said.

Paratroopers Ask Residents of Ur to Lend Helping Hand

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

BAGHDAD - The discomfort was written all over the young man's face, his eyes darted all over and he nervously rubbed sweat from a now perspiring brow. He continued to vehemently deny any knowledge of criminal activity.

Either the Iraqi military-aged male was truly scared or he was keeping a secret from Coalition Forces. The questions he would not answer were intended to provide assistance in tracking down criminal militia members. This was not an accommodating Iraqi citizen. The paratroopers tactically moved to the next residence of Ur, a neighborhood in Baghdad's Adhamiyah District. There would be more questions for other residents to answer.

The paratroopers asked for help from the very people who the operation would benefit: residents suffering under the iron grip of criminal militia known for kidnappings, executions and roadside bombings.

The choice for residents: keep silent and continue suffering or come forward with information and risk reprisal. The paratroopers of 1st Platoon, Company B, 2nd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, hoped some residents were fed up with the status quo and wanted to make a change.

"We tell them we can clean up the streets for them as far as the bad guys," but only if they provide information on the criminal militia, explained 1st Platoon's leader, 2nd Lt. Andrew Walko.

But the consequences of helping the platoon, terrified many residents of Ur, said the Great Falls, Va., native.

"A lot of people are hesitant to give out information because they get strong armed. (criminal militia members)



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

An Iraqi boy speaks with Wadley, Ala., native Sgt. 1st Class Kenneth Adams, the 1st Platoon sergeant of Company C, 2nd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, in Ur, a neighborhood within Baghdad's Adhamiyah District, July 21.

come around and say, 'Hey, talk to the Americans and we'll kill you,' Walko explained.

Despite the fears, the paratroopers persisted and tried to reason with the residents full of trepidation.

"We let them know that we're here to protect them and that

if they tell us where a bad guy is, we'll take him to jail," said Sgt. Brent Palmer, an acting squad leader with the platoon.

Aside from verbal assurances, the paratroopers left contact cards with anyone in the area, so residents would be able to call in tips anonymously later on, which sometimes happens. The residents also have the legal right to bear some arms. Each household is authorized one AK-47 rifle and a single magazine. Individuals who desire a pistol are required to have a permit for it, said the native of West Palm Beach, Fla.

The paratroopers do their best to discourage residents from taking the law into their own hands and make every effort to leave the proper impression while tactically probing for useful information, Walko said.

"We try to present a friendly appearance. If we're inside I'll take my helmet off and try to make (the residents) feel more comfortable," he said.

The section of Ur the platoon visited on this occasion is fertile ground for the criminal militia to recruit from because the residents do not have the means of subsistence. Offers of money to place IED's, fire RPG's (rocket propelled grenades) or execute a small-arms attack are sometimes taken as a means to put food on the table. "They'll do it because they follow the money," Walko said.

Though the influence of criminal militia in Ur has dwindled since the paratroopers arrived in January, there is still a limited presence of extremists, he said.

"It is getting safer, but it's still a combat zone. We're still earning our combat pay and people are still getting hurt over here, so we have to be vigilant at all times," he said.

"People die here. We're at war. But I think we're making a difference."

Horse Detachment Hosts Soldiers, Families for Division FRG Event

By Sgt. Cheryl Cox
1st Cavalry Division Public Affairs

FORT HOOD, Texas - The 1st Cavalry Division "Tween" Family Readiness Group had the opportunity to meet the four-legged troopers of their division July 20 during a barn tour and barbecue at the Horse Cavalry Detachment's stables here.

Though it was raining throughout the barbecue portion of the event, the sun broke through in time for the Soldiers and their horses put on a demonstration of horseback formations and riding styles that were once used by the cavalry.

After the feast, the Soldiers of the detachment escorted the families through the different areas of the detachment and talked to each group about how the horse shoes are made and put on the horses, how the saddles and boots are made and about the different types of weapons used by the Soldiers and how they are maintained.

Along with teaching the kids and their families about the different parts of the detachment, the kids were given a chance to get up-close and personal with the mules and horses of the detachment.

"The idea for having the FRG event at the stables came from us wanting to provide the children of the First Team an

opportunity to interact with the Soldiers of the First Team," explained Capt. Ted Zagraniski, the 1st Cavalry Division Horse Detachment commander.

"Family members, especially the kids, are a big part of the support network that helps our Soldiers do the best job that they can," he said.

While some Soldiers spent most of the morning preparing the field for the families, others ran the barbecues and served the families as they went through the food line.

But the highlight of the day was watching the Horse Detachment Soldiers not just ride the horses through the course that was constantly changing, thanks to the ground crew, but putting the weapons used by the Horse Cavalry to use at the same time.

Known for using rifles, pistols and swords, the Horse Detachment Soldiers of today, put together a demonstration of how the Horse Cavalry Soldiers would move in formation and teams while using the weapon of choice while on horseback.

But watching the show wasn't the only interesting part of the day.

One of the First Team "tweens" enjoyed petting the horses during the barn tour and meeting new friends.

"It's nice to be able to meet new people and not feel alone," said Micayla Vaughn, one of the more than 50 First



(Photos by Sgt. Cheryl Cox, 1st Cavalry Division Public Affairs)

1st Cavalry Division "tweens" pet Ghost, one of the 38 horses currently at the 1st Cavalry Division's Horse Cavalry Detachment, during a barn tour after watching a demonstration by the Horse Cavalry Detachment Soldiers July 20 at Fort Hood.

Team kids who attended the day's festivities. "You get to know other people that are just like you and have a mom or dad in Iraq or overseas."

As the barn tours came to a close and the families started to head home.

"This is a really special population

that we are reaching out to," he said. "It's important to us to be able to give back to them as much as we possibly can. It's the personal touch that truly makes the Horse Detachment special, as far as what we can do for the community."



Soldiers from the 1st Cavalry Division's Horse Cavalry Detachment jump over a hurdle as a team during a demonstration at their stables at Fort Hood, Texas July 20.

Cav Soldiers Receive Valor Awards for Courage Under Fire

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE PROSPERITY, Iraq - It was during the 2nd Brigade Combat Team's last deployment to Iraq in 2004, that the 1st Battalion, 9th Cavalry Regiment had the distinction of earning the most combat-related awards during heavy fighting in and around Haifa Street.

The unit would end their time there with more Purple Hearts than any other unit since the Vietnam War. Staff Sgt. Terry Prater earned a Silver Star for shielding one of his Soldiers from a grenade blast - not once, but twice.

Their efforts seemed to clean up the Sunni-gang infested area. Yet, after their redeployment, the area repopulated with insurgents.

Haifa Street became 4th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment "Dark Horse's" main area of operations during this deployment, and what they would encounter six months ago would be an eerie case of déjà vu.

The 3rd Battalion, 5th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division was in the process of establishing its unit, and the small group of men out of 4-9 Cav., who formed the brigade's internal Military Transition Team, took their years of training experience in hopes of cleaning up the mess that was Haifa Street when they returned to the Iraqi capital.

According to the 3-5-6th MiTT chief, Maj. Christopher Norrie, a native of Barton, Vt., Haifa Street was infested with enemy activity. It had, once again, become a gang-ridden haven.

It was during the new Iraqi Army's birthday celebration, Jan. 6 that Norrie and his team accompanied two IA units into the Sheik Marouf traffic circle. What they found was a macabre display of the enemy forces' evident lack of concern for its opposition.

"Sir, they have strung up 27 dead bodies ... like scarecrows," he reported to Lt. Col. Steven Duke, 5-6th IA MiTT chief soon after 11 a.m. "Their wrists and feet were bound and have died of gunshot wounds to the head."

Around 1 p.m., the 3-5-6th MiTT started their first engagement with the enemy when it spotted eight enemy forces with weapons.

Sgt. Daniel Williams, who served as a gunner, was shot in the right forearm as he was returning fire. The team quickly evacuated him to the International Zone's Combat Support Hospital. While there, Duke and his team met with Norrie's and "Crazy Horse" Soldiers from Troop C, 4-9 Cav.

Until that point, the enemy's "shock and awe" strategy seemed to do exactly that to the young and inexperienced IA Soldiers. "We walked in to a complex ambush," Norrie recounted.

As he and his team evacuated Williams to the CSH, Norrie admitted that the IA had lost its will to fight and with thoughts of his family back home, he reluctantly admitted to his own.

With Crazy Horse and 5/6 MiTT there to provide extra security, Norrie's team went back into Haifa Street to find the perpetrators. They dismounted from their vehicles with IA soldiers, but they again started to receive small-arms and grenade contact from some of the high-rise apartment buildings near Taleel Square. Norrie, 1st Lt. John Forehand, and Sgt. 1st Class Carl Lay were trapped in an alley as enemy gunfire surrounded them. Later reports estimated



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

1st Lt. John Forehand (right) gives a briefing to Lt. Col. Stephen Duke on where they go into Haifa Street Jan. 6.

approximately 30-40 insurgents.

During the next few minutes of chaos, Norrie's team moved and used their vehicles to provide cover from the endless barrage.

The MiTT never lost sight of their responsibility of helping their IA counterparts.

"Get out there and fight! It's your country!" witnesses said Norrie yelled at the Iraqi troops.

"I'll remember 1st Sgt. [Joseph] McFarlane screaming around the battlefield - seemingly everywhere - going from fight to fight - seeing I don't know how many rounds hitting his vehicle and hearing a grenade explode," Norrie said. "Sgt. [Jay] Mayhle (was) screaming from the turret, staying up, despite fire from numerous directions - focused on saving his buddies - killing the enemy - all with absolutely no regard for his personal safety."

Staff Sgt. Buakai Tamu, the gunner who took over for the injured Williams, laid down enough suppressive fire to subdue the machine gunner who kept Norrie, Lay and Forehand trapped in an alley.

"Tamu enabled us to get out of there," Norrie said.

Tamu, a native of Sierra Leone, admitted that although he is grateful for receiving the medal, the events of that day are memories he said he'd rather forget.

"It was a very complex attack that took a lot to plan from a determined enemy, as the major would say. The scale of which we were attacked was unexpected," he said. "The response was a result of our training and battle drills."

Yet, it would be Forehand's ability to lead from the front that would give them the courage that would prove to change the tide of the battle for their IA brethren.

"I'll never forget your calm resolve ... picking them up, the IA, and getting them to the fight - making them believe in themselves: leading from the front," Norrie said to Forehand during the ceremony.

Earlier that day, the IA troops received such a beating from the enemy that Tamu said he felt that they must have felt like they had lost already. But as they left to reset their vehicles and came back with a larger, Coalition Force behind them, they started to take over the fight.

"They were low in numbers - low in equipment then," he said. "They used the story of that battle on January 6th to define their future. The ones who were there that day are the heart and soul - the core of the unit. We built a special relationship with them that day - one

you can only build during those times when you put your safety and life aside for one another because on that day, there was only one army - one army the enemy saw and wanted to destroy."

The fighting started heading into his eighth hour, and nightfall would turn the fight to a luminescent green, the view through the Soldier's night optical devices. The sound of constant gunfire, followed with sparks shimmering off the humvees, drowned out the constant radio traffic from Norrie to Duke.

Darkhorse's quick reaction force called for close-air support. That proved deadly for the enemy and it almost stopped all fighting.

The fighting left one IA soldier dead, wounded one U.S. Soldier and led to the capture of more than 20 insurgents. Most of the vehicles came back with shattered glass, blown out tires, and their chassis Swiss-cheesed by small arms fire.

Between the MiTT gunners, at least four enemy fighters laid dead from their guns. "Crazy Horse" Soldiers took out at least seven more.

The events of that day earned Norrie a Bronze Star with a "V" Device for Valor. Forehand, McFarlane, Tamu, Staff Sgts. Colin Davis and Jay Mayhle also received the award. Lay received an Army Commendation Award with a "V" Device for Valor for his actions during the battle.

Tamu described Davis' actions on that day as the mounted commander as nothing short of heroic.

"Through all the fire, he remained calm," Tamu said about the Baltimore, Md. native.

"He maintained his composure and even in the heat of battle. He constantly kept calling for SITREP (situational reports) and the whole time taking fire and firing back. He maintained complete command and control so the dismounts could continue controlling the guys on the ground - virtues only a very few portray, especially when needed like on that day," he said.

In front of a small crowd July 30, the squadron commander, Lt. Col. Patrick Matlock awarded the Soldiers their respective awards and spoke about the battle and how it was the "gateway" to their current state of Baghdad's Karkh District.

Each earned the Bronze Star Medal for Valor for their outstanding leadership, dedication to mission accomplishment, and bravery under fire, which facilitated a clear victory for the Iraqi Army, saved numerous friendly forces, and resulted in at least 11 insurgents killed in

action.

Williams, who received a Purple Heart, said he had mixed feelings about recovering from being wounded and said there are few words he could use to describe how honored he felt by receiving the award.

"There are very few things in this world that can describe how one person can risk life and limb for the greater good," Williams said. "I feel very humbled to have received the Purple Heart for the simple fact that others before me have received the same award for a greater sacrifice. I am thankful for the support and the care my comrades provided during and after my recovery."

McFarlane, who hails from Traverse City, Mich., not only said receiving the award was an honor, but reminded the attendees that everyone who has served in the military for this cause are his real heroes. In a separate ceremony, on July 23, Staff Sgt. Wesley Gilmore and Sgt. 1st Class Michael Williams of Troop C, also received a Bronze Star with a Valor device for their actions during that day. Sgts. Nicholas Skelton, Joshua Brown, Donald Belzer, and Pfc. Jason Boykin received Army Commendation Medals with a Valor device for their actions Jan. 6, as well.

In the weeks following Jan. 6, Troop C, went out to "clean up" what was left of the insurgent activity. From Jan. 24 - 26, Troop C's Staff Sgt. Damian Crawford received a Bronze Star Medal with a Valor device. First Lt. Jonathan Sammon, Williams, Sgt. 1st Class Joshua Brown, Sgts. Cesar Ortiz and Ahmad Mohamad, Cpl. Charles Warren, Spc. Michael Stephens, and Pfc. Gregory Gousse, Alexander Stelly III, and Christopher Dennis received the Army Commendation Medal with a Valor device.

On Feb. 3, back again on Haifa Street, Spc. Stephen Battisto, a radio operator, protected Capt. John Gilliam, Troop C's commander, from what could have been a fatal grenade blast. His complete disregard for his own personal safety earned him the Bronze Star with a Valor device. Gilliam received a Purple Heart for his wounds.

The award ceremonies, six months in the making, brings the events of the fight for Haifa Street, Jan. 6, 2007, to light - shining on a band of heroes. Yet, it's not the war stories that will be told in bars back home for years to come that are important, but rather the lineage established in that fight by the Iraqi Army troops from the 3-5-6th IA, according to Norrie.

"It was the euphoria of watching the Iraqi Army start bumping chests, hugging each other, screaming in the middle of the street and getting on their vehicles to ride back into the fight with Charlie Troop - turning four, broken vehicles around and limping them back into the fight - pissed off, cursing, and praying all at once - counting the bodies of those who wanted to kill you under illumination and marching with the Iraqi Army soldiers who started to believe in themselves that night - that is what I'll remember," he said. "I've had the good fortune to observe what it means to be an American; how we don't quit and harbor an optimism that requires success; how we'll sacrifice ourselves without a thought in a cause and for a people who may never thank us for it."

"We are the good guys, and I've had the honor of serving with the very best," Norrie said. "It's an honor, I can assure you, that exceeds any I deserve."



(Photo by Capt. Dawn Williams, 1st Cavalry Division Public Affairs)

Maj. Gen. Joseph F. Fil Jr. (center), commanding general for the Multi-National Division-Baghdad and 1st Cavalry Division "puts up his dukes" with Tito Ortiz (left), a former light-heavyweight champion with the Ultimate Fighting Championship and Team Punishment teammate and fellow fighter, Justin McCully during their visit to Camp Liberty Aug. 2.

Ultimate Fighters Step Into the War Zone

By Pfc. Benjamin Gable
7th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq - Ultimate Fighting Championship warriors stopped by the Pegasus Moral, Welfare

and Recreational center July 31 to sign autographs and visit Soldiers during their latest tour in support of deployed troops.

Team Punishment founder, Tito Ortiz, is a former light-heavyweight

champion. "The Huntington Beach Bad Boy" stands at 6 feet 2 inches, and weighs 205 pounds.

His fighting styles include wrestling, Brazilian Jiu Jitsu and Muay Thai.

Justin McCully, nicknamed "The Insane 1," is a member of the Team Punishment camp with Ortiz.

He holds a black belt in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu and trains with Ortiz. The 6-foot-2-inch, 235 pound McCully will make his return to the octagon, the fighting ring, at "UFC 76" in Anaheim, Calif., Sept. 22.

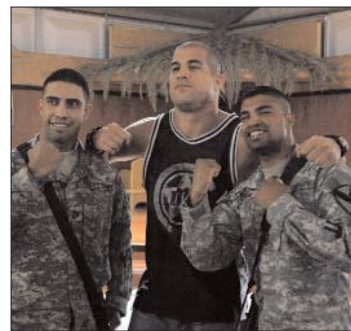
Ortiz and McCully are touring the globe meeting with Soldiers. Their first stop was in Washington, DC, where they met wounded service members at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. Now, they have made their way to Iraq to visit Soldiers in a war zone.

"I am tremendously excited about going overseas with the USO," said Ortiz, before heading to Iraq.

"The men and women on duty in the Persian Gulf are literally on the front lines, and I'll do whatever I can to show them how much their service means to everyone back home," he said.

Soldiers stood in line for hours for their chance to get an autographed picture, and maybe even to "size-up" the ultimate fighters.

"I just became a fan of UFC," said

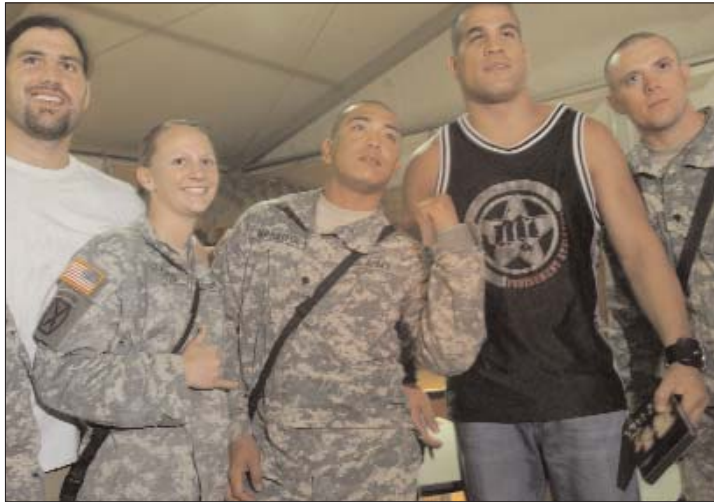


Staff Sgts. Ricardo Rendon and Rudy Rendon, brothers from San Antonio, pose with Tito Ortiz, a former light-heavyweight champion with the Ultimate Fighting Championship, during the athlete's visit to Camp Liberty in southwestern Baghdad July 31.

Spc. Erin Barnes, a supply specialist with Headquarters Platoon, 642 Engineer Co., 20th Engineer Battalion, 1169th Group.

"Tito is already my favorite," she said.

Ortiz and McCully took time to visit with Soldiers and wish them well. Ortiz thanked them for their service to their country and promised to bring more members of "Team Punishment" on their next visit.



(U.S. Army photo by Pfc. M. Benjamin Gable, 7th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

Soldiers have their photo taken with Justin McCully, left, and Tito Ortiz, tank top at the Morale, Welfare and Recreation building at Camp Liberty in southwestern Baghdad July 31. Both McCully and Ortiz are mixed martial arts fighters with Ultimate Fighting Championship. They visit troops in Iraq after starting their tour visiting injured service members in Washington, DC.

Best Show Up for Bench Press Contest

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE PROSPERITY, Iraq - Hundreds of Soldiers go to the gymnasium on a regular basis for many reasons like general fitness, strength and bodybuilding. However, it's not often these Soldiers take it to the level of a professional-style competition.

During this month's Black Jack Bench Press competition, Soldiers from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division defied gravity and pushed their way to victory Aug. 3.

Without air conditioning in the gym, the sweat poured down a little more during the high-intensity competition that pitted Soldier against wrought iron.

Although the competitors were from the same Army and same country, the level of intensity they displayed was intimidating as several of the pectoral punishers casually cranked out single repetitions of more than 300 pounds.

Sweat was already pouring down the faces of everyone in the room before a single weight was lifted. First to the benches were the ladies.

Kimberly Hunter, Kymberlee Randle and Stella Hilsenbeck, all from the 15th Brigade Support Battalion, battled for placing.

After the mandatory three rounds of lifts, Hunter and Randle tied and had to go to a playoff for first place with Randle coming out on top after lifting 105 pounds - five more than Hilsenbeck's best.

Hunter said she only got into the competition to support Randle.

"Now that I've done it, I think it's something I could get into," she said. "I'll definitely be training for the next one."

Although he was uncontested in the 150-pound weight class, Daytona Beach, Fla., native Rodriguez Benjamin from the 1st Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment, currently attached to the Black Jack Brigade, flawlessly pushed 280 pounds off his chest after starting with 260. He shrugged it off saying his best-ever lift was



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

Daytona Beach, Fla., native, Rodriguez Benjamin from 1st Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment, wins his weight class with a lift of 280 pounds during the Black Jack Bench Press competition held in the Forward Operating Base Prosperity gymnasium in central Baghdad Aug. 3.

340. The 150 to 170 pound class had a few more people in it vying for the title. Antoine Martin from the 1-3-1st National Police Transition Team put up 300, narrowly edging out Marcus Gable and Julio Calzada - both from the 15th BSB.

"There's no substitute for hard work," Martin said after taking in a breath of air.

While there was plenty of talent and strength in the 170 to 185 class, tournament director Omar Bouie from the 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion cranked out a 350 pound rep that lit up the crowd as he effortlessly re-racked the weight and secured his first place finish ahead of Jason Hood.

In the 185 to 200 pound division, only two competitors battled down to the last lift with Michael Hamilton

pressing 20 more pounds than the second place lift of 300 pounds.

In another uncontested category, Robert Grudier almost had the best lift of the day at 375 pounds. However, he still won the 200 to 230 pound class.

"I should've warmed up a little more," he said after his first lift of 315. Although he admitted to being a little tense, he set a personal best with his lift of 375.

Only two people came to the super heavy-weight division: one a previous champion and one contending. Marvin Blackstock proved untouchable after benching an astonishing 410 pounds.

Daniel Pilard had a good showing in the class pressing 315 for his final stand.

Time to Release the Sci-Fi Geek from Within

DVD
Hunt

Spc. William
Hatton



I know it's hard to admit, but from time to time I let down my tough guy shell and enjoy something that fits in a nerdy or geeky genre. I think it's about time people came out of the closet, so to speak, and started admitting they love seeing Luke Skywalker battle Darth Vader in "Return of the Jedi," or just cheer seeing Neo take on Agent Smith in the "Matrix" trilogy.

Regardless of what my friends might say, I watched a movie that helped me release the nerd from within. The movie was "Serenity."

The movie is about a future where space travel and colonization on other worlds has become more than just customary: it's life. As humans leave Earth for more and more worlds untouched, an alliance groups each world together. With the alliance taking on the form of bad guys in the film, making everyone comply with

their laws, a faction of outsiders/renegades push to defy the alliance's control.

In the midst of the ongoing battle with the alliance, a team of rebels who make their living by robbing from the alliance find themselves stuck in a jam that will change history.

The movie was based off a cult television show called "Firefly," which won an Emmy back in 2003 for Outstanding Special Visual Effects for a Series. After the show was cancelled, with much help from fans, creator Joss Whedon started filming for the movie. The movie basically picks up right where the show left off.

I think one of the reasons I enjoyed this movie was because it jumped right into the story and action. No boring five minute introductions, this movie jumped right into it.

Although there are no recognized names in the cast, you recognize their faces. I spent the entire film trying to remember where I had seen certain characters.

I really feel that this film makes its mark with incredible visual effects and incredible fight scenes.

What made this movie good to me was that it was entertaining from start to finish. The character development was very well done - and that's

coming from someone who never saw a single episode of the failed TV show. The story was well developed and well presented.

I do have to admit that I was skeptical at first about this movie. I was weighing my pre-viewing opinion with whether it would be worth

watching since it was based on a cancelled television show. I can honestly say that I would totally watch a TV series based on this movie.

This movie was a great watch. I definitely recommend it. I give it 4-and-a-half spurs out of 5.



(Courtesy of Universal Pictures)

Impromptu UFC Warrior Visit Brings Smiles, Photo Ops and...a Haircut?

By Capt. Dawn Williams
1st Cavalry Division Public Affairs

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq - Soldiers at the Multi-National Division - Baghdad headquarters here welcomed a surprise, last-minute visit when two Ultimate Fighting Championship warriors stopped by the division's headquarters building during a USO tour visiting deployed Soldiers in Iraq, Aug. 2.

Bad weather in the Baghdad area prohibited the Team Punishment founder and former light-heavyweight champion, Tito Ortiz and teammate Justin McCully from flying to other operating bases in and around the Iraqi capital. Soldiers working out of the MND-B headquarters and home to the 1st Cavalry Division eagerly welcomed the pair, awaiting their chance for a photo with the "Huntington Beach Bad Boy" (Ortiz) and the



(Photos by Capt. Dawn Williams 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Tito Ortiz (left), a former light-heavyweight champion with the Ultimate Fighting Championship, cuts the pony-tail off of Team Punishment teammate Justin McCully during a recent, impromptu visit to meet Soldiers at the Multi-National Division-Baghdad and 1st Cavalry Division headquarters at Camp Liberty in southwestern Baghdad Aug. 2.

"NSane1" (McCully).

"We are really glad to be able to come out here and visit with you guys," McCully said. "It's our pleasure to come out and support you; we really appreciate all that you all are doing for us."

Service members and Department of Defense civilians lined up ready to "take a fighting stance" next to the two fighters for photos and get autographs. Deployed members of all ranks, shapes and sizes showed up to get a glimpse of the Team Punishment ultimate fighters to include Maj. Gen. Joseph F. Fil Jr., the commanding general of MND-B and the 1st Cav. Div.

Fil presented the two fighters with mementos and paused to take photos with the two fighters. Excited to see their top leader shaking hands with the UFC fighters, Soldiers taunted their commander to "put up his dukes" and get an action shot. The commanding general raised both fists asking, "Like this?" Ortiz and McCully played along, lending classic "I've been punched" expressions to the photo shoot.

Laughter erupted from both the crowd and the commanding general as he stepped away with a huge smile saying, "I want a copy of that one!"

Rumor of an internal "bet" between Ortiz and McCully quickly surfaced among the crowd of service members. Having lost some sort of bet with Ortiz, the long-haired "NSane1" would shave his long locks, but only if a Soldier would do it for him.

Staff Sgt. Brian Crenshaw, a trained and certified barber serving with the 1st Cavalry Division suddenly appeared from the crowd with scissors and a barbershop cloak in hand.

"Let's do this!" said Crenshaw. "You ready?"

An anxious McCully looked a bit alarmed for a second, but threw his hands up and surrendered to the bet as Ortiz held the scissors in his hand.

"OK," McCully said, "I'll do it, but Tito has to have the first cut."

The crowd cheered as a wide-eyed and highly enthusiastic Ortiz started cutting the ragged and aged pony-tail off his teammate. A few cuts later, shorter locks fell across McCully's face as Ortiz jumped around, hooting and hollering, swirling the six-inch pony-tail recently removed from McCully's head.

Excitement and perhaps slight embarrassment aside, McCully faced the crowd and thanked them again for such a great tour.

Before heading to Crenshaw's barber chair set up in a trailer



Staff Sgt. Brian Crenshaw, a 1st Cavalry Division Soldier prepares Ultimate Fighter Justin McCully who promised he would allow a Soldier to "shave" his head in Iraq during a recent USO tour to visit deployed servicemembers in Iraq.

next to the division headquarters.

McCully and Ortiz talked about their deep-seeded friendship and camaraderie and ended their visit with a story about a recent comeback bout for McCully in preparation for his upcoming UFC fight in September.

As the crowd began to disperse, a select few walked the UFC pair to Crenshaw's barbershop, where a chair was already prepared to receive the ultimate fighter.

Crenshaw welcomed the guest into his barbershop and gave him his first haircut in several years. Ortiz sat by watching closely making jokes and taking pictures with his own digital camera, capturing the moment.

When asked how he liked his new haircut, McCully replied, "It's great! I'll have to get used to it and most importantly...it's paid for by the U.S. government!"

Ortiz and McCully are currently on tour in support of deployed troops. Their USO adventure began in late July when visited wounded Soldiers at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C. The two UFC veterans also made stops to visit Soldiers in Kuwait and Iraq.

The Atlanta Braves and a Day at "The Ted"

This week's sports article is about the Atlanta Braves, who will soon be National League champions. No, the St. Louis Cardinals or the New York Mets won't win it. Not even those loveable losers from the north side of Chicago.

The Braves made huge trade-deadline deals to bring in first baseman, Mark Teixeira, from the Texas Rangers and relief pitcher, Octavio Dotel, from the Kansas City Royals. They added power and pitching, making them my favorites for the pennant.

Atlanta is hot in more ways than one. It's the hip hop capital of the world with artists such as Usher, Outkast, So So Def Recordings and Lil' Jon calling it home. It's the home of Coca Cola, Ted Turner, who some say is a hologram, and Julia Roberts. Hey, they don't call it "Hotlanta" for nothing.

And speaking of home; I'd love to be

Trigger Pull

Pfc. Benjamin Gable



there to make that short trip to Turner Field, or, "the Ted," as its known. I miss those hot summer days at a Braves game paying some homeless man with no pants and a cough \$30 to park in "his" lot. Then eating at the Varsity, where you can literally feed a family of five, or two really wasted college students, for 10 bucks.

It's all worth it to see the Braves play. They have been consistently winning for the past 14 years. Now they are back in the thick

of it and looking to make a run at the World Series.

Teixeira played college baseball at Georgia Tech, so he is a bit of a hometown hero. In his first game with the Braves, he hit a three-run home run and had four runs batted in. He is just what the doctor ordered. Teixeira will most likely hit cleanup and provide protection for Chipper Jones and Andruw Jones.

Now maybe Andruw will finally give my fantasy team a lift.

Dotel isn't exactly our savior for the bullpen. He did have an earned run average below 4 and 11 saves for the Kansas City Royals, which will help. But, he will add depth and a viable set-up man for Bob Wickman.

It's possible he could take over the closer role if Wickman continues to be inconsis-

tent.

The enthusiasm of making a run at the World Series will help Braves fans forget about the Michael Vick trial. It's getting ugly and Vick is facing up to five years in prison if convicted.

Even if he is found innocent, the Falcons have lost their quarterback for the year, at least. Maybe they should have taken my advice in December and benched him for Matt Schaub.

Move over Arthur Blank, I'll take over from here.

Teixeira and Dotel have brought new enthusiasm to Atlanta. Anytime the Braves are in a pennant chase, it takes the sting out of the price of beer and hot dogs. Look for the Braves to make a push in the final half of the season, and take that momentum into the playoffs.