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Crossed Sabers

Volume I, Issue 25

Telling the MND-Baghdad Story

Monday, Oct. 12, 2007



Photo by Maj. Michael J. Indovina

Troops of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 18th Military Police Brigade await the departure on their flight, a Air Force aircraft into Baghdad International Airport.

Brigade Arrives in Iraq

**By Sgt. Daniel D. Blottenberger
18th Military Police Brigade Public Affairs**

CAMP VICTORY, Iraq— In eager silence Soldiers of the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 18th Military Police Brigade walked through manmade paths aligned with barriers on their way from Baghdad International Airport to Camp Victory here.

Soldiers from the 18th Military Police Brigade deployed from Mannheim Germany, recently completed their final stage of in-processing and training into the Middle Eastern theater in Kuwait, and arrived here in Iraq to their final destination for its upcoming 15 month deployment mission. The final training and in-processing in Kuwait focused on tasks specific for this area of operation.

"From the stories I've heard, I expected the area to be in chaos with bombs going off everywhere, but once I got here I found that doing my job as a personnel clerk was not much different from what I am used to doing elsewhere," said Spc. Anthony Henderson, a native of Memphis, Tenn., and a human resources specialist with the unit.

Besides all the stories and the training the 18th MP BDE had heard about in Kuwait, Kuwait afforded the unit an opportunity to get acclimated to the region.

"The training was very vital. I believe I can handle myself in a combat situation now. We have been constantly preparing for months now and we are ready to handle the stresses of this environment," said Henderson who is deployed for the first time.

The unit is trained and ready to begin their 15 month deployment. In the upcoming days, they will complete a Transfer of Authority with the outgoing unit and continue the mission.

The 18th MP Bde will be replacing the 89th MP Bde from Fort Hood, Texas who is currently performing the MP mission in Iraq. The 89th MPs will complete their 15 month tour here soon.

The 18th MP Bde is prepared to complete a process called the "Relief in Place" where units spend time working, training and transitioning the duties and responsibilities from the outgoing unit to the incoming unit on how they operated during their deployment.



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

'Witch Doctors' Begin Journey Home

With 15 months of medical evacuation missions behind them, Soldiers from Company C, 2nd "Lobo" Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, load up their gear onto a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter before they start their trip from Camp Taji, north of Baghdad, back to the United States Oct. 25. (See Page 3 for article.)

Shot Soldier Takes Out Terrorist

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

BAGHDAD – "I think the whole part of being scared and nervous actually helped it along with what the situation was, and I think it played a part in me actually being able to act on what was going on," Spc. Justin McDaniel said.

He had all the pre-mission jitters. It was natural. He was a little anxious, a little nervous, but he, like his fellow Soldiers in his platoon, his company and throughout

Iraq, understood there was a job to be done and they were the ones on tap to do it.

What McDaniel, a team leader with Company B, 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division out of Fort Carson, Colo., did not know before going into sector was that, on this night, those jitters just might save his life.

In the early morning hours of Oct. 20, McDaniel and

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After Surviving the Battlefield, Arrive & Survive the Homecoming

Like many of you, I've got a "short-timers" clock on my computer which not only tells me how many months, weeks and days until I hit our Central Texas home, but it counts hours, minutes and seconds, too.

As I write this, I've got 4,108,444 seconds to go until I leave Baghdad in my rearview mirror; not that I'm really counting.

In this, my last newspaper column, I'd like to talk about going home and offer some of the pitfalls and pratfalls we should all avoid when we return to our loved ones and garrison duty. This is my third turn through Iraq, and I think I've seen them all over the past five years.

First off, let's talk about some expectation management. When we arrive back home, it will be after more than 24 hours of travel. Most won't be able to sleep much on the freedom bird home, being so keyed up to get there. When you finally come into the waiting arms of loved ones, or settle into your final stop, you're going to be dead tired. Once the adrenaline rush of just being there wears off, you'll hit the proverbial wall and need some rest. We all get three days away from the unit to reconnect with family and friends. That's not including the arrival date. Take it slow; take it easy and take the time to enjoy those first few days of being home again.

While we were away, our families carried on without us. There will be changes made in the day-to-day living in your household. Don't rush in and expect everything to run the way it did the day you left for Iraq more than a year ago. Don't be that "bull in a China shop." Sit back, relax and ease into

Pegasus 9 Sends

Command Sgt. Maj. Philip Johndrow



your family role again.

In many cases, you'll find that change is a good thing. You don't have to force your family to revert to your way of doing things. Take your time, and find time to reconnect with your family members.

Reintegration training stresses over and over not to abuse alcohol. It's been a long time since we've had the opportunity to crack open a cold one, and for just about all of us, our tolerance is down. Moderation is the key, and so is being smart when you do decide to party with friends.

Designate a driver to get you and your friends to and from holiday parties in one piece. Think and plan ahead. It was a life saving measure here in Iraq, and it will save your life once you return home, too.

After surviving 15 months in a combat zone, we all need to remember that we are not invincible. Traffic fatalities take too many proven warriors from our ranks, leaving us all lessened with the loss.

Motorcycles are cool. Many Soldiers will have extra money saved from this deployment and the urge will be to run out and get the biggest and the best motorcycle on the market and take it for a spin. Make sure you're trained first. None of us would

hit the mean streets of the Iraqi capital without the proper training or the proper equipment. Don't do that by attempting to take on a high-powered motorcycle with limited experience or training. It just doesn't make sense.

Just as we relied on each other, our battle buddies here in Iraq, use the buddy system again when you're home. If you plan ahead and take a simple risk assessment in all that you do, you'll survive the reunion, just as you survived, and thrived here in Baghdad.

Speaking for the entire command team of the Multi-National Division – Baghdad and the 1st Cavalry Division, I can tell you all that I am extremely proud of the profes-

sionalism and dedication to duty displayed by our troopers every single day here in the Iraqi capital. Your leaders care for your well-being, and that care does not end when we cross the berm into safety and take that freedom flight home.

You are an important part of a great team. Whether you are remaining with the team, moving onto another assignment or moving on with your life after the military, you owe it to yourself and those who love and care for you to continue to make smart decisions and think before you act.

I'm counting on all of you to do just that. And my count is now at 4,107,544 seconds to go.

FIRST TEAM!



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

A Spoon Full of Sugar...

(Above) Handing out gifts to local Iraqi girls, 1st Lt. Tiffany Bilderback, squadron personnel officer for Fires "Hell" Squadron, 2nd "Stryker" Cavalry Regiment receives smiles from the children during a combined medical effort Oct. 19 in Fira Shia, Iraq. The day's event involved the coordinated efforts of the 3rd Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division and the Fires "Hell" Squadron. (Right) Maj. Matthew Rice, regimental surgeon, 2nd "Stryker" Cavalry Regiment, who hails from Tiburon, Calif., looks at an X-Ray of an elderly Iraqi man, who is having knee problems, during the combined medical effort. The man brought the X-Ray with him to the event.



Baghdad News Briefs



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

Ten Iraqi Army soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 1st Brigade, 9th Infantry Division, based out of Camp Sarah in New Baghdad, receive recognition Oct. 25 for foiling an attempted kidnapping and bank robbery on Sept. 3.

Iraqi Troops Recognized for Foiling Kidnap Attempt

By Maj. Sean Ryan
2nd IBCT, 2nd Inf. Div. Public Affairs Officer

FORWARD OPERATING BASE LOYALTY, Iraq — The morning of Sept. 3 started off the same for the Soldiers of the Iraqi Army squad from 2nd Battalion, 1st Brigade, 9th Infantry Division, based at Camp Sarah in the New Baghdad area or “Tisa Nissan” in Arabic. The mission for the unit in eastern Baghdad was to set up a temporary hidden checkpoint in addition to the many checkpoints already in place around the area.

Too often in the past, checkpoints were flimsy structures that were easily replicated by insurgents, who became adept at setting up their own fake checkpoints to commit crimes against innocent Iraqis.

Since, checkpoints have been drastically upgraded by the Iraqi Security Forces and are now hardened concrete tower structures, nearly impossible to replicate and only equipped with heavy equipment. The checkpoints are monitored throughout the area by Iraqi and Coalition Forces.

Early on this Monday morning, gunshots spoiled the quiet, uneventful day thus far for Iraqi Army Lt. Bahaa, the platoon leader, as he quickly found himself running to the source of the shots. While locking and loading his weapon, he shouted instructions for his Soldiers to call in the shots and follow him with backup.

He entered the area to find a barrage of bullets ripping through a car with three persons inside. The university graduate who studied information technology, found the bullet-riddled car blocked in front and back by the suspects’ vehicles.

“I started firing but the suspects were able to flee quickly in a third vehicle,” Bahaa said. “We assumed this was just a kidnap attempt.”

Iraqi Pvt. Ali, the second Soldier on site and one of Bahaa’s back-ups said, “I started firing as well but by the time I got there, there were already onlookers circling the area and it was unsafe. It all happened very quickly. This was not just an attempted kidnapping, but a robbery, as well.”

Ali added, “In addition to the 3 scared, but unharmed victims, we found 600,000 U.S. dollars earmarked for a bank in Nasiriyah. The kidnapping and robbery suspects did not know we had set-up a temporary checkpoint, only 200 meters away, because it was out of their sight.”

For the heroic and daring rescue, the 10 Iraqi troops were rewarded for their selfless service by their battalion commander, Col. Shakir and joined by Col. Jeffrey Bannister, commander of the 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, in an Oct. 25 ceremony at Forward Operating Base Loyalty.

The Iraqi soldiers received certificates, coins of excellence, and a small cash reward. Shakir said of his Soldiers, “We are very proud of all of them and honored to reward them for their extremely brave behavior that epitomizes the country of Iraq.”

Cav Medics Start Journey Home

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

CAMP TAJI, Iraq — For the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division’s medical evacuation unit, the horrors of war are all too real. But, those missions of transporting hurt and dying patients are over for a few troopers.

About a dozen Soldiers from Company C, 2nd “Lobo” Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, loaded up onto non-MEDEVAC UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters for a change, and began their journey home, Oct. 25. They are the first group of Soldiers from the 1st ACB to redeploy.

“It feels good to be going home after 15 months,” said Rochester, N.Y., native, Chief Warrant Officer 3 Bryan Sills, a MEDEVAC pilot for the Co. C “Witch Doctors.”

Like most units in Iraq, when the final orders came down, Co. C. was extended to 15 months.

This made the deployment more difficult, said Orchard Park, N.Y., native, Sgt. 1st Class Jon Spiller, a flight medic for Co. C and the brigade’s senior medical noncommissioned officer.

“This was my third deployment and it was probably the roughest one I’ve been through; mainly because of the extension,” Spiller said.

Even after they knew the extension was going to affect them, it didn’t really hit the Witch Doctors until the 12-month mark, Spiller said.

“Once we heard about it, we all prepared for it, but when you hit that 12-month mark and you know you should be going home, you kind of feel a little different about it,” he said.

The extension aside, Spiller felt the Witch Doctors did some good while they flew over Iraq.

“I really think we made a difference over here. We helped out the best we could. I’ll be happy when everybody gets home,” Spiller said.

Day in and day out for 15 months the troops from Co. C saw the horrors of war, but they made it a point to be a part of the change taking place in Iraq — even if that meant making amends with those who seek to kill Coalition Forces, said Spiller.

One patient in particular was an insurgent who had a gun shot wound to the leg, said Spiller.

“We seemed to kind of connect. We couldn’t really talk because we were in a helicopter and plus he didn’t speak English,” he said “I just kind of did some hand gestures and helped him out.”

Spiller, as a sign of kindness, tried to give the wounded enemy fighter a bracelet he was wearing at the time, but the man only gestured as if he didn’t deserve such a gift, said Spiller.

“I know a lot of our medics are doing things like that, where they want to make sure these people understand we’re here to help them whether they like us or not,” he said.

But those times are now memories with which to tell stories to their friends and families — for the most part. Spiller can’t wait to see his wife and three kids, he said.

After three long deployments, another shorter deployment and basic noncommissioned officer school, he estimates that he has been gone from home almost five years straight, said Spiller.

Although he just got done saving lives in Iraq, Spiller heralds his wife, Kris, as a hero for keeping it together through all of his deployments.

“She’s tried to keep her sanity. She’s definitely kept the household together with me gone. I’m just looking forward to being back at home with my kids and make our family whole again,” he said.

Spiller plans to spend lots of time with his wife; his son Tyler, 15; and his two daughters, Victoria,



(Photo by Cpl. Nathan Hoskins, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div.)

Orchard Park, N.Y., native Sgt. 1st Class Jon Spiller, a flight medic for Company C, 2nd “Lobo” Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, walks his gear to the waiting UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter at Camp Taji, Iraq, Oct. 25.

13, and McKellen, 8, when he gets home. That doesn’t mean his mind isn’t on good ‘ole American sustenance.

He is already thinking about the steak he’ll eat if he arrives in the evening or that quaint little coffee shop if he arrives in the morning, he said.

“If it’s dinner, steaks; if it’s around breakfast time, we have a couple little places we like to go. I’ll have a nice coffee cappuccino, sit down, enjoy the view and be glad to be home,” said Spiller.

For some of the Witch Doctors, arriving home means time with the family, for others it’s that and the start of a new life altogether.

Bay City, Mich., native, Sgt. Robert Witbrodt, a UH-60 Black Hawk crew chief for Co. C, will be joining the civilian ranks soon after his arrival home, he said.

With three tours in Iraq complete, Witbrodt will be heading to school to study engineering, he said.

Still, he is proud of what he and his unit accomplished while in Iraq, said Witbrodt.

“I like the mission here. Saving lives is pretty (darn) great. Sometimes it’s hard on you, but it’s rewarding,” he said.

Other than school, Witbrodt is fairly laid back about what he’ll do once stateside.

“I don’t really have any big plans other than just spending time with my wife and maybe a little snowboarding, but that’s about it,” he said.

Although each Soldier’s plans are varied, all that really matters to them is that they’re headed home.

The rest of Co. C will soon follow their fellow Witch Doctors, but will first hand over their mission to another MEDEVAC unit taking their place.

Engineer Battalion Turns Over Their Territory

By Spc. Elvyn Nieves
113th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – After flying proudly for more than a year over Iraqi soil the color's of the 130th Combat Engineer Battalion were cased for redeployment during the transfer of authority ceremony marking the ending of their tour here, Oct. 20.

The 107th Engineer Battalion, Michigan Army National Guard, took over the mission to keep the main supply routes in the Baghdad area clear of improvised explosive devices from the Puerto Rico Army National Guard unit.

"The casing of the 130th Engineer Battalion colors and the uncasing of the 107th Engineer Battalion colors represent a change of unit and Soldiers only," said Lowell, Mich. native Lt. Col. Dean A. DeGroute, commander of the 107th Eng. Bn. "The mission doesn't change and the military standards are maintained to the highest level."

The 130th Eng. Bn. completed more than 1,500 combat patrol missions in Iraq, more than 44,000 miles of roads traveled and recon, 16,500 interrogations conducted, 7,300 hours expended in IED search throughout Baghdad and found and deactivated more than 280 IEDs.

According to, Humacao, Puerto Rico native, Lt. Col. Angelica Reyes, 130th Eng. Bn. commander, the mission was a challenging one.

"We've never done this type of mission before and this was the biggest challenge for the battalion," said Reyes. "Day by day we worked and focused on the tasks ahead until the day we were officially done with the mission."

Maj. Ramón Burgos, Vega Baja Puerto Rico native and battalion sergeant major, said the battalion had a physical challenge because its members needed to endure eight, 10 and 12 hours of continuous combat



(Photo by Spc. Elvyn Nieves, 113th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

During the transfer of authority ceremony 1st Sgt. Jose Alicea (left) and Spc. Santiago Perez (right) of Headquarters Company, 130th Engineer Battalion retreat the battalion's flag that has flown over Iraq since the arrival of the battalion more than a year ago at Camp Liberty in western Baghdad, Oct. 20.

patrols, seven days a week.

"We attained 70 percent effectiveness in our missions," Burgos said. "The battalion before us only attained 30 percent. I believe we had established a standard that would be very difficult to emulate by any other battalion."

Besides numbers and statistics the human factor made the difference.

The 130th Engineer Battalion was recognized with the Meritorious Unit Citation for performance and actions in Iraq.

At the individual level, the battalion received 35 Purple Heart Medals, 26 Bronze Star Medals, 13 Army Commendation Medals with V device for valor, 469 Army Commendation Medals, 12 Combat Medic Badges and 313 Combat Action Badges.

"I'm very proud of my Soldiers, because each one has accomplished their mission with honor and pride," Reyes said.

The Soldiers of the 107th Eng. Bn. know they have big shoes to fill but are confident in their soldiering skills.

"Right now the moral is very high, the tough training is behind us and we're looking forward to complete our mission with everybody going home at the end of the deployment," said Cpt. Scott Etelamaki, a personnel officer with 107th Eng. Bn.

have interviews with the mental health technician, psychiatrist, psychologist and other mental health experts. Although it is a three-day program, it is not limited to three days.

Stressed? Medical Unit Teaches Combat Stress Control

By Spc. Angel D. Martinez
113th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – The battlefield is a dangerous place. War and stress go hand-in-hand and mental health units are helping Soldiers fight against that stress, but they need Soldiers to take the initial step to get help.

The 785th Medical Company (Combat Stress Control Unit), an Army Reserve unit out of Fort Snelling, Minn., has joined this fight for the third time in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"Our main mission is to keep the Soldiers doing their mission with their unit," said Sgt. 1st Class Tim Lindquist, a Chanhassen, Minn., native and the unit's non-commissioned officer in charge.

If a Soldier needs help, the prevention team will assess and try to control the situation. If the case dictates, the prevention team will send the client to nearest on post restoration center.

Combat Stress Control is divided in two categories, prevention and restoration.

The prevention program is the same as the restorative, but with four-man teams integrated with units outside the



(Photo by Spc. Angel D. Martinez, 113th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

Bedford, Minn., native, Spc. Andrea Gilbert, a medical health specialist for the 785th Medical Company (Combat Stress Control Unit), prepares the board for a positive thinking class at the Combat Stress Control Center on Camp Liberty in western Baghdad Oct. 12.

wire before help is needed.

The restoration portion is a three-day program in which the "clients," Soldiers who visit the facility looking for help,

The patients also go through different classes focusing on subjects such as sleep, hygiene and relaxation techniques, coping skills, anger and stress management, bereavement, home front issues, communication, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder awareness and positive thinking.

The classes are available to everyone, and there are no appointments needed to attend them.

According to Lindquist, the number of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder cases is increasing due to the amount of rotations in OIF.

"What we've been finding is, now that guys are coming back for their third, fourth and sometimes even fifth time, and the tours being extended from 12 to 15 months, we're getting a lot more (cases of) chronic PTSD," he said.

The Combat Stress Control Center is located in Building C 70, on Camp Liberty West Logistic Support Area, next to the Witmer Troop Medical Clinic.

For more information on combat stress or classes call VOIP 302-242-4642 or DSN 318-847-2432.

Ironhorse Troop Takes Silver Star with Ounce of Humility

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

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Riding in a humvee down a dusty road, Sgt. Ken Thomas, a team leader and cavalry scout for Troop C, 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, sits in the right front passenger side of the vehicle, relating that never in a million years did he ever think he would receive a Silver Star Medal while deployed to Iraq.

As the humvee comes to a stop, Thomas who was presented the medal in a ceremony at Camp Liberty, in western Baghdad, Aug. 11, gets out and walks from house to house along a road in a neighborhood in the Baghdad Gardens area near Taji with other members of his platoon as they build relationships with the local people here, gathering census information.

The Utopia, Texas native, who has a wife, Christi, and a soon-to-be-two-year-old daughter, MacKenzie, spends most of his days here patrolling the streets on both mounted and dismounted patrols, takes the fact that he is a Silver Star recipient with a dose of humility.

"I just did my job and there really wasn't anything extraordinary about it," said Thomas, relating his experience of a mission in which he and members of his platoon were ambushed as they floated down the Tigris River on patrol boats as part of a joint mission with Iraqi Police near Falahat, Iraq Feb. 16. "It was just another day in the Cav."

"It wasn't just me, it was a whole platoon out there doing outstanding things," added Thomas as he waved to an Iraqi man on the street, and then continued his tale about the boat mission that earned him the Silver Star.

Four Iraqi Police patrol boats, made up of mixed crews with both Troop C Soldiers and Iraqi Police, set out on the mission to keep the waterways clear of possible insurgents trafficking weapons, said Thomas setting the scene.

Tips received indicated that insurgents were using the river to transport weapons and gain access to areas from which they could launch attacks on civilians, Iraqi security forces and Coalition troops. The plan also included stopping and checking houses near the banks in a search for weapons and suspected insurgents.

For the mission, Thomas was joined by members of his platoon, all fellow scouts, to include Spc. Jonathan Toth of Clinton, Miss.; Pekin, Ill. native Sgt. Chad Bolding; Sgt. Mike Waddell of Austin; Pfc. Angel



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

Utopia, Texas native Sgt. Ken Thomas (right), a team leader with Troop C, 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment talks with local Iraqi residents near Taji, Iraq during an Oct. 6 foot patrol. Thomas recently received the Silver Star Medal for actions taken in mid-February during an enemy ambush.

Sandoval of Lancaster, Calif. and Staff Sgt. Allen Johns who hails from Adrian, Mich. along with two Iraqi Police boat crewmembers.

In the order of march, Thomas was in the second boat and his platoon leader was in the first boat, with the two other boats following not far behind.

Within a matter of minutes and not getting too far down the river, the Soldiers and Iraqi Police found themselves sailing through a hail of bullets.

"We were engaged by heavy gunfire which would die down to a few pop shots and then go back to heavy machine gun fire and other heavy small arms fire," said Thomas. "People were lining the banks to shoot at us. At first, we were just suppressing fire but once we started fixing on where everyone was, we were starting to pick targets."

Thomas said the enemy, however, was very well positioned, having very carefully planned the attack.

"We were in a complex linear ambush and the enemy was taking advantage of the terrain and we were vastly outnumbered," said Thomas. "We were pretty sure we were going to die."

Once the heavy fire began, Thomas's platoon leader, 1st Lt. John Dolan, a native of Maple Grove, Minn., ordered the boats to turn around—by that time, however, it was too late.

"After the firing started, we saw the first boat, the lieutenant's, get hit and saw them

crash into an island," said Thomas. "Then we hit a sand bar and our boat got stuck so we were like sitting ducks."

"We were getting hit pretty hard and there wasn't much cover in the river," he added.

The Iraqi Police on the boat were stuck, pinned down in a corner of the boat by the heavy fire, so Thomas, taking action, manned the boat's PKC heavy machine gun and began firing, continuing to reload until he ran out of PKC ammunition.

"Everybody was keeping their heads down continuing to engage the enemy with their M4 rifles—all the guys were firing," Thomas said.

Knowing they would most likely die, Staff Sgt. Johns made the decision that they should abandon the boat and float or try to swim to a small island which was harder than it sounded, according to Thomas.

"They told us that our equipment floats, but you're carrying an extra 60 pounds and I was thinking to myself that I'd rather get shot than drown," said Thomas. "Along with that we were a lot heavier because we had brought a lot of extra ammo and signal equipment for this mission."

As the Soldiers entered the water, weight lifted from the boat and it was freed from the sand bar. The two Iraqi Police decided to take the boat and find another route out.

"We got on the island which was basically a small hill, and there was no cover on either side, we had to just do a bit of conceal-

ment trying to hide our position," said Thomas.

The Iraqi Police saw no safe way to make it out of the area so they pulled the boat around to the East side of the island. Then, the Soldiers got back on the boat and they were able to take it to a river bank.

"Toth took the wheel and got us to the bank," said Thomas, adding that they were still under relentless fire from the insurgents. "When we got there we found a crater and got inside it to get cover but it wasn't big enough for us all to fit in."

"Staff Sgt. Johns said 'We've gotta get out of here,' so he sent me to find a way out," said Thomas. "There was a cinderblock wall running to the north and the south and a fence to the east. So, I told him we were going to have to cut through the fence."

There was just one obstacle, downed power lines running across the fence and sparks were flying from them.

Thomas ran back under fire and cut a hole in the fence using wire cutters all the while receiving small jolts of electricity.

While his fellow scouts made their way through the fence, Thomas pulled security and then crawled through himself.

Once they made it through the fence, they ran to a house where there was better cover and they continued engaging the enemy until helicopters from the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division arrived on the scene to evacuate the Soldiers and Iraqi Police.

The crew in the first boat to include Dolan, the platoon leader, had fought their way to a clearing where the wounded Dolan had called in the air assets.

In all, the ambush lasted for a little over two hours, according to Thomas. One U.S. Soldier – Dolan – and two Iraqi Police officers were wounded. An Iraqi Police officer in Dolan's boat later died from wounds received in the ambush. Twenty-two enemy fighters were killed in the engagement, while more than 50 were wounded. No U.S. Soldiers were killed in the ambush.

Thomas praised the performance of his fellow Soldiers and credits their survival to teamwork.

"They really did an outstanding job considering the impossible task at hand," said Thomas. "It really was a team effort, everything just fell into place."

Dolan echoed many of the same sentiments about the efforts of his Soldiers.

"Thomas really did an amazing job and just did what anyone of those guys would have done

Honoring Our Fallen Heroes

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Pfc. J. Chitjian, 3-8 CAV, 3rd BCT, 1st Cav. Div.
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Spc. David E. Lambert, 107 EN, 35th Eng. Bn.
Spc. Vincent A. Madero, 2-82 FA, 3rd BCT, 1st Cav. Div.

Spc. Jason N. Marchand, 3-2 CAV 2nd SCR 5-Oct-07
Capt. Timothy I. McGovern, 2-7 CAV, 4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div.
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Sgt. Joseph B. Milledge, 3-2 CAV, 2nd SCR
Spc. Avealalo Milo, 2-2 CAV, 2nd SCR
Sgt. Donald L. Munn II, 1 BSTB, 1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div.
Spc. Brandon W. Smitherman, 2-7 CAV, 4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div.



(Photo by Spc. Shejal Pulivarti, 1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

A local tribal leader (left), Col. Paul E. Funk II (center), commander, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division and an Iraqi government representative converse on the accomplishments and goals for reconciliation at the opening of the Sheiks Conference Center near Taji, Iraq Oct. 18.

Neutral Location Established to Advance Reconciliation in Taji

By Spc. Shejal Pulivarti
1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – The Sheiks Conference Center's grand opening took place Oct. 18 near Taji, Iraq. Sheiks of all tribes, Iraqi police, Iraqi Army, representatives of the Iraqi government, Iraqi security volunteers as well as 1st "Ironhorse" Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division troops gathered at the center with a common goal – reconciliation.

"The gathering is immense," said Lt. Col. Kevin MacWatters, commander, 1st Squadron 7th Cavalry Regiment, 1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div. "It's another step toward progress."

During the grand opening ceremony, the Sunni and Shia sheiks greeted each other, sat together, conversed and feasted collectively, many for the first time ever, symbolizing the unity in their desires.

"The location provides a headquarters for all tribes and security forces to work together for the people of Taji," said MacWatters, a Mustang, Okla., native.

Prior to acquiring this neutral location, the meetings were held at other various locations.

The conference center is between both Sunni and Shia tribes' locales allowing a consistent place where

everyone can be comfortable during reconciliation meetings.

The assembly consisted of key members speaking about their goals and recognition of the advancement the center represents.

"We have to continue to be optimistic and continue to work together," MacWatters told the assembled sheiks at the grand opening ceremony.

Prior to reconciliation efforts, the Ironhorse Brigade's main focus during their deployment was security, however, as a result of the recent unions, security has improved in the brigade's area of operations—mainly thanks to the joint efforts of the Iraqi people, local Iraqi government officials, tribal leaders, Ironhorse troops, Iraqi Security Volunteers and Iraqi Security Forces.

Reconciliation efforts will allow the Ironhorse Brigade to spend their last few months in country with a shift in focus from mainly a security role to being able to focus more on helping Iraqis with essential services, rebuilding and assisting local Iraqi governments.

The conference center, in essence, is a monument to all that has been accomplished and a preface to establishing a safe, stable and secure environment, MacWatters said.



(Photo by Spc. Shejal Pulivarti, 1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Sgt. 1st Class Tony Copeland (left), the noncommissioned officer in charge of the personnel office for the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, and Sgt. 1st Class Aaron Manning, the brigade's Iraqi Security Force cell NCO, watch the Lowndes High School versus Valdosta High School football game via streaming video on Camp Taji, Iraq in the early morning hours of Oct. 20. The two Valdosta, Ga., natives are high school rivals who still remain true to their high school alma maters.

Football Rivalry Extends Thousands of Miles to Iraq

By Spc. Shejal Pulivarti
1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – "My team is the best," Sgt. 1st Class Tony Copeland, noncommissioned officer in charge of 1st Brigade Combat Team's personnel office and Sgt. 1st Class Aaron Manning, 1st BCT Iraqi Security Forces Cell noncommissioned officer, stated in unison.

Sharing the same hometown of Valdosta, Ga., these high school football rivals developed an unorthodox friendship. They discovered they were football adversaries when discussing their previous assignments – Copeland, as a drill sergeant, and Manning as a recruiter, during which their hometowns came up.

Copeland graduated from Lowndes High School and Manning from Valdosta High School. Each firmly claim their respective high school as the highest esteemed.

Down there, it's all about football, they stated. Both are very proud of their hometown, they are all-around Georgia fans with only their high schools as a difference.

"There's a lot of history between these schools," said Manning. The rivalry is an old one, added Copeland.

"That's why I still watch," said Manning. "It's the competition. Copeland will confirm, the Wildcats (Valdosta) have six national titles and 23 state championships, we are just better!

"Ask him how many national titles the Vikings (Lowndes) won," he teased.

Shaking his head, Copeland confirmed the statistics and declared that Manning, "keeps living in the past, but his school isn't doing anything now. Five years in a row, we have beaten them!"

The Vikings beat the Wildcats in their most recent game Oct. 19. "We beat them 18-8 this past game," Copeland announced.

Regardless of the hometown rivalry, these senior NCOs are admittedly each other's battle buddy.

"We talk about everything, especially home. He's my confidant," Manning said, reminiscing on the times they have shared.

Copeland arrived at Camp Taji, Iraq in April and the two Georgia natives have spent a lot of time together since.

"Being at war, it's nice to meet someone that you have something in common with. I'm so glad I have him as my battle buddy," said Manning with a smile.

They eat lunch together and visit each other at work every day. The bond they have allows them to maintain a healthy friendship, Manning said, despite maintaining that bitter high school football rivalry.



THERMOGENICS AND THE DESERT; A POTENTIALLY DEADLY COMBINATION

THE THERMOGENIC PRODUCTS INCLUDED IN SPORTS SUPPLEMENTS WORK BY RAISING THE USERS METABOLIC RATE WHICH PLACES THEM MORE AT RISK FOR HEAT RELATED INJURIES.

Iraqi Army “Junior Hero” Visits School Children

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

JERF AL-MILA, Iraq – Iraqi Army soldiers from the 3rd Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division (Mechanized) are taking part in a program designed to reach out to Iraqi school children throughout villages in which the battalion operates.

In much the same way policemen visit schools in the United States in crime prevention programs, the battalion's troops kicked off their “Junior Hero” program at an elementary school here Oct. 17 to give the children an understanding of the roles that Iraqi Security Forces play in their local community and to promote volunteerism.

An Iraqi soldier was hand-picked by the 3rd battalion as a spokesperson and role model to speak to the children and to make them honorary Iraqi “junior heroes.”

The Iraqi soldier who was chosen as the “junior hero,” explained the program as a way for the children to show pride in their country and themselves while also learning about the meaning of honor and integrity.

“We teach them that they are junior heroes through their volunteerism. I’m glad to give to these children because they are my brothers and sisters,” said the 3rd Battalion junior hero, who chose not to have his name released due to security reasons. “I hope I can protect them and provide them with good advice that will make their lives better. It is my duty to protect them from terrorists.”

“These children are going to make a better future for Iraq. It’s good for the kids to see us out here doing these things and see that they shouldn’t be afraid of the Iraqi Army soldiers,” he added, explaining that sometimes children are a little intimidated when they see soldiers in uniforms with helmets and donning rifles.

During the event, Iraqi soldiers from the 3rd Bn. handed out comic books, crayons, backpacks with school supplies and other goodies to the children. The comic book featured an adventure story about the Iraqi Security Forces defeating terrorism.

In an introduction to the program, the Iraqi Army junior

hero addressed the children.

“I’m here to talk to you about your Iraqi Security Forces and how you can help secure our country,” said the junior hero to the assembled students. “I am here today to also tell you about a new program that is starting and it involves you—the children of Iraq. This program is called “junior hero” and it means that even the youth can be an influence in our country.

“My job entails me helping our country of Iraq, and we are out there to protect you and your family from terrorists,” the junior hero added. “The Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police work together to make sure your community is safe and secure. The Iraqi Security Forces are patrolling the streets everyday so that you can get an education. When you see your Iraqi Security Forces, do not be afraid, but have faith that we are out there to be your protectors.”

After explaining the program to the children, the junior hero led the children in the “allegiance for good” oath which inducted the children as junior heroes.

Raising their right hands, the children promised to be loyal and honest to their family and their country along with being obedient to their parents and treating them with respect. They promised to treat their teachers and people in their community with respect and to honor the Iraqi Police and Iraqi soldiers who are in their community to protect them.

As with similar programs in the U.S., the children also swore to report any crimes that they see in their neighborhoods.

The children then donned a badge sticker which read “Junior Hero: loyalty, obedient to parents and honesty” in Arabic wording.

Once the junior hero had inducted the students as honorary junior heroes, he chose a child from the assembly and had her lead the classes in singing the Iraqi National Anthem.

Soldiers from Troop D, 1st Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, attached to the 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment and Soldiers from the 3rd Bn., 2nd Bde., 9th IA Div. (Mech.) Military Transition Team (MTT) were on hand during the event only for assistance with security and to



After arriving in the village to promote their Junior Hero Program, Iraqi Army troops from the 3rd Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division (Mechanized) greet the residents of Jerf Al-Mila, Iraq at one of the village's schools Oct. 17.

assist the Iraqis with transporting items for the children.

The Troop D Soldiers and MTT members present at the event said they were impressed with how the Iraqi troops are working to reach out to the children in the local communities.

“This is a good opportunity for the Iraqi Army to restore and renew faith in the Iraqi Security Forces, allowing the children an opportunity to see them in a different light—to see them as people and not just as guards on their street corner,” said Anchorage, Alaska native Capt. Martin Wohlgenuth, commander, Troop D, 1st Bn., 82nd FA Regt. “This partnership between the Iraqi Army and the local nationals shows some of the types of things you can do when you have improved security—you can’t bring essential services or simple events like these if you don’t have security.”

Wohlgenuth, whose troopers have been working closely with Iraqi Security Forces, local area tribal sheiks and the Iraqi Security volunteers in the village to improve security, have seen a lot of changes over the past several months. Their collective efforts have driven Al Qaeda extremists from the area.

The Troop D commander said that the children in the village know first hand the types of things the Iraqi Security Forces working with Coalition troops have done to create a much more secure environment, citing the example that for nearly two years little girls in the village were not allowed to go to school due to threats and attacks by Al Qaeda operatives who warned parents against sending their daughters to school.

“There’s a little girl at school today whose father was killed by a car bomb (planted by Al Qaeda extremists) and three weeks ago, we bought her a new dress for school—and before, we couldn’t have done that because of Al Qaeda,” said Wohlgenuth.

Maj. John Atilano, team leader for the 3rd Bn., 2nd Bde., 9th IA Div. (Mech.) MTT who spends his time in country advising the Iraqi troops had his own take on the Iraqi-led Junior Hero program and what it meant for the children.

“This is the way it should be with Iraqis leading the way to help their people,” said Atilano, who hails from Orange Vale, Calif. “This is awesome for them. When these children grow up and become military age they’re going to be the true Iraqi heroes, they won’t be the guys digging holes for improvised explosive devices. It’s the sons and daughters of Iraq that are going to save the country.”



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

The Iraqi Army “junior hero,” an Iraqi soldier from the 3rd Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division (Mechanized) talks with children at an elementary school in Jerf Al-Mila, Iraq Oct. 17 during a “Junior Hero” event at the school. The Iraqi Security Forces designed the program to teach children not to be afraid of the Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police who work to keep their villages safe and gives the children insight into how they can help keep their neighborhoods free of crime.

Elementary School Reopens

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

BAGHDAD – After months of renovations supervised by the Qadisiyah Neighborhood Advisory Council, hundreds of students lined up to attend their school's grand reopening ceremony at the Al Hamza Elementary School Oct. 22.

Soldiers from Battery A, 3rd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division and the 422nd Civil Affairs Detachment helped officially open up the school for more than 400 students from kindergarten through sixth grade.

According to Capt. Donald Cherry, Battery A's commander, he and his battery visited 12 different schools within Qadisiyah. The head mistress told them that there was a fire right outside the school grounds where the students were playing. So, one of the first things Cherry asked for was to raise the outside wall to about eight feet.

"We raised the wall so the playground would be safer for the kids," the Bolivar, Tenn., native

said. "Everything we've done is based upon what the head mistress told us she needed."

Aside from the wall, contractors also repainted the entire school, added new furniture, put in a new generator and made many other repairs.

"I'm surprised they got all the work done in three months, and I'm very happy with the work they've done," he added.

Qadisiyah NAC president, Raied Khaled, and the deputy, Mohammed Jalal, were on hand to cut the ribbon during the ceremony.

"I am happy that we were able to work with the Coalition Forces in making this school better for the teachers and students," Khaled told the attendees.

Cherry credited the NAC members for their work on making sure the school was suitable for the children and faculty.

"It's been a great partnership with these great people who care so much about Qadisiyah. This is a beautiful place. I'm glad we could be a part of a beautiful place with great people," Cherry said. After the ceremony, the NAC and 3-82 FA Soldiers passed out backpacks for all the children.



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

Bolivar, Tenn., native, Capt. Donald Cherry, commander of Battery A, 3rd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, gives a backpack to a student during the Al Hamza Elementary School re-opening in central Baghdad's Qadisiyah neighborhood Oct. 22.



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

A policeman with the 1st Battalion, 5th Brigade, 2nd National Police Division, celebrates victory over the 2nd Battalion soccer team after a championship soccer game while at the National Police Academy in Numaniyah, Iraq, Oct. 21.

National Police Battalion Claims Small Victory While Training at Police Academy

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

NUMANIYAH, Iraq – When the Iraqi soccer team claimed the Asian Cup Championship earlier this year, the entire country rejoiced in their victory. It served as a small symbol of victory that encompassed all sects of people and brought them together, if only for a moment.

During their month-long rotation through the National Police Academy, the policemen from the 5th Brigade, 2nd Iraqi National Police Division, celebrated a similar victory after holding a small soccer tournament Oct. 18 to 21.

Policemen from all three battalions and the headquarters element of the brigade selected the best volunteers to serve as players on their teams. They squared off in a single-elimination tournament for the highly-coveted commander's cup and bragging rights that would hopefully give them motivation as they go into the third week of training.

So far, the policemen have completed about two-thirds of their training at the academy. The soccer tournament was a break from the classroom instruction and the heart-pounding exercises they've been performing.

"This was just a great way for the guys to come out here and blow off some steam," said Secaucus, N.J., native Staff Sgt. Josh Hammerstone. "This is the only time in their lives that they can have fun like this. Every day in Baghdad is life or death."

The soccer tournament was the idea of the brigade commander. He wanted his policemen to have a little break from the high-stress training and also build a better team in the

process.

During the championship game between the 1st and 2nd Battalion teams, the action started early when the 1st Battalion scored early in the first half. After a small celebration from their cheering section, the game resumed. The early score by the 1st Battalion proved to be the game-winner with the final score 1-0.

After the tournament, the training went back to its normal schedule. The policemen still have about two weeks to go until their final training exercise – which encompasses all the training they've had during their stay here and then a graduation ceremony.

The soccer tournament wasn't the only thing policemen have to compete for. At the end of the rotation there will be awards for best-overall policeman, best company and best barracks.

So far, they have received instruction on crime scene analysis, cordon operations, checkpoint operations and much more during their stay for what will be the last rotation of semi-trained policemen at the academy.

Soon the academy will turn to training fresh recruits, those new to paramilitary operations and without any experience on the streets whatsoever.

While the 1st Battalion celebrated, there wasn't a sad face in the 2nd Battalion crowd to be seen. They seemed to know that although they'd lost the soccer game, the real fight needing to be won was on the streets of their capital.

"The football was fun," said one policeman. "But we have to go back to Baghdad and go back to work soon. We'll celebrate victory when our streets are truly safe."



Tennessee Community Donates Soccer Equipment to Harthia School Children

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

BAGHDAD – After hearing a presentation from a Tennessee National Guardsman who had recently returned from Iraq about how the future of the country will be in the hands of its children, Richard Kolasheski and others at the American Legion Post 256 in Loudon, Tenn. came away with a new idea for helping Soldiers fighting overseas.

Kolasheski, a retired Army colonel, had taken part in a donation drive for Soldiers about a year earlier, and he wanted to do something similar, but this time with the focus being on young, Iraqi children.

"A lot of people asked, 'why are you sending things to Iraqi kids?'" he explained about the questions they received when they first started pitching the idea to other people and organizations. "Based on things the National Guard representative said, we did this with the thought of winning the hearts and minds. We wanted the kids to see that there's a human side to us, and that Soldiers are interested in kids. Help GI's win the hearts and minds and get home sooner is what we told people."

Instead of accepting donated goods, Kolasheski said they thought raising money and then buying school supplies in bulk would be much more economical, and so the American Legion Post 256, along with assistance from the local Lions Club, Rotary Club, Kiwanis and the Tellico Village Community Church began raising funds for the project in January.

"Our idea was that \$25 would support one kid, and most people we approached were willing to support at least one kid," he explained.

While raising money was the focus, they soon received a generous donation of soccer



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

Sgt. Heather Buck with Forward Support Company D, 4th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, directs the downloading of pallets filled with backpacks, soccer balls, soccer jerseys and school supplies, which were handed out to the students of Harthia Primary School in central Baghdad Oct. 23.

equipment that they couldn't pass up.

American Soccer Incorporated, which is owned by a friend of one of the Legionnaires, donated 1,000 backpacks, 1,000 soccer balls and 5,000 soccer jerseys, and all of a sudden the focus of the campaign to raise money to buy goods for Iraqi school children switched to raising money to ship all of this soccer equipment.

They eventually raised \$27,000, which gave them not only the money to pay for the

shipment of thousands of pounds of equipment, but also to accomplish their original plan of buying and donating school supplies.

Everything was sent at the end of June in two shipments: one going to Kolasheski's son, who is a battalion commander with 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, and the other going to his son-in-law, Maj. Christopher Norrie's, unit, 4th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division.

Norrie, who is originally from Barton, Vt., said that once the donated items were on their way, the only thing left to do was select a school to distribute them at, and so the squadron's leadership approached the local Iraqi leaders in their area of operations and decided on donating the items to the students at Harthia Primary School.

"They picked that particular school because those are probably the most impoverished children in our area of operations and they don't have a lot to look forward to," he said.

So with everything set, the soccer equipment and school supplies were delivered by Soldiers from Company E, 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, which is attached to 4-9 Cav.; D, Forward Support Company, 4-9 Cav.; and the 4th Battalion, 5th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, Oct. 23. The Soldiers went from classroom to classroom, first handing out the backpacks and then the soccer balls and jerseys to the schools' 570 students, who range in age from six to 12.

"The students are very happy to get this

backpacks and it brings smiles to their faces," the school's headmaster, Faten Shehab Ahmed.

She said that the teachers were just as happy to receive the school supplies as the kids were to receive the soccer equipment, and that she hopes to continue her school's partnership with the Coalition Forces.

Norrie said that the day after the backpack drop, leaders in Harthia continued to call the squadron to thank them for the donations; however, Norrie was quick to note that the real thanks should be directed toward the residents of Loudon, Tenn. who made this event possible.

"To sit there with an idea, and then translate that idea into what it became, is something requires a lot of talent, a lot of effort, a lot of hard work and dedication, and there's a whole group of folks back there who put all of that together," he said. "I feel particularly humbled to know those kinds of folks and to be associated with those kinds of folks, and then also so very, very proud of our country and who we are as Americans."

"To know that, not having been asked, and not needing to do it, a group of citizens back in the United States, raised their hands and said I would love to help and they did everything that they could to do just that over the last few months, and it was a pretty wonderful way to help. And I think everyone of those kids experienced an event yesterday that they'll remember for the rest of their lives."



1st Lt. Chris Gallion, a platoon leader with Company E, 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, passes out soccer balls to children at the Harthia Primary School in central Baghdad's Kindi neighborhood Oct. 23. Gallion's unit operates in central Baghdad attached to the 4th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division.

Coffee Connoisseur Fuels 15th BSB Soldiers

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE PROSPERITY, Iraq – “Anybody can take grounds and put them in a coffee pot and make a pot of coffee,” explained Chief Warrant Officer Tilden Morgan, as he prepares a shot of espresso at his office at FOB Prosperity, “but anybody who knows anything about the taste of coffee knows that espresso has a distinct flavor.”

For the past year, Morgan, an electronic missile system technician with the 15th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, has been keeping his office mates fueled with daily cups of cappuccinos, mochas and every other type of gourmet coffee imaginable.

“He’s basically kept us afloat and alive and kept our hearts beating,” joked Chief Warrant Officer Mark Rademacher. “If it wasn’t for him and his little concoctions over there, we’d probably be floundering or yawning or just passed out on a desk.”

Morgan, who is originally from Seaside, Calif., is not just a coffee connoisseur who enjoys sharing his passion, he and his wife, Keela, have owned Java Jolt, a drive-thru coffee shop near Fort Hood, Texas, for the last 14 months.

He said they bought the store in anticipation of his upcoming retirement, and they already have big plans for its future.

“As soon as I get back, I start my retirement, and we’ve decided to expand the business after I retire,” he said. “I’ve recently acquired a mobile espresso unit. It’s a completely enclosed coffee shop on wheels; so I’ll be hitting all the local weekend events.”

Morgan said that even though his current deployment has kept him, “out of the game,” for the past year, having an espresso machine in his office lets him continue to experiment



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

Chief Warrant Officer Tilden Morgan, an electronic missile systems technician with the 15th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, prepares a shot of espresso at his office at Forward Operating Base Prosperity in central Baghdad.

with new flavors to add to his menu.

“You’ve got hundreds of different coffee syrups available, and it’s just basically trial and error,” he said. “I sometimes think of a candy bar that I like, and you mix a little bit of almond with a little bit of coconut and you’ve got an Almond Joy. You mix a little bit of caramel syrup with hazelnut syrup and chocolate syrup and you come up with a Snickers bar. It’s just limitless the different flavors that you can come up with.”

Morgan’s latest concoction, while still in the works, already has a name: The Black Jack.

“I haven’t decided what the main flavors are going to be yet, but it’s going to be something that the 2nd BCT Soldiers can come to the shop and ask for by name,” he said.

While his fellow coworkers often serve as a testing group for his newest flavors, they

are not the only Soldiers on the FOB benefiting from Morgan’s association with the coffee industry.

Morgan has partnered with his distributor, Amy Watson of Texas Coffee Traders, to offer free samples of coffee, which are made available to any Soldier inside the dining facility. Since he started offering the samples about five months ago, Morgan said that more than 150 pounds of coffee has been donated, and said that he has received a lot of great feedback from the Soldiers who tried the various samples.

“We try to mix up the different regions of coffee we offer,” he said. “For the Soldiers keeping track, they can actually differentiate between the taste of a Columbian bean and an Ethiopian bean.”

Morgan said that while it has been great

being able to share his love of coffee with his fellow Soldiers while in Iraq, he is looking forward to returning to Fort Hood and focusing on expanding his business.

Not only is Morgan going to offer a mobile coffee service and catering services, but within five years he also plans to open a roaster in the Killeen area, as well as start offering repair services for coffee equipment to other vendors in the area.

Ultimately, Morgan said that he hopes to leave a successful business that his 17-year-old daughter, Tiara, can one day take over.

“I want to leave her a conglomeration with a couple trucks, a warehouse to roast coffee and technicians to service the coffee machines in and around the Bell County area,” he said.

He said that none of the things he has accomplished would be possible without his experiences in the Army.

“The Army has been good to me for 20 years,” Morgan said. “It’s because of the Army that I’ve acquired the skills necessary in order to do what I’m doing now, and that’s manage, which has led into the entrepreneurial aspects.”

“The military can be a good stepping stone. There are skills that you probably don’t even realize you’re acquiring just from the mere fact that you’re, one, in the military, and two, you’re in a battle zone. Whatever those skills are, there something that if you use them to your advantage, they can benefit you sometime down the road.”

Morgan said that once he retires, he hopes that through his business he can give something back to the military.

“I’m still going to be here to support the troops 100 percent with whatever I can,” he said. “A lot of local businesses say they support Soldiers, but very few of them can also say that they’ve served with Soldiers - I know what it is to be here.”

Top Noncommissioned Officer in Iraq Helps Induct New NCOs

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE PROSPERITY, Iraq – During a Soldiers’ career the promotion from specialist to sergeant is one of the most significant ones he or she will earn.

This is the first step that most Soldiers take in their progression toward leadership, and to signify this important step the 15th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division conducted a Noncommissioned Officer Corps induction ceremony to recognize all of its Soldiers who have been promoted to sergeant during the unit’s current deployment to Iraq.

“By becoming a noncommissioned officer each of you is doing more than simply pinning on stripes,” Command Sgt. Maj. Marvin Hill, the top NCO for Multi-National Force – Iraq, told the group of young sergeants. “Beyond that outward sign of transformation, you are internally transforming, as well.”

“You are accepting new responsibilities and new privileges – ones that have been part of our Army for 232 years. As our creed implies, your entire life – your entire way of life, has changed.”

Hill was the guest speaker at the ceremony, and offered the Soldiers what he called “golden nuggets,” of advice, particularly concerning their increased role in upholding the



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

Sgt. David Martinez, prepares to step through the arches signifying his entrance into the Noncommissioned Officer Corps during the 15th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division's NCO induction ceremony at Forward Operating Base Prosperity in central Baghdad Oct. 19.

Army’s standards.

“More will be expected of you and more will be demanded of you,” he said. “You now become our Army’s newest standard bearers and standard enforcers.”

A history of the NCO rites of passage was presented to

the Soldiers, and then one by one, the 23 sergeants passed through a wooden arch, signifying their entrance into the ranks of the NCO.

“Honestly I didn’t know what to expect,” Sgt. Tyler Jensen, a nuclear, biological and chemical specialist with Co. A, said afterward. “It was very professional, very formal, and like I said I was just pleased to be a part of it.”

Jensen, who is originally from Garden City, Kan., was promoted to sergeant April 1.

According to Sgt. Shelby Silva, who was promoted July 1, the progression from specialist was, at first, “nerve-wracking,” but she was able to quickly adjust to her new role.

“The big difference is now you have to take responsibility for all the people under you,” the Pinckneyville, Ill. native, who is a medic with Co. C, said. “When they mess up, you’re the one getting yelled at, and then you have to talk to them and let them know what they did wrong.”

“You have to always be on top of your game because otherwise if you try to correct someone they’re not going to listen to you if you’re jacked up.”

Hill told the Soldiers that though their new responsibilities may be challenging, the honor that comes with being an NCO is well worth it.

“You should not be daunted by what lies ahead of you,” Hill said. “Instead you should be excited and honored by the increased responsibilities.”

Cav Hosts Historic Launch Held at Camp Taji

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

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – The residents of Camp Taji, Iraq, are exposed to an incessant buzzing – a sound of safety for the troops on the ground in Multi-National Division-Baghdad area of operations.

And the source of all this racket? Well, it's none other than the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division's, unmanned aerial vehicle launch site.

The Soldiers of Company E, 615th Aviation Support "Cold Steel" Battalion, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. have been working day and night, pushing the limits of their equipment, to ensure the troops on the ground in Baghdad have an extra set of eyes overhead – setting records in the process, said 1st Sgt. Joseph Bell, the senior noncommissioned officer for Co. E.

"We have recently passed 30,000 flight hours which is almost double what (the previous unit) flew," said Bell who hails from Jacksonville, Fla. "Our goal was to actually reach 25,000 (flight hours), but then we passed that. We just keep pushing the envelope."

Pushing the envelope is now the standard for Co. E, which covers seven brigades within the MND-B area of operations – along with whoever else happens to be rolling through the area, said Bell.

Exceeding their goal has had a positive effect on morale throughout the ranks.

"I'm excited because I feel I'm apart of a team. I feel like I helped contribute to make those numbers where they are," said Galveston, Texas, native Sgt. Christopher Willis, a UAV crew chief and technical inspector for Co. E.

"That number is outstanding; everyone is going to try to duplicate that," said Willis.

Along with being a part of a team that has set the standard for UAV operations, Willis also got to be a part of history when he let Iraqi Lt. Gen. Abud Qanbar, commanding general of Baghdad Operational Command, launch his aircraft, Oct. 14. He was not only the first Iraqi general to launch a UAV, but the first-ever Iraqi to do so, said Bell.

"We would like to see more of our Iraqi counterparts



(Photo by Master Sgt. Winston Churchill, 1st ACB)

A crowd looks on as they watch the first-ever launch of an unmanned aerial vehicle by an Iraqi. Iraqi Army Lt. Gen. Abud Qanbar, the commanding general of Baghdad Operational Command, launched the Shadow UAV during his visit with the leaders of the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Oct. 14 at Camp Taji, Iraq. The UAV unit, Company E, 615th Aviation Support "Cold Steel" Battalion, covers all of the Multi-National Division-Baghdad area of operations.

come and actually see what we're doing to help them out," Bell said. After giving a quick briefing about the procedures Willis handed over the controls to Abud.

"I was excited that he got the opportunity to launch an aircraft. I just made history; I'm a part of history," Willis said with a big smile.

Letting Abud launch his aircraft was a big deal for Willis. Not only because he made history, but because that aircraft is his "baby."

He said he doesn't let just anyone touch it. He is with it

from launch to recovery.

"When it's on the launcher, we go around it two or three times just in case because you can forget something the first time around," said Willis. "So we take this job very seriously and make sure that we get that airplane up."

With all numbers and accolades aside, Co. E work hard for a singular reason, said Willis.

"I honestly like what I do ... I like the positive feedback from launching every aircraft, because I know that we're getting eyes in the sky for those guys on the ground," said Willis.

Rock 'n Coffee at Camp Taji

Fargo, N.D., native Sgt. Adrienn Falk, a personnel clerk for the 1st Air Cavalry "Warrior" Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, belts out 90s rock music during "Open Mic Night" at the Mud House coffee shop at Camp Taji, Iraq Oct. 19. On the instruments from left to right are: on guitar, Batavia, Ill., native 1st Lt. Craig Falk, a platoon leader for Company E, 2nd "Lobo" Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment; on bass, Stowe, Vt., native Chief Warrant Officer 2 Pat Riordan, a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter pilot for Co. C, 3rd "Spearhead" Battalion, 227th Avn. Regt.; and on drums, San Jose, Calif., native Sgt. 1st Class Robert Martinez, a platoon sergeant for Co. D, 3-227th.



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



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

No Wax, Please

Philadelphia native Spc. Colin Gwilliam, an AH-64D Apache attack helicopter crew chief for Company A, 1st "Attack" Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, washes an Apache with a pressure hose on the flight line at Camp Taji, Iraq, Oct. 24. The wash down is a scheduled maintenance task, one of many that the crew chiefs perform to keep the Apaches flying at their optimum performance.

Warrior Brigade Holds 100th Video Teleconference at Taji

By 2nd Lt. David Seiden
1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – When Soldiers deployed to Kuwait for Operation Desert Storm, opportunities to contact the home front were extremely limited.

This was the era before cell phones and high-speed internet.

Communication technology consisted of hand-crank phones and Soldiers found themselves in this far-flung region, far away from familiar faces.

With the advent of Joint-Network Node technology, Soldiers may now participate in state-of-the-art Video Teleconferences that connect them to their families back home. These technologically-advanced capabilities far exceed those of the 20th Century war fighter.

Currently, Service members may conveniently meet face-to-face with wives, husbands, and other family members live via satellite, said Lockhart, Texas native Sgt. 1st Class Jerry Basey, JNN platoon leader, Company C, 615th Aviation Support "Cold Steel" Battalion.

The 615th ASB, 1st Air Cavalry "Warrior" Brigade, reached a milestone on Oct. 13, with its 100th VTC at Camp Taji. The event was a crowning achievement in the history of the Warrior Brigade.

Traverse City, Mich., native Colonel



(Photo by 2nd Lt. David Seiden, 615th ASB)

Col. Dan Shanahan (right), commander of 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, presents coins to Spc. Davide Emerson and Pfc. Dameion Maxey for their efforts in operating the 100th video teleconference for the brigade during its deployment to Iraq. Maxey and Emerson are from Company C, 615th Aviation Support "Cold Steel" Battalion, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div.

Dan Shanahan, the brigade commander, was the chairperson for the 100th VTC.

"You are doing great, important work and we appreciate your efforts for these VTCs," Shanahan said of the efforts of the

Soldiers, from Co. C who run the JNN.

After making remarks to Co. C Soldiers, Shanahan recognized Spc. David Emerson, from Knoxville, Tenn., and Pfc. Dameion Maxey, from Dallas, with commander's

coins.

The teleconferences enhance command capabilities by allowing commanders face-to-face communication in real time over secure lines. Nearly 300 hours, many late into the evening hours, have been logged by Co. C for VTC operations.

Sixty-four Family Readiness Group teleconferences have been facilitated by the Soldiers of 1st Platoon since their deployment to Camp Taji in October 2006. Spearheading these duties was the section sergeant for the Enhanced Position-Location Reporting System Network Manager, Staff Sgt. Thomas Childers, who calls Chattanooga, Tenn., home.

The teleconferences also have connected Soldiers to their children's high school graduations in cities in Texas, including Copperas Cove and Nolanville.

One of the more emotional teleconferences captured a high school graduation in Killeen, Texas.

Atlanta native Spc. Travis Cantrell was one of the Soldiers who made the teleconference possible.

"Students who were graduating could see school banners, hats, and t-shirts set up in our conference room over VTC," Cantrell said. "At the end, there was private time for family members to talk. It was good because ... it gave them a chance to witness their kids growing up."

'Bushmasters' Settled into East Baghdad Outpost

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

KAMILIYAH, Iraq – "Welcome to EFP Airways," Staff Sgt. Howard Weitzmann, the weapons squad leader with 1st Platoon, Company B "Bushmasters," 2nd "Ranger" Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment, said as the patrol left Forward Operating Base Rustamiyah in southeastern Baghdad.

The patrol would be heading into one of the roughest parts of the city, known for numerous explosively-formed penetrators targeting Coalition and Iraqi forces, to replace a platoon at Coalition Outpost Bushmaster.

Zigzagging through the bustling city avoiding traffic jams, the platoon was forced to come to a halt only once that trip – traffic outside the local Iraqi Police station was in gridlock as thousands of military-aged men awaited the chance to enter and apply for a job.

"Only about 50 or so will be chosen to go inside," Weitzmann, the 32-year-old Patillion, Neb., native said as the throng of jobless men began rushing together like high school American boys eager to watch a fistfight.

About the same time, an American unit entered the IP compound and Weitzmann's patrol began moving again.

Entering the small town of Kamiliyah, the patrol was welcomed by many children waving and giving "thumbs-up" signs as the lumbering humvees ambled their way through the narrow litter strewn streets slowly avoiding suspicious piles of debris and the omnipresent overflowing open-air sewage trenches.

Though the troops have been up and down these streets tens, if not hundreds, of times since May when they began manning the COP, the Iraqi children seemed to pay a keen interest in the Americans. At one point, a little girl and her sister passed the convoy multiple times as it halted briefly before beginning its journey.

COP Bushmaster

Ultimately, the "EFP Airways" flight had been quiet and the sights of the smiling and cheerful children refreshing. The patrol entered COP Bushmaster will little fanfare except for the smiling faces of fellow Soldiers eager that 1st Platoon had come to relieve them.

Nestled near the town's industrial complex, camouflage netting and concertina wire signals the quiet presence of the COP. Home to at least two platoons for almost a week at a time, the two-story building is the base of operations for the Bushmasters, attached to the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division operating in eastern Baghdad out of at Forward Operating Base Loyalty.

The unit's parent brigade, the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division from Fort Riley, Kan., is operating out of Forward Operating Base Falcon, in the Rashid District on the south side of the Iraqi capital.

A quiet complex, that has grown quieter yet since Moqtada Al-Sadr called for a six-month cease-fire in August, has the basic needs a Soldier could ask for with few exceptions.

There are hot meals twice a day, Internet access, telephones, satellite television, a full-sized gym with free weights and wrestling mats for the Soldiers to unwind after a mission outside the relative safety of the COP's wire.

But, with all the modern amenities the COP has, the lone shower consists of a refillable bag attached to a low ceiling allowing a single Soldier a cramped chance to wash off a mission's grime. Then there are the six wooden latrines, where the contents were pulled out in barrels and with a touch of diesel fuel put to the torch.

Despite conditions that make "Fobbits" cry foul, the Bushmasters to a man stoically agreed they would take COP-life over FOB-life any day. In an era where there is no rear echelon, "Fobbits" are what Soldiers who routinely pound the Iraqi landscape call those who stay on the FOBs.

"It's not that bad," said Spc. Jonathan Turek, a gunner from Houston, slowly smoking a cigarette. "It could be a



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

Staff Sgt. Lucas Horn, an infantryman from Portland, Ore., assigned to Company B, 2nd Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, and attached to the 2nd BCT, 2nd Inf. Div., stands guard at the entrance to the Kamiliyah Neighborhood Council Hall Oct. 11.

whole lot worse."

The truck commander of his vehicle agreed.

"It's much better than staying on the FOB and making that trip twice a day," said Cpl. Jacob Price, an red-haired, boyish-looking 21-year-old from Eureka, Calif. The smoke from the duo's cigarettes wafted into the air as they spoke a quiet resolve in their faces.

During the first months at the COP, the Bushmasters had to withstand triple-digit temperatures while their air conditioning and electric generators sputtered and died. They said they lost at least ten AC units in the first month alone.

On Sept. 29, their platoon sergeant, Sgt. 1st Class James Doster was killed by an improvised explosive device traveling the stretch of road the patrol had just traversed.

"We are rolling with the ball," said Staff Sgt. Jose Vera, a 26-year-old infantryman from Philadelphia. "That is what Doster would want us to do. We are doing the same things as before."

Though solemn in their resolve, the air is ripped apart with laughter around the same time each day. One of things that makes the Soldiers laugh heartily are the re-runs of America's Funniest Home Videos shown on Saudi Arabian television.

With the laughter is the clanking of weights as the Bushmasters strengthen their sinews before their next mission.

A meeting and a night's rest

Soon the Bushmasters would be back on the streets making their presence known to those whom they are there to protect – the Iraqi people.

A few hours after its arrival, 1st Platoon was once again cautiously driving through town, this time to the Kamiliyah Neighborhood Council Hall where Capt. Jermaine Hampton was scheduled to meet with the council chairman about current issues affecting the village.

"Looks like it will be a long meeting," said 1st Lt.

Edward Boland, 1st Platoon's platoon leader as he stood guarding the front door of the bustling hall. Four sheiks in traditional dress had entered the complex, where locals arrive for everything from medical care to resolving business issues.

The troops had fanned out in their humvees outside the complex walls, while others went inside for added protection.

"There is a convoy approaching," crackled a voice on Boland's radio.

Boland said "Ranger 6," or Lt. Col. Ralph Kauzlarich, the 2-16th's commander was arriving for face-to-face talks with the sheiks.

Inside the large, well air-conditioned room on the second floor, Kauzlarich and Hampton sat across from the sheiks with the chairman sitting behind his desk under an Iraqi flag between the two as if a moderating a political debate.

After initial pleasantries, Kauzlarich told the sheiks bluntly, "We have captured these three individuals. They are bad men ... We have had numerous people tell us they were bad."

The tribal elders listened intently and asked small questions, but to a man they nodded in agreement when Kauzlarich said a contractor scheduled to do work in the town was fired because he failed to work in a manner timely enough to help their people.

Downstairs, children, amused by the heavily-armed Americans, began to congregate at the gate straining to get a glimpse or even maybe a treat from the strangers.

Soon the meeting would end, and the sweat-drenched Soldiers were on their way back to their base for much needed rest and some hot chow.

As the sun began to sink into the dust on the horizon, the Soldiers found out why the meeting took as long as it did – there would be no night mission that evening, allowing the sheiks to maintain order over their people.

Bushmasters Prowl Kamiliyah's Streets

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

BAGHDAD – The morning started like any summer day at a beach town in Southern California – warm and overcast. It wouldn't be until afternoon when the heat of the sun would scorch the clouds away.

But there wasn't going to be any frolicking in the surf today. Instead, the Soldiers of Company B "Bushmasters," 2nd Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment would be patrolling the increasingly calm yet dangerous streets of this small neighborhood, called Kamiliyah, in a southern section of the Iraqi capital Oct. 11.

After an unexpected reprieve from a mission the previous night, the Bushmasters of 1st Platoon were ready and ventured out into the quiet town for a two-fold mission: check the town's water supply and check the industrial area for a reported weapons cache.

"We don't get blown up or shot at that much anymore," said Cpl. Jacob Price, an infantryman from Eureka, Calif. "The sheiks are starting to rein in their people."

Even through the eerie calm, the Bushmasters will uncoil and show the people they are still there through various day and night patrols.

Four corners and a dry hole
Staff Sgt. Adam Schumann, the 1st Squad leader from Minot, N.D., led the platoon straight out of the semi-comforts of Forward Operating Base Bushmaster down a road more than a half mile and then stopped and dismounted near a school.

As the day before, the children began to gather to get a glimpse of the heavily-armed Americans bottled up in heavy armored vehicles or to possibly be the beneficiary of a Soldier's good will.

Schumann entered the school to take a sample of the water in the area. Water samples were being taken at various points around the perimeter of town to judge the health of its water supply.

The convoy stopped a few more times to

take other samples and eventually tested in a residential area.

"Look for a house with running water," Schumann ordered through the radio as Price, Pfc. Scott Francis Scutari, a 31-year-old infantryman from Long Island, N.Y., and others began testing the locks on nearby courtyards for entry.

Politely the Soldiers wrapped on a front door and patiently waited until a mother and child opened the door.

"Salaam Alakum," Scutari said the Iraqi greeting with a smile to the mother and child, who returned the smile and quietly stepped aside as the Bushmasters stealthily searched the house.

"This one has running water," a Soldier called out somewhere in the house and after doing a cursory check of the residence the troops left as quickly as they arrived.

The next part of the mission would last a bit longer.

The sun had burned off the haze as 1st Platoon drove around mountains of scraps that in another time and place may have been considered abstract art; near ramshackle tan brick walls with rusted. They parked and began searching for what intelligence said could be a sizeable cache of weapons. If it wasn't for dogs barking and new locks on the doors the place would seem deserted.

"We went looking for 30 to 300 107mm rockets," Price said afterwards. "It's a little easier to find something like that – there are not a lot of places you that can hide it."

Armed with bolt cutters, the troops began a methodical clearing of the industrial block with knock on each door then if no answer the locks would be destroyed and the troops entered.

Building after building the Bushmaster searched in vain for the cache.

The troops kept searching even though most of the near empty buildings didn't have the space to conceal a sizeable cache. But they did find Iraqis working hard either packaging dates or powder coating hot water heaters who barely acknowledged the



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

Cpl. Jacob Price, an infantryman with 1st Platoon, Company B, 2nd Battalion 16th Infantry Regiment, peers out a window during clearing operations of the Kamiliyah industrial area in southern Baghdad as his platoon looks for a cache of rockets Oct. 11. The Eureka, Calif., native's unit is part of the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Inf. Div., but is attached to 2nd Brigade, 2nd Inf. Div. during its current deployment.

inspectors and kept working.

"We have been here many times," Price said. "We come here from time to time, but don't always find caches. We go places to show our presence and to let the locals know we are there."

Even though they have been to the complex many times, it doesn't make it any less stressful.

"You are always apprehensive until you finally go in the door," Price said.

With sweat dripping off the brows the temperatures creeping toward 100 degrees Fahrenheit, the platoon methodically neared the end of the mission. But there was still one more shop to inspect.

When Schumann, Price and a few others stepped through the courtyard, they encountered fresh metallic scraps littering the courtyard and a grey-haired old man and his family who smiled at the Americans and shook their hands with an excitement reminiscent of meeting long lost relatives.

The Soldiers gave a cursory look over the man's tin-cutting wares and left as quickly as they arrived.

Ghosts in the darkness

Intelligence arrived that afternoon of a possible high-value target in the vicinity and the Bushmasters began planning a lightning strike to snatch him up.

With the clock striking the first few ticks of Oct. 12, the platoon doused the humvee lights and a squad led by Schumann entered the block on foot.

Like ghosts afraid of the light, the squad stealthily crept from shadow to shadow looking for the house intelligence pointed to: a two-story residence with a yellow gate and a courtyard.

Houselights up and down the block cast an eerie glow as the squad approached. A

few meters before the suspect house, the patrol walked past an empty vehicle on the right side of the road and met a heavy-set Iraqi leaning up against a wall taking in the night sky.

Schumann immediately exchanged pleasantries with him and quickly enlisted his services.

"Do you know where this man lives?" the squad leader asked politely.

No, the man insisted.

"What about this address?" Schumann said showing the man a map. With a slight hand gesture the man indicated it was the first home on the right. As part of the squad searched a house four doors up the road, Schumann and others quickly tested the gate to find it locked.

Three Soldiers scaled the gate and knocked on the door. A middle-aged man answered and quickly went outside to unlock the gate. Soldiers inspected his house and only found the man's identity paperwork. It was the wrong man.

Schumann talked with the man and with a smile and handshake the Soldiers left.

"We had vague intel," Price said later. "People may be upset at other people for what ever reason and reported them."

No matter if it was another dry hole or not, 1st Lt. Edward Boland, a 24-year-old platoon leader from Washington, D.C., said it helped keep his troops sharp.

"It was good practice for the guys," he said. "You might scare some people in the house; it makes them mad, but they see you are going after bad guys."

With daylight still a few hours off, the Soldiers crawled into their bunks and slept until the smell of hot breakfast and preparation for their next mission would wake them up.



Eureka, Calif., native, Cpl. Jacob Price, an infantryman with 1st Platoon, Company B, 2nd Battalion, 16th Infantry, keeps watch as members of his squad check an Iraqi residence in Kamiliyah for running water Oct. 11.



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

Working Together

(Above) Capt. Kevin Wynes, of Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 2nd Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment based out of Vilseck, Germany and currently attached to the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division at Forward Operating Base Falcon in Baghdad, speaks with an Iraqi farmer about inoculating his livestock. The Washington, D.C., native was on hand as Soldiers from the "Cougar" Squadron visited the Five Farms area of the Rashid District in an effort to improve the health of livestock in the area. (Left) An Iraqi farmer and his son attempt to control a sheep so it can be vaccinated. Soldiers assigned to the 2nd Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment based out of Vilseck, Germany and currently assigned to the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, visited the Five Farms area of the Rashid District to improve the health of the livestock there.

Valor Recognized: Soldier Shot, Takes Out Terrorist

Valor

From Page 1

his platoon leader were clearing a room that was, unknown to them, occupied by a terrorist.

The criminal pulled a handgun on McDaniel and fired a single round into his side before McDaniel returned fire, killing him.

For his presence of mind, quick reactions, and actions under fire, the Rapid City, S.D., native was awarded the Army Commendation Medal with "V" Device for Valor during a ceremony at Forward Operating Base Falcon in southern Baghdad, Oct. 26.

For McDaniel, the award was reassurance he did the right thing.

"It let's me know that I did my job how it's supposed to be done. It's a statement saying that this person knew his job and was able to act under pressure.

"I think it's something that other people will strive to do, as well," he said.

As appreciative as he is of receiving the award, the Soldier was not concerned about medals at the time of the incident.

"When I first got shot, I was scared," he recalled. "When I actually figured out I was shot, I thought it was a whole lot more serious. There was just a burning sensation in my side. I thought the round had actually gone into my flesh. I'm really thankful it didn't."

Capt. Jim Keirse, the commander of Co. B, 2-



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

Harker Heights, Texas native Col. Ricky D. Gibbs (left), commander of the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, congratulates Spc. Justin McDaniel, a team leader with Company B, 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division from Rapid City, S.D., on receiving the Army Commendation Medal with Valor at Forward Operating Base Falcon Oct. 26.

12 Inf. from Highland Falls, N.Y., said McDaniel's actions that morning were not a surprise.

"Spc. McDaniel is a well-trained and confident junior leader," he said. "It's comforting knowing we've got high-quality human beings like him out there, positively identifying and neutralizing threats without hesitation."



(U.S. Army photo)

Rapid City, S.D., native Spc. Justin McDaniel, a team leader with Company B, 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division the bruise from a round that struck his side while on a mission in southern Baghdad, Oct. 20. McDaniel has already received the Army Commendation Medal with "V" Device for Valor and has been nominated for a Purple Heart.

Dragon Red Legs Vie to be Best Field Artillery Crew in Top Gun Competition

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

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – For Army field artillery men, commonly referred to as ‘red legs,’ a term adopted during the Civil War when artillery men wore red stripes down the sides of their uniform pant legs, it has been said that there can be few greater accolades than being named “top gun.”

The red legs in M109A6 Paladin howitzer section crews from Batteries A and B of the 1st “Dragon” Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment put their game faces on for their most recent shot at that title during a “Top Gun” competition here Oct. 3 thru 6 and Oct. 8 thru 16.

The “Top Gun” competition recognizes the best Paladin crew based on their knowledge and mastery of their skills on the Paladin through a series of scored events that are evaluated by field artillery senior noncommissioned officers. The events, some of which are timed, include tasks based on basic knowledge and operation of the Paladin.

“This has been a tradition for a long time in field artillery and it’s one of the most significant things we do to build confidence among sections for cohesion and team building,” said Top Gun evaluator Sgt. 1st Class Jamie Crankfield, a battalion master gunner for the 1st Bn., 82nd FA Regt., who hails from Colquitt, Ga. “It gives them something to look forward to and it’s a real morale booster to come out top gun.”

“The normal competition usually lasts a full two weeks at Fort Hood but it’s been abbreviated in country to about a week because our guys are doing real fire missions in support of combat operations,” said Bethlehem, Pa., native Master Sgt. James Alesick, a Dragon operations sergeant who also served as an evaluator during the event. “But it’s all about bragging rights.”

Along with boosting morale and building team cohesion, the event offered the troops the chance to re-certify themselves on the Paladins as well as a chance to hone their skills and receive refresher training, according to Crankfield.

Regardless of who would come out on top in the competition, Command Sgt. Maj. Mike Giles, the Dragons’ most senior noncommissioned officer, who hails from Omaha, Neb., said he has been extremely proud of the Paladin section crews and their successes in firing more than 6,000 rounds in support of combat operations for two brigades in Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom Rotation 06-08.

As most field artillery troopers in Iraq are doing roles that were once normally reserved only for infantrymen to include foot patrols, Giles said the Battery A and B section crews get a rare opportunity to actually do the jobs they enlisted as field artillerymen to do.

“It’s really important to me, because a lot of these kids normally wouldn’t get to shoot a howitzer and they won’t get the opportunity when they get back to the states,” Giles said. “Many of the guys we have who were in Iraq last time didn’t get to shoot Paladins because they were on patrols, at traffic control points, doing guard tower base defense and all that kind of stuff.”

“Since we’ve been here, they’ve gone from being okay to being pretty damn good, and both of these batteries have had a chance to shoot in combat and have equal time on the guns so now it’s time to see who’s the best of the best,” added Giles at the start of the competition.

The phases of top gun

The competition was broken down into four phases. The first phase began each morning with the sections, which are made up of usually four members, taking a written exam that tested their knowledge of the Paladin and its operation

to include such topics as firing, driving and performing maintenance.

Each section member took the test individually with the score for the exam being based off of the section’s average.

Only one crew section competed each day of the competition in a team effort to prove their worth as a Paladin crew and the evaluator’s said they could usually tell who was going to do well in the early phases of the competition.

“With one section going through each day, it gives us the ability to give our full attention to that section and allows us to give them a thorough and proper evaluation,” said Alesick. “The most experienced gun chief knows how to use his crew, and is already prepared for each step most of the time and thinking ahead as to how he’s going to tackle each event.”

“Those are the guys who usually come out on top most of the time, they have a plan and a motivated section,” added Alesick.

The other phases involved such events as disassembling and assembling of the breech mechanism on the Paladin; disassembly and reassembly of the .50 caliber machine gun; preparing the Paladin for movement and occupation of a firing area; a dry fire mission and an emergency mission among many other events.

Some of the events involved the crews doing such things as manually plotting points on a map and driving the Paladin to four different checkpoints.

“Many of these guys haven’t done a land navigation course since training at the Joint Readiness Training Center in Fort Polk, La., so this can be a little challenging,” said Alesick during the competition while emphasizing that the Paladin crews can’t always count on their computers. “It’s important that they can do this manually because you never know when your digital (equipment) may crash. That applies to firing the weapon too, they have to be proficient in doing it both digitally and manually.”

When the firing and movement events ended, phase four which was designed as a morale booster was a little bit of a physical challenge for the crews, according to Crankfield, explaining that the four-man crews must run 100 meters in what is known as the “red legs relay” to pick up five 103-pound, 155 millimeter artillery rounds.

Then they have to run the rounds, without dropping them, back to the Paladin where they must strap the rounds down inside the howitzer—all within a two-minute time-frame.

Crankfield explained that it can be very hard for a four-man crew to get all five rounds at one time without having to make a second trip as well as completing the event in the two minutes allotted.

A final event involved the crew’s attempts to throw five expended primers, which look similar to spent rifle shells, into a bucket that has been placed about 10 meters from them. “The most we’ve seen one person get in the bucket so far is three,” said Alesick.

The crews said they enjoyed the competition.

“I feel outstanding, it’s a wonderful thing because it’s fun for the crews to be able to do this,” said Staff Sgt. Justin Stevenson, a section crew chief from Battery A, who hails from Albuquerque, N.M. after his crew completed the red legs relay. “We accomplished everything we trained to do so I feel really good about that.”

“This is my first time to compete in top gun as a section chief, so the next time I do this I’ll know where to hone my skills so I’ll know what to improve upon,” he added.

There can be only one

After nearly a week since the competition ended, the

waiting was over and the top overall section was announced a day prior to an Oct. 23 ceremony here in which the winners were bestowed the Top Gun title along with Army Achievement Medals, a Paladin muzzle cover with the words “Top Gun” embroidered on it and a Top Gun streamer for their battery’s guidon.

For Detroit native Staff Sgt. William Cannon, a section crew chief for the 2nd platoon of the Dragon battalion’s Battery A, all the glory for the win goes to his Soldiers.

“I’m proud of these guys, they’ve trained hard, putting in long hours and it was good to have the training pay off and for us to come out on top,” said Cannon, whose section calls themselves “8-mile.” “It’s also been a valuable experience for them as they weren’t able to do the training until they got out here to prepare for Top Gun.”

Crankfield said there was definitely something special about Cannon’s crew that put them above all the other crews competing during Top Gun week.

“Overall, their operations and their fire missions were great. You could tell that the chief was dedicated to his training program, you could see how his guys had confidence in themselves,” Crankfield said. “They were the first team to finish the red legs relay within the two minutes and you could see how well the team had planned out their strategy to carry all five rounds down to the Paladin at one time.”

“You could tell how much they wanted it when you saw the physical fitness, endurance and discipline of the section as they put it all on the line to win,” he said.

Out of a possible 565 points, Cannon’s crew scored 500 to take the win.

Soldiers in Cannon’s section said the hard work to take the spot as their battalion’s Top Gun was well worth it.

“I feel good and as though we pulled together as a team from the start,” said Pfc. Jeremy Hunker, a field artilleryman who hails from Fostoria, Ohio. “There were obviously a few minor gripes in the beginning with all the late nights training but we came through the whole competition with no regrets.”

“It’s great anytime you can participate in something like this, because we’re getting to do the job we actually enlisted to do as field artillerymen,” said Sgt. Jason Casebier, a native of Colorado Springs, Colo. “So instead of being gate guards somewhere, we’re actually getting to send rounds down range.”

Leadership in both the 1st “Ironhorse” Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division and 1-82 recognized the efforts of the Paladin crews during Top Gun as well as their performance over the past year.

“Every time the enemy is on the business end of the Paladin they know they’re in trouble and you have been firing in support of the Iraqi people,” said Col. Paul E. Funk II, commander of 1st BCT. “(When you fire) the enemy knows we are here and we mean business. We are not going to let up on the enemy, taking away something from them everyday.”

“You have taken away the enemy’s ability to do any type of concerted fires effort, and this battalion leads all others (in the number of rounds fired this rotation)—and that’s amazing. Being top gun is a pretty damn good thing, be proud of yourselves and finish strong,” Funk added, encouraging his troops to keep their motivation and situational awareness high, continuing their hard work while nearing the end of their deployment.

San Diego native Lt. Col. Martin Clausen, commander, 1st Bn., 82nd FA Regt. echoed many of Funk’s sentiments.

“We saw a lot of motivation and a lot of focus and you have done a tremendous job,” said Clausen in praise of his troopers.



Apple Springs, Texas native, Sgt. Justin Brister from Battery A, 1st Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment—quickly carries a 103-pound, 155 millimeter rounds to his Paladin howitzer during the timed red legs relay portion of the Top Gun competition on Camp Taji, Iraq Oct. 8.



Springfield, Ohio native, Spc. Kenneth Hilt and Winston-Salem, N.C., native, Spc. Stephen Mondy, both M109A6 Paladin howitzer crew members with Battery B, 1st Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, reassemble a .50 caliber machine gun during the Top Gun competition on Camp Taji, Iraq Oct. 3.



Marion, Ohio native Spc. James Davis (left), the number one man on a Battery A, 1st Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment M109A6 Paladin howitzer section crew, checks his manual calculations to ensure his crew fires "steel on target" as Sgt. 1st Class Jamie Crankfield, monitors his progress during a Paladin dry fire event as part of the Top Gun competition at Camp Taji, Iraq Oct. 8.

Medical Aid Provided to Iraqi Families

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

COMBAT OUTPOST COBRA, Iraq — Many residents of the New Baghdad District of eastern Baghdad are too poor to afford medical care, and often it's too risky to try and get to the nearest clinic.

The New Baghdad District Council members teamed up with Soldiers of Company C, 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry, attached to 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, to ensure local residents were seen by physicians and given medicine in a medical operation from Oct. 19 to 20.

Capt. Miguel A. Juarez of Brownville, Texas, commander of Company C, 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry, said both days went well, and that most of those receiving treatment were Sunni even though it was in a Shia area.

Giving care through the clinic in Shuada North, was a way to show people Coalition Forces are here to help, Juarez said. "This is just one thing we're doing here to gain their trust," he said.

On both days, adults and children lined up outside and anxiously awaited to be seen by a Coalition Forces physician. The Iraqi Police kept the crowds in order along with Soldiers in 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment.

Even though some Iraqis and their children had serious illnesses that could not be treated on site, most people that came through received medicines and education on how to improve their health.

Those who had advanced illnesses were given medicine for pain and advised to go to the nearest hospital.

1st Lt. Jamison E. Gaddy, a physician assistant for 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry, said the goal of a medical operation like this is to give care, or to assist the local providers in



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

Pfc. Rebecca Anderson, a native of Crewe, Va., and a medic with Company C, 2nd Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, puts ointment on an Iraqi child's head after he received stitches Oct. 19 in the New Baghdad District of eastern Baghdad.

giving care to the population.

"It went really well," he said.

Everyone was pleased with the outcome and how smoothly the operation ran, Gaddy said.

Gaddy, a native of Camden, Del., said more than 100 people were treated at the school.

"It's a good experience, a positive experience, but at the same time you see how poor the local community is," he said.

Some of the patients Gaddy saw had illnesses that could not be treated on site such as brain tumors, congestive heart failure,

end-stage cancer and even diabetes and hypertension.

"Those are the tough ones to see," he said. "It's really tough here because they can't afford treatment. Or there are limited treatments."

Aside from the incurable ailments, the majority of patients complained of throat pain, nose bleeds and bleeding teeth, which Gaddy said stems from the dry environment. The local populace was given toothbrushes and toothpaste and was educated on how to properly take care of their dental hygiene.

There were also a number of ear infec-

tions, mostly in children. Fevers and upper respiratory infections were also common and the men tended to have gastrointestinal issues.

Pfc. Rebecca Anderson, a medic with Company C, 2nd Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd IBCT, was on site both days to administer help to the physicians and to improve her own medical knowledge.

Anderson, a native of Crewe, Va., said she loves to help children and found great joy in easing their pain or bringing a smile to their face when she handed them a stuffed toy after they were treated.

"The parents were grateful we were doing it for free," she said. "Some kids came in with things we couldn't treat."

Not being able to help someone is one hard part of going the job.

"I wanted to do more, but there's only so much you could do," she said.

The hardest part, Anderson said, was getting past the language barrier when explaining what was wrong with a child. She said medicine is hard to explain to people who speak the same language, and trying to describe a fever to the worried father of a young boy was hard when the description wasn't something he understood.

This was the first time Anderson has left Forward Operating Base Rustamayah to come out into sector to deliver aid.

"I loved it," she said. "They were so appreciative. We help (Soldiers) too, but we're lucky if we get a thank you. As Americans, we have what we need for the most part but it's humbling to help these people. You give them Tylenol to lower a fever and it makes you feel like you make a difference."

When it comes to giving medical treatment, Anderson said she thinks the efforts of Coalition Forces are making a difference.

"I'm glad I came," she said.



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

Ready, Aim, Fire!

Iraqi Police from the 2nd Battalion, 1st Brigade, 11th Iraqi Army Division fire their weapons at a combined training range at Forward Operating Base Volunteer with Soldiers with Company C, 2nd Battalion, 69th Armor Regiment, based out of Fort Benning, Ga., and part of the 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division Oct. 21.

Iraqis, Coalition Forces Work Together to Solve Water Issues

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE LOYALTY, Iraq – Getting potable drinking water to residents of the New Baghdad District of the Iraqi capital was the focus of a meeting here Oct. 22.

Community leaders joined the Soldiers from the 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, to try and hammer out solutions.

The main problem cited was improper connections to the water supply, which leads to water line leakage and breakage, low water pressure and disease.

1st Lt. Joseph Gray of Rochester, N.H., a member of 2nd IBCT's Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team, stressed to attendees that the meeting was "primarily to identify issues and come back with solutions," he said. "Solutions are not about pointing out who is at fault. Nothing has been done to this point, and we are concerned with fixing

the problems."

Mohammed Hader, the District Advisory Council vice president for the area, said tapping into water lines was done mainly by squatters and that it was causing environmental problems. He added that these issues have been raised before but nothing has changed. That led to a discussion about how this time could be different. Possible solutions aired included municipal water delivery, solar-powered filtration systems, personal filtration units, repairing and replacing broken lines and building a water-bottling plant.

Besides the tapping, other issues raised were a lack of spare parts and a shortage of maintenance personnel. An inadequate water distribution network was also discussed.

Coalition Forces have spent almost \$13 million this year on getting potable water to New Baghdad District residents, and possible solutions like those aired at the meeting can further the Coalition and Iraqi goal of getting clean drinking water to the people.

Soldiers Provide Aid to Injured Iraqi

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

COMBAT OUTPOST COBRA, Iraq — When a taxi driver in the Shuada North area of eastern Baghdad was injured in a mortar attack directed by insurgents at Coalition Forces six months ago, his situation may have been hopeless were it not for the efforts of Soldiers in 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry, based out of Fort Hood, Texas but operating in the Iraqi capital attached to 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division.

Soldiers in Company C, 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry have been helping the man and his family for more than six months.

Capt. Miguel A. Juarez, commander of Company C, 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry, said the man would help the Coalition Forces repair water lines that had been ruptured and was friendly when he saw Soldiers.

Juarez, a native of Brownsville, Texas, said after the man was injured he left the area for fear of mortars. But, now that things have quieted down, he has returned and is in need of aid to help feed his family.

"Every now and then we drop off food and water

and clothing for the kids," Juarez said.

The man, his wife and six children are saddled with the burden of unemployment. His taxi was destroyed in the mortar attack and because of his injuries, he will be out of work for some time.

1st Lt. Jamison E. Gaddy, a physician's assistant for 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry, said the man broke his femur and received shrapnel wounds to his leg. The break was bad and due to a poor diet, Gaddy said the man's recovery is going to be slow.

Instead of a cast, doctors inserted an external fixator to the man's leg, which will give his bone support while it's healing.

Company C is providing the man basic supplies, but is also educating the man and his family on how to keep his wounds clean, Gaddy said.

Gaddy, a native of Camden, Del., said Company C brought him out to see the man because he is still in pain after six months.

"I gave him some medicine for the pain," Gaddy said. The man also received multivitamins and calcium tablets.

When doctors set the bone it wasn't aligned 100 percent, which Gaddy said wouldn't have been easy due to the extent of the break. However, due to not being exactly aligned, there is a non-union of the bone and so it's not healing.

"The man's muscles are also weak," Gaddy said. "I wanted to show him exercises he can do to keep the leg muscles. He had a lot of muscle atrophy."

Gaddy said some of his exercise suggestions included walking on crutches at least a few minutes a day and working his legs can also promote bone growth.

"I don't get the impression that he's feeling sorry for himself," Gaddy said. Helping the man was both rewarding and frustrating for Gaddy.

"It's frustrating too because you can't pay to go get his care," he said. "If I could I'd sponsor him to get his \$10 visit."

Gaddy said the Soldiers in Company C are the reason the man and his family have made it this far during his recovery.

"They have been involved in his follow-up care since it happened," Gaddy said. "They have done a lot to take care of that family or else they wouldn't be here."



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

Soldiers with Company A, 1st Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, based out of Fort Bragg, N.C., attached to the 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, prepare to move an Iraqi Security Volunteer into the Fadel Health Clinic in eastern Baghdad Oct. 19.

Paratroopers Aid Volunteers

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE LOYALTY, Iraq – In the battle against insurgents, Iraqi Security Volunteers receive relatively little attention compared to Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces.

But they play a key role in the struggle to bring Iraq back to its former glory. Often unnoticed, they fight and suffer wounds and need treatment. On Oct. 19, Soldiers with Company A, 1st Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, ensured eight security volunteers received medical treatment in the International Zone following a fire-fight with insurgents in early October.

Capt. Mike Semmens, Company A commander, said Iraqi Security Volunteers are roughly analogous to neighborhood watch volunteers in the United States. Semmens, from Colorado Springs, Colo., was on hand when Company A Soldiers transferred the last of the eight wounded volunteers from the 28th Combat Support Hospital in the International Zone to the Fadel Health Clinic in eastern Baghdad on Oct. 19. The victim suffered third-degree burns over 35 percent of his body.

"We're taking him to the Fadel Clinic for follow-up treatment," Semmens said. "He is the last of the eight to be returned to local national care."

According to Semmens, one of the brigade's Iraqi allies had asked for assistance in getting the wounded volunteers treated, and the 2IBCT was happy to oblige.

"This definitely strengthens the bond between Iraqi Security Volunteers and Coalition Forces, and it strengthens reconciliation," Semmens said.

And by getting the volunteers to medical care at a Coalition Force hospital, it stresses to the volunteers that they make vital contributions.

Capt. Diana Jenkins provided part of the patient's care at the 28th CSH. Jenkins, of Spokane, Wash., serves as a critical care staff nurse at the hospital. Jenkins said the patient normally had his burn dressings changed twice a day and that he was making progress. "Burns take so long to heal from, but so far he's doing good," she said. "Our patients don't usually stay very long. We're a trauma hospital and don't usually do long-term care."

Jenkins said the patient still needed treatment, but that he was ready to be transferred to Fadel Health Clinic. At the clinic, Semmens and 2nd Lt. Stephen Abbott of Las Vegas, Nev., a platoon leader with Company A, spoke with the director about the patient in particular and the Fadel situation in general.

Abbott said Al Qaeda in Iraq had temporarily caused disruptions in Fadel, but that Coalition and Iraqi Forces were pushing back. "We worked together and pushed out Al Qaeda in Iraq," he said. "The Iraqi people are taking care of problems in the area. They were relying on Coalition Forces and the Iraqi Army to provide security. Now they are providing security for their homes and families."

"It's part of the reconciliation process," Semmens added. Also, he said, residents are now feeling more secure and know Coalition Forces are there to work for their safety.

"We're happy to help out," Abbott said. "We've built a good relationship with them."



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

1st Lt. Jamison Gaddy, a physician's assistant for 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, helps an injured Iraqi man in the Shuada North area of eastern Baghdad Oct. 18.

Iraqi Emergency Responders Work Together

By Pfc. April Campbell
27th Public Affairs Detachment

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq - Iraqi Security Forces took another step toward self-sufficiency when several Iraqi security elements participated in a civil defense drill in Yarmouk, an area in the Mansour District of western Baghdad, Oct. 20.

Iraqi soldiers from the 2nd Battalion "Falcons", 5th Brigade, 6th Division as well as policemen from three Iraqi police stations and firefighters from the Yarmouk Fire Department planned and executed the drill. The different security elements reacted to two simulated vehicle-borne improvised explosive device explosions in a populated area.

The 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division (Task Force Patriot) along with a Military Transition Team (MiTT) with the 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, helped to coach the different elements.

"We proposed the idea several months ago," said Cape May, N.J., native Lt. Col. Michael J. Lawson, the commander of Task Force Patriot. "Then, the Iraqi Army took the lead in planning the drill along with the Iraqi Police and the local fire department."

While Coalition Forces helped guide the Iraqi Security Forces, the Iraqis were in charge of planning and executing the drill.

"The drill enabled the Iraqis to develop an Iraqi solution to an Iraqi problem," Lawson said. "Reacting to VBIEDs is some-



Members of the Iraqi Police work with soldiers from the Iraqi Army's 2nd Battalion, 5th Brigade, 6th Division to take care of casualty role players during a civil defense drill in Yarmouk, an area in the Mansour District of western Baghdad, Oct. 20.

thing that they will have to be able to do."

The exercise allowed the different response elements to understand each other's roles as well as how they, themselves, fit into the bigger picture.

"The most important gain happened in the area of coordination between all the (security forces)," said Iraqi Army Col. Ali Fadil, commander of the Falcon Battalion. "It is not just the work of (the Falcon Battalion). There is a much bigger force involved in controlling events other than just

the Iraqi Army."

Different sectors of the local police and fire departments will be interacting with the Iraqi Army to coordinate a response to such a terrorist attack, added Fadil.

Emergency response drills, such as this, may also help to increase the quality of life for the citizens of Baghdad. Enabling the different organizations to work together can help them develop a more systematic approach to their emergency planning.

"If (a terrorist attack) happens, (the citi-

zens) can see that the Fire Department will come here and do this, the police will do this, and the Iraqi Army will be doing (its) part," said Woodbridge, Va., native Cpt. Gregory Wooton, MiTT executive officer and civil military officer advisor, 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment. "They'll start seeing who's responsible for what."

Wooton said the Iraqi emergency response agencies can learn to coordinate with each other, and Iraqi citizens can gain confidence in the quality of their civil service agencies.

U.S., Iraqi Leaders Working Together for a Better Ameriya

By Spc. Angel D. Martinez
113th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE HAWK, Iraq - Cooperation is the key to any successful mission, and for one western Baghdad neighborhood of Ameriya the cooperation between forces from U.S., Iraqi and community volunteers is beginning to pay off.

Members of the Fort Hood, Texas-based 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, operating in western Baghdad as part of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, met with members of the 2nd Battalion, 1st Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division and the volunteer group Forsan Al Rafideen (FAR), which is Arabic for "knights of the river," at Forward Operating Base Hawk Oct. 26. The purpose of the meeting was to synchronize their operations and common goals between troops and the volunteers.

FAR is assisting in securing their neighborhood, in collaboration with Iraqi Army and the cavalry troops, said Huntsville, Ala. native, Lt. Col. Dale Kuehl, commander for the 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment. A "gated" community, Ameriya has two major entry points, and they are jointly operated by the three forces.

As the situation in Ameriya improved, Kuehl said he and his Iraqi Security Force counterparts have been able to focus its attention from identifying insurgents to identifying the essential service needs of the community, such as trash collection, electricity and sewer system repair.

"The sewer networks are functional, but they haven't been cleaned in probably a few years," said Palmyra, Pa., native Maj. Chip Daniels, the operations officer for 1-5 Cavalry. "They get clogged up and you get sewage backed up



Leaders from the 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, the Iraqi Army and a local volunteer group known as Forsan Al Rafideen, which is Arabic for "knights of the river," share their common goals and knowledge of the battlefield at a synchronization meeting at Forward Operating Base Hawk in western Baghdad, Oct. 26.

onto the streets."

No immediate project was mentioned about electricity, and trash projects present a tough, but common, obstacle.

"Trash (pick up) is an on-going thing, but quite honestly, we don't have enough money to do that yet," said Kuehl. "It's one of our challenges right now. We don't have enough money to do all the projects."

The people of Ameriya are getting back on their feet, and they have proved how significant the collaboration of the community is with the different forces patrolling the area.

"The community coming forward and providing local citizens to work with us has been essential for us to defeat al-

Qaida," said Kuehl. "We say al-Qaida is defeated in Ameriya now. I couldn't say that for a long time, but now I can say it.

"We have not had an IED (improvised explosive device) attack since Aug. 7," he added. "We could not have done that without the help of the locals."

Another example of the community doing its part is the FAR, a group of local volunteers working as an auxiliary police force.

"In Ameriya, there are no Iraqi police. It has only American Army and Iraqi Army, and they (FAR) help fill the void the police would be," said Daniels. "They'll walk with us and the IA to patrol the neighborhood to maintain security. They are local people, so they know everyone in the neighborhood, which is very helpful."

Although Ameriya seems to be a reasonably quiet place now, this hasn't always been the case.

"Back in May, there was some very heavy fighting going on. This battalion lost 14 Soldiers in the month of May alone," said Daniels. "Now, we haven't had an attack since Aug. 7. That's really because of the cooperation between Iraqi Army and Forsan Al Rafideen."

Through the cooperation of both, U.S. and Iraqi Forces, citizens of Ameriya hope their community will continue to develop its infrastructure and economy.

"By working together, we're able to provide a better sense of security for the people," said Daniels. "That allows the shop owner who couldn't open his shop several months ago because of the violence, to open up his shop now."

Over the course of the next few months U.S., Iraq and FAR will continue working side-by-side, improving the security situation and working toward raising the overall standard of living for the residents of Ameriya.

New Aid Station Honors Fallen Soldier's Memory

By Spc. Angel D. Martinez
113th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq -The Medical Platoon from the 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, 3rd Infantry Division out of Fort Stewart, Ga., is naming a new troop medical clinic here in honor of Staff Sgt. Darren Patrick Hubbell, a combat medic from the same unit, who died during a reconnaissance patrol, June 20.

Hubbell, who was from Jacksonville, Fla., is well remembered and celebrated by his teammates not for how he died, but how he lived.

"He was a good friend to me, and from the time I got into this unit he helped me with anything at anytime," said the Warm Spring, Ga., native, Spc. Ronald Trao, a treatment medic with the Medical Platoon. "He was that kind of guy, very special to all of us."

But Trao is not the only one who felt that way. Sgt. 1st Class Martyn Pauwels, a Melbourne, Fla., native and the medical platoon sergeant said Hubbell was never in a bad mood, and he came a long way as a noncommissioned officer and a medic.

"It's an honor for us to be able to do this for him," said Pauwels, who knew Hubbell for more than two years.

The unit thought that dedicating the construction of the new aid station to Hubbell was the least they could do, and Trao said it took a little more than three weeks to re-build the new aid station on Pad 7.

Alexander City, Ala. native 1st Lt. Michael Jones, the Medical Platoon leader, said the structure used for the aid station was once an aid station, but by the time they got there it was only a tent frame.

"We did so much construction to it that we turned it into what I like to call the 'Taj Mahal' of aid stations," said Jones. The new aid station will not only be used as a medical facil-



(Photo by Spc. Angel D. Martinez, 113th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

Spc. Ronald Trao, a treatment medic with 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, signs a mural he helped paint for the new medical aid station on Camp Liberty in western Baghdad Oct. 14. The new aid station was dedicated in memory of Staff Sgt. Darren Patrick Hubbell, a medic from the unit who died June 20.

ity only, but as a training facility as well.

"We needed a place to train Soldiers," said Pauwels. "Not just CLS (Combat Life Saver Course) for the 'Joes,' but medical training for my guys. I want my Soldiers to say 'I was trained, and know exactly what to do,' and this place will facilitate that for us."

Like most things in the Army, setting up the aid station was a team effort, but the leadership in this unit played an important role.

"Our leadership here is excellent, and they've been very

supportive," said Trao. "They're always trying to better the surroundings, and we all appreciate that."

On a side note, Jones said his unit, in collaboration with medics and nurses from other units and the Iraqi Army, cleaned and set up aid stations in two schools in Baghdad's Jamia neighborhood, enabling them to provide medical support and humanitarian aid to nearly 800 people as part of a good will mission.

"We're out there putting the medical foot forward trying to help the local citizens take care of themselves," said Jones.



(Photo by Spc. Angel D. Martinez, 113th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

Fighting against the heat, an Iraqi girl nurtures her baby sister while their mother stands in line waiting for medical supplies at a school in Baghdad's Bakariya neighborhood Oct. 22. The medical supplies, the nurses, medics and doctors were coordinated by the Iraqi Army in an operation supervised by Coalition Forces.

Iraqi Army Runs 'Solo' Medical Operation

By Spc. Angel D. Martinez
113th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq - There was a long line of black headcovers, children running around unworried, a medical crew ready to take care of their own and military men providing security as Iraqi Army troops turned a school in Baghdad's Bakariya Village into a temporary medical clinic Oct. 22.

Soldiers from the Iraqi Army, 2nd Battalion, 1st Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, conducted the medical operation without any assistance from their U.S. counterparts, making this the first medical operation conducted on their own since they started working with American troops.

"Today was an IA-ran medical operation. They provided the doctors, and all we were doing was overseeing it," said Sgt. 1st Class James Rundberg, a Baltimore, N.Y., native and a scout platoon sergeant for the 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment. "We were helping them out making sure they had security in the site, ensuring that they were searching the people as they were coming in, and making sure that everything was run in an orderly fashion."

Rundberg explained that medical operations are conducted to help people who do not have the economic resources or medical assistance nearby, like hospitals or clinics.

"This right here is a land-mark event," said the New Orleans native Capt. Randy Lavender, a medical platoon leader. "Normally, we would be organizing these ourselves, and we ask the



Iraqi mothers stand in line with their children waiting for medical aid and medicines at a temporary clinic set up at a school in Baghdad's Bakariya Village Oct. 22.

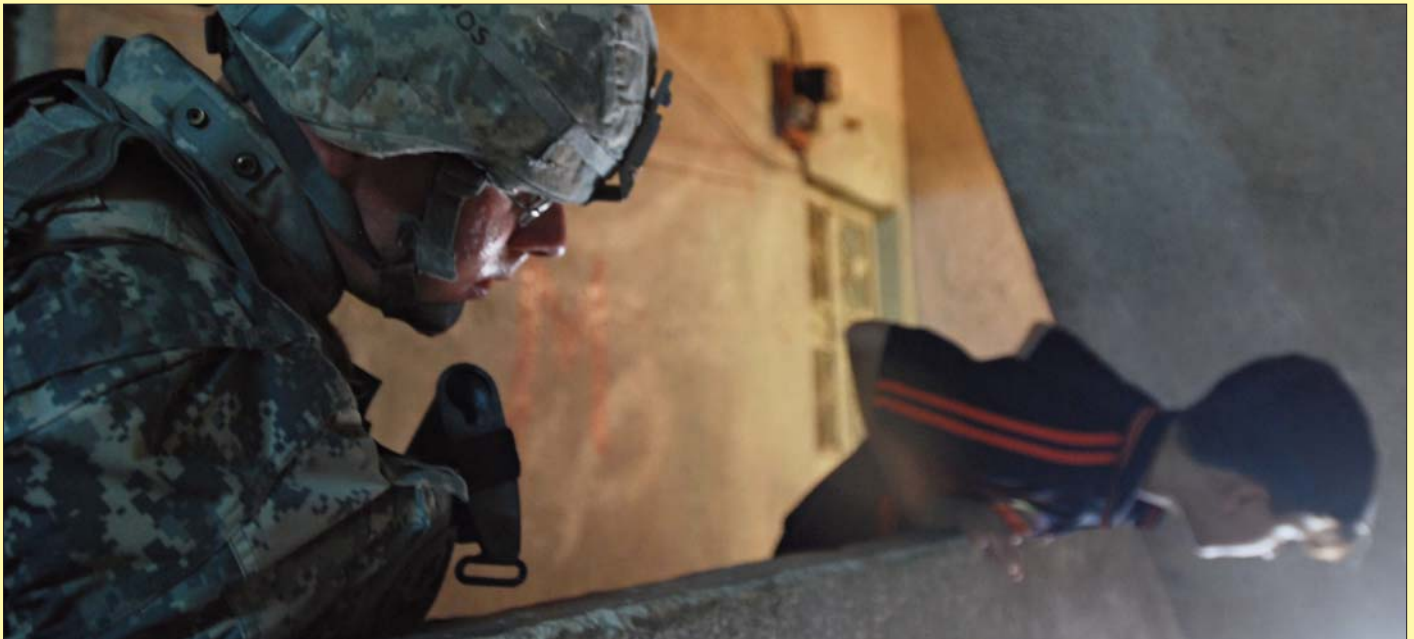
Iraqis for help. But in this case, they came to us. They planned it for themselves, and they wanted this for the people of Bakariya."

Operations like these help build strong relations between the Coalition Forces and the residents.

"When we first got here it was real quiet. People didn't really trust us or even the IA in the area," said Rundberg. "Now, the kids are interacting with us more, even the adults come out and let us know if they have seen or heard anything bad in the area."

The Bakariya Village has enjoyed progress since the Iraqi Army and U.S. troops have been working together in the area.

"Since we've been in that area, they have a market area that has opened up, a soccer field and trash collection areas," said Rundberg.



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

Two Sets of Eyes Better than One

A young Iraqi boy helps Evadale, Texas native Pfc. Matthew Goats, of Headquarters Company, 1st Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, out of Vilseck, Germany, keep watch over a staircase while pulling security during a search of an apartment complex in Baghdad's Adhamiyah District Oct. 15.

Lieutenant Helps Renovate an Orphanage for Iraqi Girls

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

BAGHDAD – The high point of 1st Lt. William Bass' deployment to Iraq so far wasn't a raid or some other combat operation; it was the sight of two little girls playing on a brand new swing set.

It was an important moment for Bass, because it represented the payoff for three months of hard work to improve conditions at the Al Zuhor Girl's Orphanage in Northern Baghdad's Adhamiyah District.

"Seeing that, that was all the gratification I needed right there. It felt really good," Bass said.

Not long ago, the orphanage was falling into disrepair from lack of maintenance and the girls spent their days shuttered inside with no place to play. But thanks to Bass, a fire support officer with Troop C, 3rd "Saber" Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, the Al Zuhor has undergone a \$100,000 facelift turning it into a state-of-the-art facility.

"With these kinds of projects, you get to make a lasting impact," said Bass, a Washington, D.C., native.

The orphanage is currently home to more than 50 girls between the ages of eight and 16 years old. There is also a separate facility for special needs children on the property. Many of the children at the orphanage lost their parents due to the murders, bombings, and other violence that has plagued Baghdad. Others were orphaned by disease, or simply because their parents could no longer take care of them, Bass said.

Now, the orphanage is their home, with a staff filling the role of surrogate parents. The director of the facility, Suda Juwad Al-Khafage, tries to give the children a normal life despite their circumstances. The importance of education is stressed, and all the children attend local schools. Even girls at the facility who reach adulthood are allowed to remain at the orphanage and attend college if they maintain good behavior, Suda said.

But despite the hard work of the staff, the orphanage



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

1st Lt. William Bass (left), a fire support officer with Troop C, 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, out of Fort Stewart, Ga., points out improvements made to the Al Zuhor girl's orphanage in Baghdad's Adhamiyah District during a visit by Multi-National Corps – Iraq commanding general, Lt. Gen. Raymond Odierno (right) Oct. 16.

lacked the funding to keep the grounds and the building in good condition.

When Bass first visited the facility on a routine patrol in July, he noticed that the building was falling apart and there was a barren, trash-filled lot instead of a playground. Talking with Suda, he found that the problems stretched to include even routine matters as preparing dinner for the children. Suda told him she was having difficulty bringing food in after curfew hours.

The next day, Bass returned with bags of rice, beans, sugar, salt and other staples for the staff to prepare meals with. Over the next weeks and months, his involvement grew, to the point where he was planning a complete renovation of the facility. Soon, Bass was up to his neck in paperwork as he dealt with Iraqi government officials, contractors, and the

military appropriations process to find money for the project.

"He really just took the ball and ran with it," said Bass' troop commander, Capt. Ian Claxton from Mount Airy, N.C.

Bass' persistence paid off, and when the renovation was completed in October, the orphanage had a new water irrigation system, a new paint job, a new electrical system, new playground equipment, improved plumbing, and a total facelift to the grounds.

Today, the children can scamper around amid mosaic-tiled walkways, bright murals, new playground equipment, manicured lawns, and street lights that let them play at night. The difference from three months ago is like night and day, Bass said.

When Lt. Gen. Raymond Odierno, the Multi-National Corps – Iraq commander, visited Adhamiyah Oct. 16, the orphanage was one of the sites he was most impressed with. And when Odierno met with Suda to congratulate her, she gave much of the credit for the state of the facility to Bass.

Getting involved to help the less fortunate is nothing new for Bass. He said he has always been involved in volunteer work. Growing up in D.C., he used to spend Thanksgiving volunteering at a soup kitchen, and Christmas handing out gifts to patients in a cancer ward.

So when Bass first saw the state the orphanage was in three months ago, his reaction was immediate.

"When I went down there and saw that those kids were hurting, I wasn't thinking, 'Hey, let me do something to get a good story.' It was 'Let me do this because they need help,'" Bass said.

In the end, Bass said he just hopes his efforts will make a positive difference in the children's lives.

"Kids are like a blank canvas," he said. "No matter where they came from, the interactions they have at the orphanage are going to shape and groom them into the person they are going to become."

"That impact is everlasting, and hopefully these kids will be the future leaders of this country," Bass said.

Punch Back:

Cav Troops Show Zero Tolerance for Attacks in Adhamiyah

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

BAGHDAD – If the people in the Adhamiyah District's Abu Hanifa Market hadn't already heard about the afternoon's grenade attack on a U.S. Soldier, they heard about it when Lt. Col. Jeff Broadwater showed up.

"Who threw the grenade!?" Broadwater shouted, stalking from shop to shop as an Apache gunship circled overhead. "Where are they? Show me where they are and I will take them out of here!"

Not half an hour before, a Soldier from Broadwater's unit, the 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, had been wounded by a grenade thrown at his patrol. Now, in response, Broadwater was bringing the full weight of U.S. military to bear in the hunt for the culprits.

"We're sending a message that attacks will not be tolerated," said Broadwater, a Fort Knox, Ky. native, as dozens of Iraqi and U.S. troops fanned out through the stalls and shops of the market and helicopters continued to buzz through the sky.

It was a show of force with a purpose. In Adhamiyah – a mostly-Sunni neighborhood in eastern Baghdad which until recently was a hotbed of insurgent activity – the 3-7 Cav "Sabers" have made dramatic improvements to the security situation by taking a zero-tolerance approach to attacks.

"Any time there's an attack we do an immediate mass response. We flood the area with as many people as we can," said Staff Sgt. Eric Bull, a section leader with 3-7's Troop C, from Perryville, Ark. "We don't want to give the insurgents time to rest."

"They punch us, we punch back harder," explained Capt. Andrew Steadman, who commands a quick reaction force of Stryker vehicles based in Adhamiyah.

It's a policy that began during the



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

Capt. Andrew Steadman (right), commander of Headquarters Company, 1st Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, questions a local man about attacks on Coalition Forces during a cordon and search in Adhamiyah Oct. 15.

Sabers' first days in the area, when insurgents tried to test the unit's mettle with grenade and rocket-propelled grenade attacks. When they did, they received a ferocious response from the Saber Soldiers, said Roanoke, Va., native Staff Sgt. William Schilling, of Troop B.

Since then, the well of "opportunists" – not hardcore insurgents, but locals willing to shoot a few rounds or lob a grenade at Coalition Forces to earn some quick cash –

has dried up, Schilling said.

Insurgent leaders have been forced to resort to desperate tactics like paying children to do their attacks for them, said Kisimmee, Fla., native Maj. Ike Sallee, the squadron's operations officer. The Sabers recently captured a nine-year-old boy who had been paid to throw a grenade at one of their patrols. (The boy was later returned to his parents.)

Broadwater said the Sabers's tactics have put the insurgents on the ropes, and the numbers seem to back up that claim. There has been a 70 percent overall decline in attacks since the 3-7 took over responsibility for Adhamiyah four months ago, said Sgt. Tim Luna, a squadron intelligence analyst.

When attacks do occur, such as the grenade attack at the market that wounded one Soldier Oct. 15, they are met with an overwhelming response.

Even as the wounded Soldier was being evacuated, Broadwater was ordering scores of Soldiers in humvees and Stryker vehicles to move in to secure the area. Fifteen minutes after the attack, there was a vehicle at every intersection around the market, and dismounted troops had begun searching from building to building.

A few blocks down, Steadman's Stryker company was also in position after responding to the call. Soldiers were everywhere: Taking a knee at the corners, scanning the sector from positions on the roof, trudging up and down narrow flights of stairs inside an apartment complex, and working their way from courtyard to courtyard. Inside the hous-

es they were polite and professional, careful to make as little of a disruption as possible as they searched.

"We don't come in to scare people, it's just to show them our presence and let them know we're here and we mean business," said Garden City, Mo., native Spc. Lonnie Pearson, of Headquarters Company, 1st Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment. Pearson said most residents were friendly and helpful when the Soldiers knocked on their doors.

"They want the bad guys out of here just as bad as we do," he said.

It wasn't long before the Soldiers located a witness who had seen the grenade being thrown. He gave them a detailed description of the suspects. The description went out over the net and was passed down to every Soldier. But it was apparently too late. The grenade throwers had managed to slip through the net. Several hours after it began, Broadwater called the search off.

Later that evening, after he had visited the wounded Soldier in the hospital, Broadwater said he felt encouraged by resolve of his Soldiers – and by the reactions he had seen from people in the community.

"The people see that we're not going to let (attacks) go unanswered, and they appreciate that," Broadwater said. And though the insurgents who threw the grenade hadn't been apprehended, Broadwater was confident he had delivered his message to them.

"We will find you," he promised. "It may not be this time, but sooner or later, we will find you."



Staff Sgt. Christopher Winchester, a section leader with Troop B, 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment out of Fort Stewart, Ga., points out possible enemy positions while providing security following a grenade attack near the Abu Hanifa Market in Baghdad's Adhamiyah District Oct. 15.



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

Warehouse Search

West Bend, Wis., native Spc. Steven Jacoby, of Troop B, 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment out of Fort Stewart, Ga., prepares to search an abandoned warehouse for hidden weapons during a patrol through Baghdad's Adhamiyah District Oct. 16.

Soldiers Celebrate School Renovation

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

BAGHDAD – When students at the Yarmook Girl's School in Sadr City returned from summer vacation last month, they found that their school had received an extreme makeover, thanks to the government of Iraq and the U.S. Army.

U.S. Soldiers and Iraqi National Police visited the recently renovated school to see the improvements and hand out backpacks and soccer balls to the students Oct. 22.

The renovations to the school totaled \$200,000 of improvements, including a new roof, a new lighting system, repairs to cracks in the pavement and stairs, and a paint-job, said Glen Allen, Va., native, Capt. Alex Carter, a U.S. Army civil affairs team chief who helped oversee the project.

Nine other schools in Sadr City have also been renovated over the past few months, as part of the same program that refurbished the Yarmook Girl's School, Carter said. The school

improvement program has been made possible by cooperation between the Ministry of Education, the local neighborhood councils, school officials, the Iraqi National Police, and the U.S. 1st Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, which operates in the Sadr City area, he said.

"What makes this special to me is that this really validates how effective we are working with the Iraqi Police in Sadr City," Carter said.

The top Iraqi Police official present at the school visit, Brig. Gen. Ali Ibrahim Daboun, commander of the 8th Brigade, 2nd Iraqi National Police Division, said he was also pleased by cooperation between the Iraqi government, the Iraqi Security Forces, and the U.S. military.

He said he hoped that the school improvement program would show the 2.5 million residents of Sadr City that they are a priority of the Iraqi Government.

"In the past, they were neglected, but the new government will serve them," he said.



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

Dallas native, Capt. Charles Knoll, a fire support officer with the 1st Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, hands out free backpacks to students at the Yarmook Girl's School in Baghdad's Sadr City neighborhood during a visit to the school to see improvements made during a recent renovation effort sponsored by the Iraqi government, the Iraqi National Police, and the U.S. military.

Fires Squadron Helps Iraqi Farmers Get Irrigation Water, Plan for Further Projects

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

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – With nearly three months in country, the Fires “Hell” Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, has been working with both Sunni and Shia local tribal leaders, local government officials and 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team to help improve agriculture and other critical infrastructure efforts in their area of operations.

The Fires Squadron, which is currently attached to 1st BCT, is responsible for areas including the Iraqi villages of Fira Shia, parts of Agar Quf and Al Thania to name a few.

One of their most recent efforts succeeded in getting irrigation water for agriculture flowing continuously in their area of operations for the first time in more than four years.

Previously, there was not sufficient water in the canals for farming above the subsistence level, according to Maj. Tim Hunt, Fires Squadron executive officer and a native of Dupont, Wash.

The effort to get the irrigation water running again began with the Fires Squadron meeting about three weeks ago with the Sunni and Shia tribal leaders and local government leaders in Fira Shia to discuss agriculture and essential services along with other issues.

“We wanted to attack problems that have been here for a long time,” said Lt. Col. Robert McAleer, the commander of the Fires Squadron, who hails from Sequim, Wash. “In quick order we found experts in agriculture that the sheikhs had brought to us and we started a small focused problem solving group to identify the problem.”

“Luckily all the key people from the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Irrigation were there and they were really motivated about getting good irrigation and true agriculture up and running in their zone,” McAleer said.

In the meeting, the local tribal members and government representatives shared their reasons why they thought there were problems with agriculture related to irrigation.

The local leaders’ reasons included a local water pump station not receiving enough power to pump water into the canals along with Sunni and Shia rivalry issues and problems with the government’s ability to provide services.

Upon closer investigation of the irrigation canal issue, the Fires Squadron leaders and the government officials paid an unplanned visit to a nearby electrical sub-station and discovered that a line at the station that was supposed to be used to keep the water pump station running was not being supplied power.

“Someone had not turned the water on because they felt (members of another sect) would be getting the water,” said McAleer.

“Through questioning of the employees at the substation, we also found that the operators were making money selling power to local residents, so others were bleeding off the power which should have been provided for the pump station,” said Hunt. “So we unveiled some corruption to get power back to the station.”

The 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment which shares parts of its area of operations with the Fires Squadron and in which the sub-station resides assisted in getting the irrigation canal water turned back on by getting the power lines fixed. And according to Hunt, 1-7 Cav. has also been making routine visits to the sub-station to ensure the power continues to flow to the water pump station.

Hunt and McAleer said they are already seeing changes and happy farmers.

“You can already see things turning green that were dying,” said Hunt.

“In meetings we’re being thanked for helping with the



(Photo by Maj. Tim Hunt, Fires Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment)

Water fills an irrigation canal near Fira Shia, Iraq. After uncovering a problem at a power substation, leadership in the Fires Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment worked with local Sunni and Shia tribal leaders, local government officials and the 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment to provide an adequate supply of water to assist local farmers with raising their crops.

irrigation,” said McAleer.

As they work with local Iraqi government experts in the fields of irrigation and agriculture, the squadron has also been teaming with the 1st BCT’s EPRT, which brings the assistance of the U.S. State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Some of the follow-on steps to getting the water running for irrigation include helping with seed and fertilizer distribution for the upcoming planting season.

“Our goal now will be to help get the farmers seed and fertilizer to revitalize the agricultural economy of Iraq,” said Hunt. “Agriculture should pump about \$2 million into the local economy and then they can start to trade and export and that’s a huge benefit for the people of Iraq for something as simple as running water.”

There are also goals to establish farmers associations which will help increase agricultural productivity through cost sharing, distribution and marketing.

The farmers will be assisted with funding and long-term and capital investments through the farmers associations which will help the Iraqi farmers to replace tractors, plows and tills that were destroyed or stolen during the war.

Besides agriculture, the Fires Squadron will work on projects designed to stimulate the economy through the establishment of small businesses.

“One of our projects will be working to open a business center in the Qadas that are on the border outreaches of military and political lines where there’s not a lot of representation,” said McAleer. “We will take advantage of what the EPRT and USAID have to offer to enable business men.”

“Soon we should see a propane plant up and running and businesses in Fira Shia have gone from zero to 20 newly opened shops. (The business center) will be on a Shia/Sunni fault line for people to meet and those with ideas that they can pitch can at least have a conduit to get business done,” he added.

The Fires Squadron will also be looking into revitalizing economy in the area by examining former state-owned enterprises that used to operate in the area during Saddam Hussein’s regime to include a concrete factory and other businesses that while stimulating the economy can also put people back to work.

“We will assess them one by one and determine whether

there is a considerable benefit to bringing those back to life, and we think the answer is yes,” said McAleer, while also explaining that the assessments will be made with the cooperation of the local government, tribal leaders and the Ironhorse Brigade’s EPRT.

Another project to help things in the area will include fixing some of the local area roads.

“Half of the roads have huge craters which have created obstacles, so we’re going to rejoin the road networks so Sunni and Shia can cross into each others areas to do business,” said McAleer.

But getting life back to normal in the Fires area of operations doesn’t just include bringing back the economy, agriculture, essential services and roads—it has a lot to do with bringing back the people.

“Something that is an entirely Iraqi-led effort will be our working with the Iraqi Army’s Muthana Brigade to help them re-settle about 150 families who were displaced a little over a year ago,” said McAleer. “The good news for them is that both the local area Sunnis and Shias have stated a willingness to pitch in and help these displaced families with rebuilding their lives.”

The success of being able to transition from a mainly security role to one of being able to focus more on rebuilding infrastructure and essential services has been a concerted effort, according to Hunt.

“This happening has all been due to the (Iraqi security volunteers) and the local people turning the tide against intimidation and terrorism and working together with the Coalition and the Iraqi Security Forces,” said Hunt. “We could never have done this without that cooperation. We’d much rather spend 15 months here to help the people here earn an honest living than to have shootouts in the streets.”

“We will continue to hunt terrorists who try to get in the way of these types of successes, but things have been fairly quiet for now and reconciliation is working well within our area,” McAleer said, who gave much of the credit for security improvements in the area to his predecessors in the 1st Battalion, 37th Field Artillery Regiment who working with the Iraqis helped begin the reconciliation process in the area and redeployed from Iraq back to Fort Lewis, Wash. just a little more than two months ago.



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

Patrolling Baqouba's Markets

Col. David W. Sutherland, commander of 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division Diyala province, Iraq, greets children while visiting Soldiers patrolling the Old Baqouba market in the province's capital city, Oct. 21.

Cav 'Chargers' Honored for Service in Diyala

By Sgt. Serena Hayden
3rd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

BAQOUBA, Iraq – Gathered in formation at a combat outpost in Baqouba, Iraq, Soldiers from "Bone" Company, 1-12 Combined Arms Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, stood tall, reflecting on their deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom 06-08.

This outpost has been their home – a home without the amenities of a Forward Operating Base, a home where success and accomplishment flourished. And on this Wednesday, they gathered to receive awards for those accomplishments – a small token of appreciation for all they achieved.

For many Soldiers in the company, it was their first time together in a while as each platoon has had a different mission all year.

"This is the first time we've had to reflect on our experiences from this past year as a company," said Capt. Mark Austin, Company B commander. "A lot of the guys have been able to celebrate the past year – not only the guys we've lost and the guys who went home early, but all we've accomplished."

The Soldiers of Bone Company have had a challenging mission in Diyala province, focusing largely on the provincial capital of Baqouba – a city that CNN's Arwa Damon dubbed "the most dangerous city in Iraq," in February. Today,



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

Following the end of tour award ceremony for the Soldiers of "Bone" Company, 1-12 Combined Arms Battalion, Oct. 24, Col. David W. Sutherland, 3rd Brigade Combat Team commander, speaks to the Soldiers about all they accomplished during their deployment in Baqouba, Iraq, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom 06-08.

because of the hard work of the 1-12 "Charger" Battalion as they partnered with Soldiers from the 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, the city is alive and thriving. What used to be a ghost town filled with small-arms

fire, complex attacks and improvised explosive devices is now filled with families going to and from work, children going to school and markets lining the streets.

"Forever, the 1.6 million people of Diyala and Baqouba will appreciate the actions of Bone and Charger," said Col. David W. Sutherland, commander of the "Greywolf" Brigade Combat Team. "When you ask yourself what you accomplished, look around at the city and realize you are somebody."

"And if you don't think you made a difference, you come see me and I will lay out a whole lot more," he said. "I am proud of each of you and your accomplishments."

As the ceremony continued, each Soldier received their end of tour awards, while others were also presented awards for valorous acts, purple hearts, combat infantryman badges and combat medical badges for their efforts in Baqouba.

"The Soldiers in my company are an inspiration to me," Austin said. "To see them all together, look them in the eyes individually and just say 'thank you,' meant a lot."

"There is greatness in this formation," Sutherland said. "And that greatness is achieved by the non-commissioned officers who run this Brigade, the officers who ensure the procedures are in place, and the Soldiers who are the means to support and improve a population."

"When the next unit comes in and asks what they need to bring," Sutherland said, "I'm going to tell them, 'It has already been brought.'"

Unyielding Dedication:

Soldier is Making Defense of the Nation a Career

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

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – It didn't matter that he already had a good job that paid well, and his convictions weren't shaken after the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001. He wanted to join the Army full time. He wanted to become a full-time warrior.

Since one week after he graduated high school, Lt. Col. Tom Jessee, the executive officer for the 1st Air Cavalry "Warrior" Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, has been in the Army.

Jessee, who grew up in Tecumseh, Okla., knew he was going to follow his father's footsteps and join the military one day, he just didn't know in what capacity, he said.

"A friend of mine at church introduced me to the National Guard. My father (spent) 20 years (in the) Air Force so I always kind of thought that I'd join the military of some type," said Jessee.

So he did join the military, and more specifically he enlisted in the Army National Guard as an air traffic control radar operator.

The National Guard, at the time, afforded Jessee some perks, like staying close to home, he said.

"At the time I wasn't too keen on going active duty and moving away from home. I kind of wanted to stick around locally," he said.

As time went on and he spent more and more drill weekends at the airfield, he decided that flying was for him.

"The unit that I was in also had two companies of helicopters stationed at that same base. So I went down on the drill weekend while they were out there flying. I was very enamored with that whole environment," said Jessee.

The atmosphere he experienced drew him in and he decided he was going to get his commission and go to flight school.

In 1987 he received his commission as a 2nd Lieutenant in the Army National Guard and graduated from flight school March 1989.

Up to this point Jessee had very much enjoyed the National Guard, but after flight school, that's when he knew he wanted to be a full-time leader and pilot in the Army, he said. Shortly after he pinned his flight wings on, he went with a warrant officer buddy of his to the local recruiter's station



Tecumseh, Okla., native Lt. Col. Tom Jessee, the executive officer for the 1st Air Cavalry "Warrior" Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, goes through some final preflight checks in his UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter at Camp Taji, Iraq, Oct. 24.



(Photos by Cpl. Nathan Hoskins, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Tecumseh, Okla., native Lt. Col. Tom Jessee, the executive officer for the 1st Air Cavalry "Warrior" Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, goes through some preflight checks on a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter at Camp Taji, Oct. 24. Jessee flies the twin rotor CH-47 Chinook helicopter.

to see about changing over to the regular Army.

His friend was signed that very day, but he was rejected – they just didn't need any commissioned officers at the time, they told Jessee.

In 1992, he married his wife Carol and then went off to the officer advance course – a course that prepares junior officers for company command. Every time he came back from one of these courses, he had a renewed urge to make the Army his full-time job, he said.

"Basically, every time that I would go to annual training or to a school or any prolonged period where I was in a uniform doing my military job, I would come back just going: 'I love doing my job. I want to do this,'" said Jessee.

Up to this point he had flown CH-47 Chinooks and UH-1 Hueys. He had just returned from the UH-60 Black Hawk course when, two weeks later, the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001 occurred. He and his family were living in Tulsa, Okla. He had a great sales job and was making a decent living, he said.

But they were at church one night when an evangelist, whose flight was grounded due to the terrorist attacks, visited and told the congregation that the U.S. was going to go to war in the near future – he wanted to pray for any service members in the congregation, Jessee recalled.

That night he not only felt his own desire to join the Army full-time, but felt God was calling him to serve his nation in a more involved way.

Although he tried his best, things didn't line up well enough to enable him to transfer to the regular Army. So, in the meantime, he took a sales job in Michigan and transferred from the Oklahoma National Guard to the Michigan National Guard, he said.

While in Michigan, things came together, but barely.

"My packet (to transfer to regular Army) got approved two days before my personal deadline," said Jessee.

This personal deadline was based on his date of rank, as he was now a major – just two days later and his whole career as he now knows it would never have been.

After that bit of good news, he assessed with the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment based out of Fort Campbell, Ky., and was accepted.

The 160th SOAR is an elite unit of aviators that primarily move special operations units across the battlefield.

Jessee and his family were three days away from buying a house and moving to the area when he found out that if he took the job with the 160th, then he would be at risk of being passed up for consideration for lieutenant colonel.

Instead, he packed up his family and moved to Korea to command the Company A "Black Cats," 2nd Battalion, 52nd Aviation Regiment. He was now a full-time Soldier.

The transition from a seemingly normal civilian life to a full-time Army wife has added some responsibility to Carol that she didn't expect, she said.

"Being the wife of a company commander whose company is the size of a battalion was a giant piece of responsi-

bility that I did not realize was mine. It was a lot of hard physical and mental work, but I embraced it and went to work," said Carol.

His wife and two children, Garrett, 6, and Clayton, 9, went right along with him to Korea.

"I was apprehensive for about two minutes, but then I got very excited about international travel – the adventure we were about to embark upon was thrilling," she said. "We would go anywhere to be with Tom, we were privileged to experience a different culture. It makes us appreciate what we do have as Americans."

As for joining the Army as his career, Carol was at first "a little nervous," but behind her husband 100 percent, she said.

"I've always known deep down that Tom was born to fly and to lead. This is what brings him real joy; I want him to experience that joy daily," she said.

It takes the whole family to work together to keep their full-time Soldier on his game, said Carol.

"Active duty is nowhere near just a job. It is a calling for our entire family and quickly adapting to change has been our key to success," she said. "We both have a role in this venture; he can't do his part if I don't do mine. It's like a well oiled machine that works as a whole and not as independently spinning parts."

After serving for nearly 20 months in Korea, Jessee moved his family along with his company to Fort Hood, Texas, for the reorganization taking place in the Army, he said. They reflagged his company to Company B, 2nd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div., Jessee said.

When he settled down in Fort Hood, he transitioned to the position of executive officer for 3rd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div.

Now, after being promoted to lieutenant colonel, Jessee is serving as the executive officer for the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade in Iraq where he flies missions in the Black Hawk and pushes piles of paperwork across his desk – helping to keep the wheels turning in the 1st Cav. Division's aviation brigade. He plans on continuing on until retirement.

Jessee has a few thoughts for those who, like him, want to make the Army a career choice.

"For any Soldier or officer coming into the military, if you're going to make it a career, you really have to love your job. You have to believe in what the Army does as an organization. You have to believe in the people around you," said Jessee.

The Army life is for some, and not for others, Jessee said. For those that choose the life, they are a different breed – they are warriors, he said.

"There have been warriors since the dawn of time and people that are on active duty and choose to make a career are warriors," said Jessee.

Fighting daily toward a peaceful Iraq, Jessee just happens to be one of those



(Photo by Spc. Elvyn Nieves, 113th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

Killeen, Texas native Spc. Diana Mota, Headquarter Support Company, Division Special Troop Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, cuts the cake designed with the 1st Cavalry Division logo celebrating her as the three millionth customer served a meal at the Pegasus Sports Oasis dining facility at Camp Liberty in western Baghdad, Oct. 27.

Dining Facility Hits Landmark Figure

By Spc. Elvyn Nieves
113th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

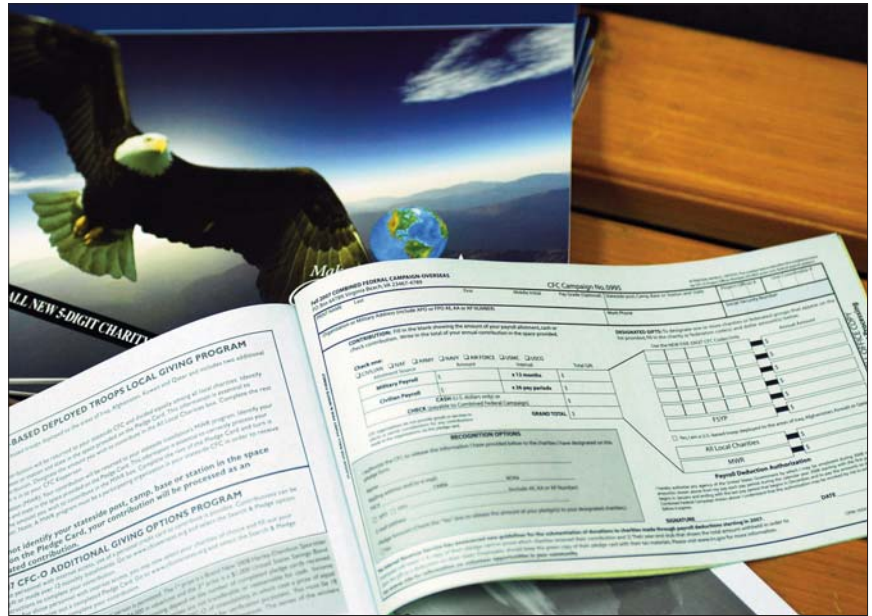
CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – The Pegasus Sports Oasis, the dining facility for the Multi-National Division – Baghdad and 1st Cavalry Division here celebrated its three millionth customer in a one-year span Oct. 27.

Spc. Diana Mota, a Killeen, Texas resident with Headquarters Service Company, Division Special Troop Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, was the landmark customer to cross the doorway into the dining facility.

"I'm excited," said Mota. "It got me by surprise. I want to thank the people involved in this initiative for making me feel special."

A cake, designed with the 1st Cavalry Division logo, was presented to her along with a backpack, jump drive, t-shirt, a coin and hat. According to Sgt. 1st Class Derric Suesberry, food service contract officer's technical representative, also with HSC, DSTB, the Pegasus Sports Oasis receives approximately 8,000 hungry Soldiers and civilians per day.

"In a one-year span we have served three million meals to Soldiers," he said. "We decided to ... celebrate because we're leaving and we're not going to see four million."



(Photo by Spc. Angel D. Martinez, 113th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

To participate in the Combined Federal Campaign, Soldiers need to fill out a pledge card (form) provided by their unit CFC coordinator. CFC is the only authorized federal charitable solicitation program. Soldiers contributing to the CFC are given the opportunity to choose from more than 2,000 charitable organizations including the Army Emergency Relief Fund.

CFC-O Campaign Kicks Off in Iraq

By Spc. Angel D. Martinez
113th Military Public Affairs Detachment

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – With more than \$271.6 million donated during the 2006 campaign, the Combined Federal Campaign has begun again.

The CFC is an annual campaign in which donations are solicited from federal employees, and is the only authorized federal charitable solicitation program.

"The CFC is the most successful fund raising model in the world," said Columbus, Ga., native, Master Sgt. Alfred Morgan, the Multi-National Division – Baghdad Morale, Welfare and Recreation Program manager assigned to Headquarter and Headquarters Company, 1st Cavalry Division.

Morgan said donations sent to the CFC will help millions of needy people. These donations are consolidated into one campaign to lower the solicitation cost of the participating charitable organizations.

"You can choose from over 2,000 national and international organizations," he said. The 2007 campaign started Sept. 1 and it will continue until Dec. 15.

Donations can be made with cash, by payroll deductions, checks, or credit cards.

In order for this campaign to be successful, coordinators from each unit should let the Soldiers know about the campaign, Morgan said. He suggested the use of e-mail and campaign posters at frequently-visited areas such as the Post Exchange or the dining facilities.

Soldiers can contribute by contacting their brigade CFC community/area project officer or their unit CFC coordinator.

This year, the Combined Federal Campaign-Overseas is sponsoring a giveaway, with the grand prize a 2008 Harley Davidson Sportster motorcycle. The second prize are two airline tickets to and from a destination of the winner's choosing, not to exceed \$4,000 and the third prize is a \$1,000 U.S. Savings Bond. Donations are not necessary for a chance to participate in the giveaway.

Soldiers need to see their unit CFC coordinator to enter. The winners of the giveaway prizes will be announced in April.

Last year, CFC-O raised more than \$50 million.

Freedom Radio ... the Station Just for You

107.7 Baghdad

Live Programming

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MON-FRI:

6am-10am "The Morning Buzz"
10am-2pm "The Mid-Day Distraction"
2pm-6pm "The Afternoon Mix"

FRI Evening:

6pm-9pm "Friday Night Flava"

SAT:

7am-8am "Smooth Jazz"
8am-10am "Totally 80s"
10am-11am "Strangers With Useless Knowledge"
11am-3pm "Weekend Overdrive"

SUN:

6am-10am "The Morning Buzz"
10am-2pm "The Country Convoy"
2pm-6pm "Classic Rock"



(Courtesy photo)

Soldiers and family members stand with the cheerleaders of Klein Forest and Westfield High Schools before they revealed that they were able to raise nearly \$4,000 for the 15th Sustainment Brigade's Family Readiness Group in just two weeks of fund raising Oct. 12.

Cheerleaders Earn Nearly \$4,000 for Wagonmaster

By Sgt. Cheryl Cox
1st Cavalry Division Public Affairs

FORT HOOD, Texas – The Family Readiness Group co-leaders accepted a gift of nearly \$4,000 from the cheerleading squads of Klein Forest and Westfield High Schools during a Homecoming Game held Oct. 12 in Houston.

As the time approached for the Soldiers of Company B, 15th Brigade Troops Battalion, 15th Sustainment Brigade to return from Iraq, the fund raising efforts of Houston cheerleaders were about to kick into high gear.

"The mother-in-law of one of our Soldiers is a secretary for the Klein Forest athletics department," explained Nikki Medlock, currently of Killeen, Texas, one of the unit's FRG co-leaders and the wife of Capt. Glen Medlock. "When she heard about the girls looking for a fundraising project she suggested raising money for the FRG."

In the days and weeks to come, that small suggestion turned into a competition between the cheerleaders of rival schools.

"The two schools that raised money for our unit, Klein Forest and Westfield High Schools, are rival schools in Houston," said Leslie Ingram, also an FRG co-leader and the wife of Staff Sgt. Darren Ingram. "They each had two weeks to raise as much money as they could for the Soldiers, before the money would be presented to us."

During the competition, the girls received pictures of the Soldiers from the day they left for Iraq and letters from the Soldiers. The cheerleaders at both schools collected donations during lunch, and parents and local Houston businesses donated money for the Soldiers and their families.

Then came the task of deciding when the money should be presented to the FRG. It was decided that the best time would be during a pre-game ceremony at the Westfield High School homecoming game where the rival schools would be playing each other.

"For all the hard work that the schools put into raising the money for us, we wanted to give something back and add a little more competition," said Ingram, originally from Gary, Ind., but who calls Atlanta home. "We decided that both schools would receive two battalion T-shirts to hang on the wall, a certificate of appreciation with a plaque, Wagonmaster pins and 1st Cavalry Division flags. But we wanted to the schools that raised the most money to get something special."

At the game, as buckets were being passed through the stands for additional donations, each school presented them with the totals they had raised.

"At that time, Klein Forest had raised \$1812.06," said Medlock, "and Westfield had raised \$2000. Following the presentation additional funds were given to us – but the outcome of the competition was not affected."

Since the cheerleaders of Westfield had raised nearly \$200 more than Klein Forest, their school also received two company t-shirts and an American flag which had flown over Baghdad.

The funds that were raised will go toward the welcome home and Christmas parties planned for later this year, said Ingram.

"This year the Soldiers will get a free pass on the parties," said Ingram. "No one will have to pay out of pocket for the parties or farewell gifts."

Ingram and Medlock both said they are hoping to maintain their new found relationship with the schools in Houston, starting by donating to the booster clubs at each school later in the year.



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

Sgt. 1st Class Jamal Smith, a San Francisco native with the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 15th Sustainment Brigade, gives his wife, Rashawn, a Bloomington, Ill., native, a big hug after returning from a 15-month deployment to Iraq.

Soldiers Return Home

By Sgt. Robert J. Strain
1st Cavalry Division Public Affairs

FORT HOOD, Texas – When Soldiers come home from a deployment to Iraq, nothing will stop their families from meeting them at the welcome ceremony, not even the weather.

With temperatures dipping into the mid-50s and the wind blowing at nearly 20 miles-per-hour, hundreds of family members from the 1st Cavalry Division, the 3rd Signal Brigade and the Army Reserve's 952nd Engineer Company waited patiently Oct. 22 for their Soldiers to walk across Fort Hood's Cooper Field.

Many of the family members waited until the buses carrying their troopers arrived at the field before coming out of the warming tent set up outside the 1st Cavalry Division's headquarters building, but dozens of families, bundled in winter jackets and blankets, braved the wind and cold to make sure they were where they wanted to be when their loved one walked across that field.

Cheryl Mason and Sami Pinal, the mother and fiancé, respectively, of Sgt. Greg Mason, with the Army Reserve's Paris, Texas-based 952nd Engineer Company, were one such fami-

ly, driving in from El Paso to be at the ceremony.

The cold weather took Mason by surprise, with temperatures in the 70s in the days prior to the return.

"It was so hot when we drove in," the El Paso native said. Mason considered herself lucky that she had a blanket in the car, and used it to keep herself and Pinal warm while waiting for her son to arrive.

"We are looking forward to having him home," Mason said. She explained that once he comes back home to El Paso, she hopes that he will go on to college and get his degree.

Mason said that he joined the Army Reserve following high school and was getting ready to go college when his unit began doing more training at their headquarters in Paris, and the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif.

"Once they started going to NTC, I knew Iraq was next," she said. When he deployed last year, Mason and Pinal kept in touch with him through instant messengers and by sending a lot of care packages.

Pinal, also of El Paso, said that she also plans to go to college, and that they plan to get married after they both finish school.



Soldiers dance at a Halloween party at the 1st Cavalry Division Morale, Welfare and Recreation Field House at Camp Liberty in western Baghdad, Oct. 27.



(Photos by Pfc. April Campbell, 27th Public Affairs Detachment)

Philadelphia native, Sgt. Charles Weber, a communication specialist with Company A, Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, the winner of the best overall costume, poses for judges during a Halloween party at the Morale, Welfare and Recreation Field House, Oct. 27. Weber dressed up as former Atlanta Falcons quarterback Michael Vick for the party.



Jennings, La., native Staff Sgt. Russetta Celestine, Company A, Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, shows off her costume, a mail room package, to the judges during a Halloween party costume competition at the Division Morale, Welfare and Recreation Field House at Camp Liberty in western Baghdad, Oct. 27.

MND-B Soldiers Let Loose at Division Halloween Party

By Pfc. April Campbell
27th Public Affairs Detachment

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – Soldiers were able to relax and have some fun during a Halloween party sponsored by the 1st Cavalry Division Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers (BOSS) at the division's Morale, Welfare and Recreation Field House here, Oct. 27.

The event gave Soldiers a chance to hang out and dance to popular music while dressed up as their favorite characters for the night's costume competition.

Sacramento, Calif. native, Spc. Jonte Scott, the division's BOSS representative and a member of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cav. Div., took the lead in organizing and planning the event.

"I've been planning the party since August," Scott said. "The costume competition had to be approved by the division command sergeant major."

Scott said she began planning the party early so Soldiers would have time to order their costumes. Soldiers who did not have the time to put a costume together could also come to the event wearing the Army physical fitness uniform.

Soldiers showed off their creativity in a variety of costumes, from a T-wall barrier and a mailroom package to

Cruella de Ville and Bat Girl. Aguada, Puerto Rico native Spc. Dayana Turner, a mail clerk with the Command Post Detachment, Company A, DSTB, said she spent two hours putting her angel costume together.

Philadelphia native, Sgt. Charles Weber, a communication specialist also with Co. A, dressed up as former Atlanta Falcons quarterback, Michael Vick and won for best overall costume and the best male costume.

The winner of the female category of the competition was Memphis, Tenn. native, Spc. Latisha Martinez, an orderly room clerk with HHC, DSTB, who came as Cruella de Ville.

Events like this are one way that BOSS representatives can help to boost Soldiers' morale.

"The goal of the party was to keep Soldiers focused on the mission, but give them a chance to unwind and relax," said Scott. "This is how we take care of each other."

Another benefit of functions like the Halloween party is it can help to ensure the safety of Soldiers during their recreational activities.

"It's great to see the Soldiers having fun safely," said Little Rock, Ark., native, 1st Sgt. Mark Phillips, the top noncommissioned officer of HHC, DSTB.

The party featured music, dancing and the plethora of Halloween costumes gave troops a chance to wear something other than their uniform, at least for a night.

For Love of Food or Family: Top-Notch Chef Gets Reality Check

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – I am a big fan of food. A BIG fan. (If I wasn't, I wouldn't have gained 25 pounds when I was laid up in a cast and on crutches.)

I love watching cooking shows. I love cooking, and I LOVE eating. If I could do all at once, I would be in heaven, or back home in my kitchen, which is almost the same thing.

So, I thought the movie, "No Reservations," would be a right up my alley.

Kate (Catherine Zeta-Jones) is a top chef who commands the kitchen in a high-class restaurant in New York. She is famous for her quail in saffron sauce.

Kate is a complete perfectionist and is constantly spitting a salsa-like fire at patrons who voice any complaints about her cuisine. At one point, she loses her marbles and pulls out a raw steak and literally pins it on a customer's table with a two-pronged fork.

Eventually, her boss (Patricia Clarkson)

Random Reviews

Sgt. Nicole Kojetin



sends her to a counselor for therapy, which she uses to talk about her recipes and not about herself. The restaurant is her life. It consumes her much like I would like to consume the huge steak forked to the table (after it is cooked, of course.)

But everything has to change the day her sister dies in a car crash, leaving her young daughter to Kate.

Kate's entire life has been about her career. She doesn't have the slightest idea how to take care of Zoe (Abigail Breslin),

especially while they are both still grieving.

Now that could be a good movie in itself (see "Raising Helen"), but the plot thickens (like gravy with a little cornstarch.) While Kate is taking some time off to grieve for her sister and get Zoe established, her boss hires another chef, Nick (Aaron Eckhart), to help pick up the pace.

This royally ticks off Kate and we spend the rest of the movie trying to figure out if they are in love or not. (Sigh)

This movie falls under the romantic comedy category, but I wasn't laughing.

There were some silly portions, but I was a little disappointed in Kate's character. Maybe, I have been watching "Hell's Kitchen" a little too much, but Kate really wasn't as mean as she needed to be. She didn't quite have that edge. Besides watching someone (fictional or not) deal with the loss of a loved one is just not funny.

I was also disappointed in the food.

Maybe it was because I was watching a bootleg version but the food didn't make me drool.

The bright side to that is if you fall asleep watching the movie you won't wake up gnawing on your pillow.

However, with all that said, I still didn't send this one back to the kitchen. The theme of this flick was good.

It was all about balancing work and family.

You can't put your loved ones on the back burner, especially when you are in the military.

Balancing family and a career can be challenging, but if the kinfolk (Mom, Dad and siblings count, too) are missing we can become overly obsessed with our jobs, which is a bad thing (see Kate.)

I liked that message so much that I enjoyed the movie.

(Four out of five stars!)



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

Sgt. Elizabeth Carroll, a member of the 1470th Tactical Psychological Operations Detachment of Denver, makes a dash toward the finish line during the Prosperity Run Club's Breast Cancer Awareness run on Forward Operating Base Prosperity in central Baghdad Oct. 23.

Prosperity Runners Raise Money for Breast Cancer

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE PROSPERITY, Iraq – The 5K fun runs hosted by the Prosperity Run Club have all but been routine for Staff Sgt. Kenneth Pierce. He has made a run of winning just about all of them since the run club director, Maj. Scarlett Foster, started it. Yet, this month's run was a little different as he came in first with a time of 17:46.

Pierce, who is assigned to Company A, 15th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, has a grandmother who was diagnosed with breast cancer almost four years ago. He said he not only ran because he enjoys it, but that he also ran this 5K in hopes that this event might help bring about more awareness.

"This just has a little bit more meaning than just running," he said.

According to Staff Sgt. Nicole Robinson, a platoon sergeant assigned to Company B, 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, and the fundraiser's organizer, one in four people either know someone with breast cancer or know someone who has died from breast cancer. Because of this month's theme, it came as no surprise that runners donated more than \$2,000 for the cause.

"The goal I originally set was \$1,500," said Robinson, who calls Charlotte, N.C. home. "We are at \$2,062 at this point, and we still have people who want to give."

Robinson started her research last month and found the website: www.breastcancerawareness.org. Through the site, she got in contact with fundraising experts and after getting

the proper approval, got with Foster, whose team of medic volunteers hosts the monthly Prosperity 5Ks.

Robinson said she was really happy about the turn out and called the entire event "awesome."

There were 180 runners and walkers who entered the event.

Klamath Falls, Ore., native 1st Lt. Marci Hanson, an unmanned aerial vehicle platoon leader from Company B, 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, was the first overall female finisher, coming across the finish line with a time of 21:30. An avid runner, like Pierce, Hanson has also won a few road races in and around the International Zone before. Not only did she improve on her personal best 5K time in this race, but she also ran for a friend who has breast cancer.

"It's nice to run for this," she said.



Staff Sgt. Kenneth Pierce comes across the finish line first with a time of 17:46 during the Prosperity Run Club's Breast Cancer Awareness run on Forward Operating Base Prosperity Oct. 23.

Monday Night in Denver Makes for Great Tuesday Morning in Baghdad

I always wait until Tuesday morning to sit down to write this sports column. It's football season and there's Monday Night Football finishing up as I head into work each Tuesday morning.

On Oct. 30, though, I got up at 3:30 in the morning to watch Brett Favre take down the Denver Broncos in overtime, 19-13.

Favre for President

The Packer legend threw two touchdown passes, one for 79 yards to rookie receiver James Jones to tie the game at 7-7, and an 82-yard bomb to second year receiver Greg Jennings on the first play from scrimmage in overtime to win the game.

It was vintage Favre. The two long balls came one week after he badly under threw his receivers on some deep balls against the Redskins, causing some pundits to question his arm strength and accuracy.

Against the Broncos, Favre beat two of the best "shut down" corners in the league – Champ Bailey and Dre Bly – on those two bombs.

Nobody was questioning Favre's arm strength during the post-game press conference carried by ESPN.

The Packer win helped them keep pace with the Dallas Cowboys for the best record in the NFC at 6-1. ESPN post-game analyst, hall of fame quarterback Steve Young said that if Brett Favre had a running game this year, the Packers would be better than the 'Boys in Dallas, causing fellow analyst and hall of fame former Cowboy Emmitt Smith's

eyebrows to nearly rise off his head.

Having the Cowboys on top of the NFC East at the midway mark of the NFL season isn't surprising. What is surprising is the Detroit Lions, at 5-2, the New York Giants at 6-2 and the utter mediocrity of the NFC South and West Divisions. I had the Giants' Tom Coughlan pegged for the first in-season firing this year. Instead, he's leading his club to the third best record in the conference thus far.

Go figure. And after years of frustration, the Lions are roaring again, even dropping the Bears in Chicago.

Best of the Best

At the midway point in the season, the New England Patriots and Indianapolis Colts remain unbeaten in the AFC (though they play in Week Nine, at Indy, five days from press time for this publication) and are clearly the cream of the NFL crop.

Peyton Manning and the Colts are the reigning NFL champs, and the Patriots are playing outstanding football – offensively, defensively, special teams, cheerleading, etc., etc., etc.

As a Cheeshead, I've never liked Randy Moss, but he has found a home in New England and re-energized an all-pro career that was going down the toilet in Oakland. Similarly, Wes Welker and Donte Stallworth have benefitted from the change of zip codes thanks to a busy off-season by New England's staff.

One of those two teams will win it all this year, unless there is a significant injury

Trigger Pull

**Master Sgt.
Dave Larsen**



to Manning or the Pats' Tom Brady.
Baseball Bore

I must point out that I correctly predicted that the Boston Red Sox would roll over whatever National League team would be their sacrificial lambs in the World Series in our Oct. 15 edition of Crossed Sabers.

While the Colorado Rockies had a simply amazing run to reach the post-season, and then kept winning to take the Senior Circuit crown, the eight-day lay-off and just "being happy to be there" for the first time led to the Red Sox romp.

Other than Bean Town fans, though, I wonder who watched this series? I didn't.

Joe Torre is gone from the Yankees; Alex Rodriguez, too; and Barry Bonds is on the free agent market.

Rumor has Torre and former Yankee bench coach Don Mattingly possibly heading to Tinseltown to take over the Dodger operation. At press time, that's the rumor, anyway.

Barry Bonds should soon be a designated hitter. My guess is that most American

League teams will pass on Bonds, except the Oakland A's or the Seattle Mariners. Oakland is probably the best bet for Barry – keeping him in the Bay Area where he still gets friendly fanfares. I think Mike Piazza's days are numbered in Oakland.

A-Rod opted out of his record-setting contract, and even passed on a slight raise offered by the Yanks.

What team out there can use 50-plus home runs and 150 RBIs? All of them, of course, but the real question is: who can afford Rodriguez's services beyond New York?

Rodriguez just said 'no' to the Yanks and the other New York team has all-stars at third base and shortstop, already, so I think the Mets won't bid on him. That leaves the world champion Boston Red Sox, the Cubs (doubtful) and maybe the Dodgers. I think no matter where A-Rod winds up, he may also wind up playing left field. His infield days are numbered. No matter how it all shakes out, it should be a fun-filled off season in Major League Baseball.

Pigskin Pickin'

I predict the winners each week in the Daily Charge and the Fort Hood Sentinel, and through eight weeks I'm at an astounding 74-42 success rate. My best showing so far was a 12-2 mark in Week Five. More important to me, though, is that the Packers remain even with the Cowboys with the best record in the NFC, at 6-1 through the first eight weeks.

Go Packers!



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

The "NFC's" Derrick Flowers dives past "AFC's" Ben Sparlin to score one of four NFC second half touchdowns during the Black Jack Flag Football All-Star Game held on Forward Operating Base Prosperity by the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, in central Baghdad Oct. 20.



The "AFC's" Jeremy Taylor runs back an interception during first half action of the Black Jack Flag Football All-Star Game held on Forward Operating Base Prosperity in central Baghdad Oct. 20.

Black Jack All-Stars: 'NFC' sneaks by 'AFC,' 41-36

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE PROSPERITY, Iraq – With four seconds on the clock and only 20 yards from the championship, the "AFC" All-Stars' quarterback Joshua Parker used a gadget play putting the ball in receiver Mario Grimes' hands.

Unfortunately, Grimes had to face a strong "NFC" defense in the form of Derrick "Sipp" Flowers, who put a stop to any thought of a dramatic ending just five yards short of the goal line on what would have been the game-winning touchdown, as the NFC beat the AFC in the 2nd "Black Jack" Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division's season-ending flag football all-star game, 41-36.

"I felt we had the game wrapped up in the first half," said AFC tackle Brandon Jones of Lake Arthur, La. "We just didn't do anything we did in the first half. We just got away from our game plan."

Through a tough regular season, the Headhunters of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division beat the Military Transition Team of Company E, 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment.

This all-star game was the last game of the deployment series of football games according to Kenneth Patrick, the NFC's player-coach.

Even though the two teams were evenly matched, it didn't seem so the way the AFC started the game. They quickly scored the first two touchdowns as Parker ran

both of them in. The AFC also forced a couple of turnovers and turned those into a couple of six-pointers.

"We just came out strong," said AFC's coach Sherrod Nevels of Sarasota, Fla. "We got a few good interceptions, and we had two stops in the red zone. We also capitalized on the turnovers."

The AFC's big tackle, Jones also scored two touchdowns. Joshua Fox caught three two-point conversions to add to the insult as they finished the half leading, 30-14.

During NFC's halftime speech, Christopher Thomas told the rest of his teammates that their individual time to shine in the All Star Game was over, and it was time to capture the "W" for the team. That speech seemed to be the right motivator as the NFC would put on a series of drives that left the AFC frustrated and wondering what went wrong.

"I told them in the first half, people are just playing to show off and stuff," Thomas said. "In the second half, it's for real. I guess it was enough to motivate the troops."

The NFC's Mike Jones started the second half off by scoring a 60-yard touchdown and Derrick Flowers dove in, adding the extra point. After that, the AFC added their last touchdown of the game, but the NFC scored three more times and relied on their defense for the rest of the contest.

"We just made a few defensive adjustments," Patrick said. "We concentrated on stopping their short game."

Even though the AFC's Jones admitted that it was a tough loss, he said he had to hand it to the other team.

"I have to give them props," he said. "It was a real good game."