



# THE DAGGER EDGE



**TRAINING THE TRAINERS**

***DAGGERS HELPING TO INCREASE  
LONG-TERM ISF CAPACITY***

April 2011 Volume 1, Issue 3

*An Iraqi Army tanker with the 9th Armored Division drives an M1A1 Abrams tank under the instruction of Soldiers with Company C, 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, United States Division - Center Jan. 16 at Camp Taji, Iraq. The IA tankers were preparing for a 45-day New Equipment Operator's course at the Besmaya Combat Training Center, Iraq. (Photo by Sgt. Chad Menegay, 196th MPAD, 25th Inf. Div., USD-C)*

# WHAT'S INSIDE...

- 4.....COL CALVERT, DAGGER 6
- 5.....CSM LEWIS, DAGGER 7
- 6.....CHAPLAIN'S CORNER
- 7.....SURGEON'S COLUMN
- 8.....1-18 INFANTRY BATTALION NEWS
- 10.....LTC CROSS, VANGUARD 6
- 11.....CSM EVANS, VANGUARD 7
- 12.....LTC HENDERSON, DRAGON 6
- 13.....CSM SMITH, DRAGON 7
- 14.....1-63 ARMOR BATTALION NEWS
- 16.....1-7 FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION NEWS
- 18.....LTC GAINNEY, LIGHTNING 6 & CSM BAUER, LIGHTNING 7
- 19.....LTC MOORE, LONGKNIFE 6
- 20.....5-4 CAVALRY SQUADRON NEWS
- 22.....LTC CANTLON, SABER 6
- 23.....CSM BURNETTE, SABER 9
- 24.....6-9 CAVALRY SQUADRON NEWS
- 26.....299 BRIGADE SUPPORT BATTALION NEWS
- 28.....LTC FARRAND, LIFELINE 6
- 29.....LTC GETER, GRIFFIN 6
- 30.....2-1 SPECIAL TROOPS BATTALION NEWS





**On the cover:** Sgt. Joseph J. Harleman, an instructor with Company B, 1st Battalion, 63rd Armor Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division Division, guides 6th Iraqi Army Division Soldiers in the task of clearing a room Feb. 17 during close-quarter combat drills at Joint Security Station Constitution, Iraq. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Jennifer Sardam, 29th MPAD, 25th Inf. Div., USD-C)



**Back Cover:** 1st Infantry Division shoulder sleeve insignia - former wartime service cover the memorial stand Jan. 19 at a service at Joint Security Station Loyalty, Iraq, honoring the life of Spc. Jose A. Torre, Jr., formerly with Company C, Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Inf. Div. Torre died Jan. 15 in Baghdad of wounds suffered when insurgents attacked his unit. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Daniel Stoutamire, 2nd AAB, 1st Inf. Div.)

The Dagger Edge: Informing the Dagger Community on the issues and events throughout the brigade.

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# COL PAUL CALVERT "DAGGER 6"



Soldiers, Families and friends of the Dagger Brigade,

The Dagger Family continues our marked success five months into our deployment in support of Operation New Dawn. As we pause and look at what has brought us to this point, CSM Lewis and I want to take this opportunity to thank all of our Families and friends for the strength and inspiration you provide to our team every day. Your daily support – thoughts, prayers, phone calls, Skype sessions, positive posts on Facebook and care packages – provides us motivation, inspiration and a little touch of home here in Iraq. These small gestures make us strong and serve as encouragement to continue mission.

Over the last several weeks, I have been privileged to watch and engage in conversation with a number of Soldiers who have served as reminders to me about why I love being a Soldier. My love for soldiering is grounded in our Soldiers themselves. I love who they are and what they stand for. I love the fact that they voluntarily serve our nation and willingly accept the sacrifices that go along with it. I love that they are supported by Families who so graciously allow them to serve while sacrificing significantly themselves. I love a Soldier's commitment to excellence which serves as the true cornerstone for organizations of excellence. I love Soldiers of excellence. They make me strong and they make our organization strong.

So what is a Soldier of excellence? To me, a Soldier of excellence:

- Values excellence and never settles for average: we must have high regard for being the best we can be in all aspects of our personal and professional lives and look for the same in others.
- Pays attention to detail: the little things matter because it sets us apart from those who settle for average.
- Remains committed to what really matters: our beliefs, Family, values, Army, organization, mission and each other.
- Displays integrity and sound ethics: it



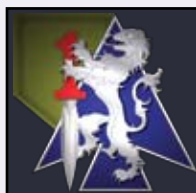
- defines us and there is no grey area.
- Respects others: we cannot get it without giving it.
- Is willing to go the second mile: never quits...No Mission Too Difficult, No Sacrifice Too Great, Duty First!
- Demonstrates consistency: meets the standard in all that we do, all the time.

- Never stops improving: we will never be perfect, so we must consistently conduct self-assessments to determine how we are going to get better.
- Always gives 100%: nothing but our best in all things.
- Makes excellence a lifestyle: the commitment to being the best we can be in all aspects of our personal and professional lives every day.

Are you a Soldier of Excellence? CSM Lewis and I are trying to be every day and what's exciting is that we see many of you doing the same. It is not lost on us that you are our cornerstone. We are proud of all that you do to make our formation an organization of excellence and we challenge you to commit or stay committed to being a Soldier of excellence.

Ready Now!

## Dagger 6



## THE DAGGER SOLDIER OF EXCELLENCE

- Values excellence and never settles for average
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- Remains committed to what really matters
- Displays integrity and sound ethics
- Respects others
- Is willing to go the second mile
- Demonstrates consistency
- Never stops improving
- Always gives 100%
- Makes excellence a lifestyle

### ARE YOU A SOLDIER OF EXCELLENCE?



# CSM RODNEY R. LEWIS "DAGGER 7"



**D**agger Soldiers, Families, and friends,

The theme of this month's column is, "What's in your tool kit?" As a newly promoted non-commissioned officer, I distinctly recall the troubles I experienced as a young leader in our Army. Although I was quickly integrated into the NCO Corps, I still lacked the experience and tools to handle the job. I will admit, it was challenging and I made some mistakes; mistakes that affected my own progression as well as that of Soldiers. Years later, as I observe the challenges facing our young leaders today, I wonder how to make my experiences relevant and how I can add to the tool kits of the NCOs in the formation.

I tell the NCOs in our brigade that as a new NCO, you start out with a hammer. Obviously, if the only tool in your kit bag is a hammer, then every problem is seen as a nail. Our leaders today face far greater challenges than I did as a young NCO. With the operational tempo and demands the unit places on the organization, there is very little time for the NCO to develop those skills critical to leading and mentoring their subordinates. Where and how can we as senior leaders develop those skills and add to the tool kits of the junior NCOs?

I would argue that the hardest job in our Army today is that of



the young team leader/section sergeant who have the challenge of evaluating and molding young men and women into the resilient Soldiers required in today's fight. If we fail at this level and fall short of instilling the Army Values, then we have failed that Soldier. As I sit here writing this article, another Soldier has succumbed to the stressors that seem to overwhelm us at a much quicker pace than we have experienced in many years.

I challenge each and every one of you, enlisted, NCO, and officer, to make a difference. There are Soldiers, leaders, medical personnel, and our Chaplain's Corps out there whom are making a difference. Get involved in your battle

buddies life like never before and identify those stressors that seem to be eating away at their resiliency and make a difference. Sometimes all it takes is a few minutes of your day to sit down, have a conversation, and ask them how things are going. Get involved with their families at home and provide both solid counsel and an ear to allow them time to vent.

I realize we as an Army are struggling with ways to identify and prevent the hardships associated with multiple deployments, but we are not helpless and there is no reason why we cannot become proactive and take an aggressive approach into our own strength training to continue to build upon our resilience. We need to look at this deployment as a strength builder. Yes, it is tough for various reasons, but as the saying goes, "What does not kill us will only make us stronger." There is no greater pride than the homecoming we will experience "together" once this mission is complete. I wish nothing more than to experience it with each and every one of you eight months from now.

Daggers! Ready Now!

**Dagger 7**



# MAJ CHARLES PAUL DAGGER CHAPLAIN



## ARE YOU **BLESSING** CONSCIOUS **OR** **PROBLEM** CONSCIOUS?

Once heard a story of two identical twins: one, an optimist, whose motto was “Everything’s coming up roses,” and the other, a pessimist, who always expected the worst. Their parents took them to a psychologist, hoping to balance out their personalities. The psychologist suggested that on their next birthday, they put each twin in a separate room to open their gifts.

“Give the pessimist the best toys you can afford, and give the optimist a box of manure,” he said. The parents did as he suggested. When they peeped in at the pessimist, they heard him complaining. “I don’t like the color of this toy. I don’t want to play these games,” he said. Next, they looked in and saw the optimist smiling, throwing manure up in the air and shouting, “You can’t fool me with this much manure, there’s got to be a pony.”

An optimist is a person who looks at the bright side of things, even if the situation may not appear totally positive at the moment, whereas a pessimist focuses on the negative aspects of a situation. The glass half-empty/half-full is a classic example of the difference between optimism and pessimism. A pessimist will see the same glass as half-empty and concentrate on what is missing or

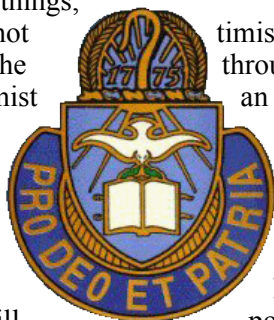
no longer in the glass. He or she will consistently nurture a negative attitude, expecting the worst of people or situations. This outlook persists regardless of fact or circumstance that might indicate a more balanced or positive reality.

Let’s face it—we all suffer from personal crisis from time to time. Life is tough, but even in the

**THE ABILITY TO CHOOSE HOW WE RESPOND IS THE GREATEST POWER WE POSSESS. WE HAVE A CHOICE TO EITHER LET THINGS WEAR US DOWN AND FEEL DEPRESSED OR TO SET OUR MIND IN A MORE POSITIVE DIRECTION.**

midst of personal turmoil and overwhelming crisis, it is important for us to hold on to an optimistic approach. Optimism increases our ability to create positive answers to the challenges we face.

So what is optimism? Optimism is not “seeing the world through rose-colored glasses,” and an “everything is wonderful” attitude, or putting a positive spin on things to avoid reality. Webster’s dictionary defines optimism as “anticipating the best possible outcome.” In life, we can anticipate the best possible outcome in any event by how we choose to perceive what is happening and also, how we respond.



The ability to choose how we respond is the greatest power we possess. We have a choice to either let things wear us down and feel depressed, or to set our mind in a more positive direction. In fact, everything that happens to us right now offers us a choice. It doesn’t even matter if that thing is “good” or “bad.” Even if something undesirable happens, we still have the power to choose how we will interpret and respond.

In the Bible, Habakkuk was a farmer. He also faced hardship, but responded with a positive attitude. He said, “Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the field produces no food, though there is no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls. Yet, I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior, The Sovereign Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights.” (Habakkuk 3:17-19)

So ask yourself, how do you perceive what goes on around you? The way you respond has a direct impact on your quality of life. Remember, life is a mirror. If you smile, it smiles back at you. It takes fewer muscles to smile than to frown and be pessimistic. So, smile, be optimistic, and enjoy life.



# MAJ JASON CLARK DAGGER SURGEON



## TIPS ON STAYING INJURY-FREE DURING P.T.

**D**aggers! As we all settle into the deployment, it is imperative that we care for ourselves.

Physical fitness is an imperative part of our health and wellness, and with limited access to other leisure activities during deployments, the amount of physical training generally increases. However, over-zealous training can lead to a variety of injuries that can become rather debilitating and chronic. The following tips will help prevent sports-related injuries.

### • Beginning an Exercise Program.

At this point of the deployment, most of us are well into our training programs and have established routines. However, for anyone just starting a program or increasing the intensity of their program, it is important to do so gradually. Prior to deployment, many units were involved in preparation for deployment rather than focusing on physical training. Rapidly beginning an aggressive daily routine in theater can set the stage for injuries. Start slow and progress to maximal effort over several weeks.

### • Stretching.

It is imperative to increase flexibility prior to exercise. This goes for controlled activities such as weightlifting, or for sports such as basketball where the demands on the body are much less predictable.

### • Warm Up.

While sitting and laying down, the natural tendency of muscles, joints, and tendons is to stiffen and shorten. If you suddenly increase the demands on the

body when it is “cold,” the risk of injury also increases. Light to moderate, low-impact, cardiovascular activity for ten minutes with a heart rate goal of 100-120 beats per minute will prevent exhausting the muscles.

### • Conducting the Training.

When performing specific exercises, concentrate on form and balance. If an exercise is new, use low weight to perfect the proper form. Vary the number of repetitions and sets in each workout. Using heavy weights will improve strength and increase muscle size. Low weights and increased repetitions improve muscle stamina and tendon strength. Avoid focusing on the amount of weight used.

Continue to strive for better fitness. This will improve long-term health and short-term stamina needed for mission accomplishment, as well as improvement of mental fitness.

Rather, use measures of muscle fatigue and heart rate to guide exercise. Maximal heart rate for any exercise is typically from 160-200 for heavy exertion. This may be difficult to sustain for a substantial period of time.

### • Optimal Frequency of Exercise.

There is not an ideal time frame for recovery between workouts. Instead, how frequently exercise should occur is based on how long it takes to recover. This is all dependent on fitness level, age, and to some degree genetics. The best advice is to never do the same workout two days in a row and to listen to your body to know

when you have optimally recovered. Exercising daily is reasonable, but alter the workouts from day to day with light days followed by heavy days, aerobic days followed by anaerobic, with separate focus on strength, flexibility, and endurance. If you are noticing decreased energy levels, or loss of strength with recurrent routines, you may be over-training. In that case, spread your workouts apart for more recovery time.

### • Dealing with Injuries.

Most training injuries will heal with time. However, once an injury occurs, the risk of having the same injury recur in the future increases. Typically, the first treatment for sports injuries follows the acronym RICE: Rest, Ice, Compression, and Elevation. Rest is the most critical piece, as the body needs to heal itself and cannot do so if the tendon, muscle, or joint continues to be stressed. The amount of rest depends on the injury and use of the injured area should not be avoided entirely. Complete avoidance of activity will result in stiffness of the muscle or tendon which will encourage immediate

recurrence of the injury. Ice immediately after the injury and 20 minutes a few times per day thereafter. Compression with ACE wraps reduces swelling and offer comfort and stability to an injury. Elevation of the injury above the level of the heart helps with swelling and pain. If the above does not improve symptoms or an injury recurs, the brigade is fortunate enough to have a Physical Therapist on staff that can assist with proper stretching and strengthening.

Continue to strive for better fitness. This will improve long-term health and short-term stamina needed for mission accomplishment, as well as improvement of mental fitness.

# 1-18 INFANTRY REGIMENT “VANGUARDS”



## ‘VANGUARD’ BATTALION SOLDIERS ASSIST AND TRAIN IRAQI ARMY ON M1A1 TANK

**Story and photo by Spc. William K. Ermatinger,  
2nd AAB, 1st Inf. Div.**

The “Desert Lions” of the 34th Mechanized Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division are getting an upgraded capability along with world-class training.

These Iraqi tankers are training with Soldiers from the 1st “Vanguard” Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division to learn M1A1 Abrams tank skills at Camp Taji, Iraq.

Since its reconstitution into the Iraqi Army in 2003, the 9th IA Div. has used salvaged Russian T-72 tanks. Now, with cooperation from the United States, the division is taking a major step into the future by switching to the U.S.-designed M1A1 Abrams Main Battle Tank, which has served as the main battle tank of U.S. forces for nearly 20 years.

“The new equipment (will help) the civilian population see the Iraqi Army’s strength and success.” said 1st Lt. Najah Dakhel, a platoon leader with 34th Mech. Bde., 9th IA Div.

Sgt. 1st Class Philemon Jones, with Company A, 1st Bn., 18th Inf. Regt. and an Arkport, N.Y., native, supervised the basic tank training class for the 9th IA Div. with help from Sgt. Craig Davis, also with Company A, 1st Bn., 18th Inf. Regt. and a Medford, N.J., native.

Najah said all of his Soldiers had prior experience on the T-72, and three had previous M1A1 experience, including him. That experience came from officer training required of all officers in the 9th IA Div.

Najah, several linguists, and Soldiers with Company A, 1st Bn., 18th Inf. Regt. worked together to teach the basics about the M1A1 tanks to the new Soldiers of the 9th IA Div.

The two-week basic tank training included a mix of classroom and hands-on lessons. Safety, maintenance and operations were some of the topics covered. The crew with the best performance was awarded a plaque at graduation.

This class broke with tradition by cross-training the crewmen in multiple positions to further their understanding



Soldiers with Company A, 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment supervise an Iraqi tank driver Jan. 13 as he navigates the M1A1 tank course at Camp Taji, Iraq.



**APACHE TRAINING:** Pfc. Andrew Carrell, with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment and a Jefferson City, Mo., native, receives instructions on the Apache flight controls Jan. 12 at Camp Taji, Iraq. (U.S. Army photo by Capt. Jacob Jeffers, 2nd AAB, 1st Inf. Div.)

of the tank's functions and capabilities. Iraqi tank crewmen traditionally trained and worked one position for their entire military careers. The Iraqi Soldiers still plan to hold a single position, but the training has changed to facilitate crew member modularity, in case a crew member needs to fill another position in the tank at a moment's notice.

After the basic tank training at Camp Taji is complete, the 34th Mech. Bde. will conduct advanced training at Besmaya Range in eastern Iraq.

"Advanced training in everything they need to do as a crewman and everything they need to do as a crew in order to fight with the tanks," Jones said. "I think when they go to Besmaya, they will see the results of this training. They will be able to focus more on the crew tasks instead of individual tasks.

Jones said with U.S. forces scheduled to withdraw from Iraq at the end of this year under the current Status of Forces Agreement, ensuring continued training is a priority.

"The basic momentum behind the class is also training cadre that are from the Iraqi Army to teach future classes," Jones said.

barrier are formidable obstacles, but "Vanguard" Soldiers are working on them.

"The tank terminology we have is not necessarily the tank terminology the Iraqis have used," Davis said.

Company A, 1st Bn., 18th Inf. Regt. is on schedule to finish training the rest of the 34th Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division. Plans for future training are based on the needs and requests from the Iraqi Army.

"It's been rewarding to have Soldiers who are genuinely excited about the tanks, who have been working with older equipment," Davis said. "They are excited to have something new and different, and they are very eager to learn."

There are a few wrinkles to iron out in the training process, however. Terminology and the language



**CLS TRAINING:** Staff Sgt. Eric Ring (third from left), a combat medic with Company C, 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment and a Lincoln, Neb., native, explains how to treat for air in the chest cavity to Iraqi medics Jan. 9 during a three-day course at the aid station at the Besmaya Combat Training Center near Baghdad. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. William K. Ermatinger, 2nd AAB, 1st Inf. Div.)



# LTC JOHN CROSS “VANGUARD 6”



To the Dagger Family and the Vanguard Nation, both here in Iraq and back at Fort Riley,

It's amazing to think that we have been away from Fort Riley for more than four months! With that in mind, that time has seen quite a few changes in the Vanguard Nation.

For starters, the “Dogs” of Company D completed their mission supporting the Tactical Command Post of the 9th Iraqi Army Division in early January, and immediately focused on closing the U.S. footprint at Joint Security Station Al Rashid. With the assistance of the 299th Brigade Support Battalion and our own support company, the “Falcons” of Company F, the Dogs turned over the keys to the JSS to the Iraqi Army on Feb.3. They are now living at Camp Taji with the rest of the battalion, and are in the process of taking over the mission to support the Stability Transition Team assigned to the 9th Iraqi Army’s headquarters. The Dogs’ professionalism and dedication were clearly demonstrated as they turned over this facility a full five months earlier than expected.

With the arrival of the Dogs on Camp Taji, Company A, “Apocalypse,” is shifting its focus to assisting and training the three brigades of the 9th Iraqi Army Division on small unit tactics, combat lifesaving, and training management.

Company B, “Barbaric,” continues to train and assist the commando,



intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance battalions of the 11th Iraqi Army Division at JSS Old MoD. They also provide the security and maintain the living spaces of all the STTs working there.

Company C, “Chaos,” remains steady in keeping Forward Operating Base Hammer in a semi-operational status in preparation of the Department of State taking it over in the coming months.

The engineers with Company C, “Venom,” Special Troops Battalion, continue to improve their partnership with the 9th and 11th IA Div.’s field engineer regiments and training them on their route clearance and explosive ordnance disposal capabilities.

The Falcons of Company F are doing a phenomenal job of supporting the Vanguards at JSS Old MoD as well as providing the recovery teams for Main Supply Route Tampa. Their ability to maintain our

vehicular fleet is also proving crucial as many of our vehicles have been ridden hard for the last several years. Their efforts will prove vital in the months to come.

Soldiers with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, “Hammer,” continue to provide support to all of the battalion’s operations. Their scout platoon serves as the Quick Reaction Force and also escorts U.S. EOD around the area of operations, while the mortar platoon provides security and mobility for Mr. Lowery as he works to bring stability to the region through agricultural and school development projects.

CSM Evans and I had the pleasure of conducting sensing sessions with all of the Vanguards this past month. During these sessions, they were able to ask questions of us and we were able to talk to them about our mission here and its importance to our long-term strategic partnership between Iraq and the United States. We are in the midst of something monumental with the drawdown of our forces here in Iraq. However, we cannot be lulled into a false sense of security. We must remain vigilant and not give the enemy an opportunity to strike. We remain polite, professional, and prepared to kill!

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In Omnia Paratus ~’TIL THE LAST ROUND!

John D. Cross

LTC, IN

**Vanguard 6**



# CSM MICHAEL EVANS "VANGUARD 7"



Vanguards,  
Greetings from Camp Taji, Iraq!

The last time I wrote, we were just accepting our battle space from 3rd Battalion, 69th Armor Regiment, and our formation was growing with the addition of the engineers with Company C, Special Troops Battalion and Soldiers with Company C, 1st Battalion, 8th Armor Regiment. The Soldiers of the Vanguard Nation have continued to drive forward in style.

With the 90-day mark in the past, and as we enter into the second quarter of the deployment, it seems like just yesterday we were getting off the plane. Time is truly flying by.

We will soon be bidding farewell to our Company C, 1st Bn., 8th Armor Regt. brothers as they wrap up their deployment and return to their Families and friends back at Fort Carson, Colo. The mighty "Chaos" Company has done a superb job here, and we cannot begin to thank them enough for their sacrifice.

As for the main elements of the Vanguard Nation, every one of our companies continues to set the standard daily with working hand-in-hand with their



Iraqi counterparts. As you know, we are working closely with the 9th and the 11th Iraqi Army Divisions here. It is truly a pleasure just watching them learn from our Soldiers as they work together to accomplish the mission. As stated in previous conversations both prior to deployment and here, the success of Iraq depends on us.

Now that we are settled in, so to speak, I encourage each of you to take the opportunity to get enrolled into college classes. For the officers in the formation, it's never too early to start a Master's degree program. For the enlisted Soldiers of the Vanguard Nation, now is the time. Get enrolled into a degree program, and get after it hard. You have time, even with the mission set. I myself am five classes short of my degree and have already registered. SGM

Stoker and each first sergeant are working hard as well. If we can do it, I know you all can. Let's see just how many college credits as a Nation we can attain through the remainder of our time here.

Numerous Soldiers are already returning from a well-deserved time on leave back home. As I get around and talk to everyone about their plans, each of you seems to have a detailed timeline. I just want to ensure that everyone has time set in to just decompress. And no, I'm not just talking about the plane ride back and forth from leave. Take the opportunity to relax. You've earned it!

Our Army continues to maintain the high-pace operational tempo. Our Soldiers continue to shoulder a heavy burden with the separation of Family and having to deal with the distractions of combat operations, yet they do so in a professional manner daily. I applaud our Soldiers and appreciate the individual sacrifices they make daily on behalf of the Vanguard Nation and this great country.

TIL THE LAST ROUND!

**Vanguard 7**



# LTC MICHAEL HENDERSON "DRAGON 6"



**S**oldiers, Families and Friends of the Dragon Battalion,

I hope everyone's 2011 is off to a happy and prosperous beginning and I thank everyone for their hard work and dedication. To our Families back home, thanks for your continued support.

January was a busy month for the Dragon Battalion and we have hit our stride in our mission to advise, train and assist the Iraqi Army. During the recent Arba'een commemoration, we witnessed more than 8 million people walk through the cities of Mahmudiyah and Lutifiyah without incident. Because of your combined security efforts and dedication to strengthening our Iraqi Army partners, the people of Iraq moved freely and securely through our area of operations.

In addition to the success of Arba'een, we witnessed the grand re-opening of the Zaidon Milk Storage Facility, a project that began in September 2009, ironically by the Dragon Battalion. You veterans of the last deployment should be justifiably proud

of this accomplishment, as it clearly demonstrates the progress we've made over time in Iraq, both economically and with security. It was made possible only through the hard work and dedication of Dragon Soldiers.

As we move past our 100th day in theater, I want to congratulate our leaders for their superb efforts at protecting the force. Our accidents and injuries have been minimal up to this point, which is a testament to our junior leaders and their active supervision and training of our Soldiers. However, as we become more familiar with our operational environment and new equipment, now is not the time to become complacent. I want every leader to remain engaged and vigilant, and continue to enforce the high standards we have set thus far. We still have many months to go and many goals to achieve before we redeploy. The success of this deployment will be judged upon how we finish.

Finally, to our Families: you continue to amaze us with your support, dedication and resilience in spite of the challenges of maintaining homes and Families while



your other half is deployed. None of our successes are possible without your steadfast support and hard work and we can never tell you enough how grateful we are for your efforts. Everything you do makes home seem a little closer.

Dragons, keep up the great work. We have accomplished a lot in a short period of time. I look forward to the challenges ahead!

Seek, Strike, Destroy,  
DRAGONS

**Dragon 6**



# CSM TONEY SMITH "DRAGON 7"



**D**ragons, thank you for making January and February very successful months under Operation New Dawn. The Dragon Battalion has overseen the opening of a milk storage facility that will greatly help the local economy and the health of the Iraqi citizens. Our Soldiers have conducted an enormous variety of combined training exercises with Iraqi Security Forces that covered marksmanship, first aid, land navigation, logistical support, traffic control point operations, and many other warrior skills. We have overcome a host of challenges in meeting the requirements of the mission, and maintained focus in spite of a very exciting postseason of football.

In the midst of patrolling and training, several of our Dragons took time to professionally develop themselves by preparing for the Dragon Soldier/NCO of the Month Board. There were many excellent candidates that stood in front of my board, but the "Eagles" of Company E stood out amongst their peers, winning three of the four awards in the last two

months given to the best performers, two for Soldier of the month and one for NCO of the month. However, I'd like to congratulate all our Dragons who participated and anticipate seeing many more great young leaders attend future Dragon Battalion boards.

January was the last month that we will be working with our partners, the 228th Engineer Company from the Pennsylvania National Guard. They have been a great asset and steadfast in their duties, despite the many hazards and improvised explosive device attacks they face on their route clearance missions. Thank you for your service and have a safe and successful redeployment.

I'd also like to now welcome our new Engineer brothers from the 511th Engineer Company out of Fort Campbell, Ky. We look forward to a great partnership and welcome you to the Dragon family. I encourage our Soldiers and Families to reach out to these Soldiers as they settle in here.



Despite our great success thus far, the mission is far from complete and the stakes for our country's mission and the people of Iraq have never been higher. I implore you, Dragons, to retain the focus and work ethic you've displayed thus far. To our Families, thank you for your continued support and never forget the crucial part you play in the success of this historic endeavor we have all embarked upon.

Seek, Strike, Destroy,  
**DRAGONS!**

**Dragon 7**

# 1-63 ARMOR REGIMENT "DRAGONS"



## SHOOTING STRAIGHT

### 'DRAGON' BATTALION SOLDIERS HONE CLOSE-RANGE FIRING SKILLS

Story and photos by 2nd Lt. Douglas Bengal, 2nd AAB, 1st Inf. Div.

The rise of the midmorning sun was accompanied by the sharp crack of small-arms fire ripping through the air Jan. 8, as the mortar platoon attached to Company C "Cobra," 1st Battalion, 63rd Armor Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division honed their shooting skills.

On an Iraqi range at Joint Security Station Muthana, Soldiers zeroed their weapons in preparation for the day's training, ensuring their rounds impacted exactly where they were aimed.

With zeroing complete, the platoon began short-range marksmanship training. Daily practice paid off, as the Soldiers completed "ready-up" drills from different firing stances and while practicing tactical reloads.

After the static portion of firing, Soldiers engaged targets while moving as a group and from the kneeling position. Their target was a

piece of paper attached to the center of a green silhouette. Simulating the disabling zone of a target, shooters were informed that only hits on the paper counted.

Staff Sgt. Larry Hornbaker, with Company C, 1st Bn., 63rd Armor Regt., said there are multiple benefits of



using the paper for short-range marksmanship. First, as

the paper visibly perforated, it gave shooters immediate feedback as their rounds connected with their target. In turn, it places emphasis on accuracy, ensuring shooters do not just fire swiftly, but with control and composure.

"It's good training and it's really fun," said Pfc. Timothy Gresham, with Company C, 1st Bn., 63rd Armor Regt. and a Glendale, Calif., native.

The second component of the mortar platoon's range was preci-

sion marksmanship—with a unique twist. The "Cobra" Soldiers competed against one another, not only in terms of accuracy, but hands of cards.

Two at a time, each with their own target deck of 2 ½-by-3 ½-inch playing cards, Soldiers played poker with 15 rounds and three hands. Each card could be shot, and thereby included in a hand, only once. The drill required shooters to exercise target identification, memorization, an element of gamesmanship, as well as fundamentals of marksmanship.

Aside from bragging rights, the competition also offered a lucrative prize. The platoon leader would cover the top shooter's eight-hour guard shift. Armed with that thought and their M-4 carbines, shooters took careful aim downrange.

Three brackets later, Pvt. Daniel Longsdorf, with Company C, 1st Bn., 63rd Armor Regt. and a Kansas City, Mo., native, placed his final rounds into a 10, jack, queen, king and ace of the same suit. It was a hand that his opponent was unable to beat.

"Becoming a better marksman, one royal flush at a time," Longsdorf said. "That's what it's all about."

1st Sgt. Alexander Aguilastratt (left) and Iraqi Army Command Sgt. Maj. Thabit Kathum Braohan (right), discuss plans for upcoming joint training events Jan. 17, 2011 at Joint Security Station Nasir Wa Salam. Aguilastratt and Braohan were assigned to units that battled each other in combat during the initial invasion of Iraq in 2003, but have since become close partners and allies.



## TWO SENIOR NCOS WHO SERVED ON OPPOSITE SIDES DURING INVASION PARTNER FOR IRAQ'S FUTURE

Story and photo by Spc. C. Michael Graham, 2nd AAB, 1st Inf. Div.

On a cool, pristine, afternoon at Joint Security Station Nasir Wa Salam, Iraq, two combat-hardened veterans sat across a plywood coffee table. The men, from different nations, share war stories and talk of future plans, the most immediate of which is a joint live-fire range with Company A, 1st Battalion, 63rd Armor Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division and the 6th Iraqi Army Division.

This isn't the first time the two leaders have met. Their first meeting, however, was under quite different circumstances. Their units engaged each other in battle during the initial stages of Operation Iraqi Freedom. But now, with those days in the past, the needs of Iraq's present and preparations for the future have brought the two men together again. Reconstruction, training, cooperation and peace are prominent points of the conversation.

"We have made strong friendships here," said Iraqi Army Command Sgt. Maj. Thabit Kathum Braohan, command sergeant major of the 24th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division. "It is my hope that they last forever."

That sentiment is shared, said 1st Sgt. Alexander Aguilastratt, first sergeant of Company A, 1st Bn., 63rd Armor Regt. and a Miami native, making discussions between the pair efficient and amiable.

Braohan often visits JSS Nasir Wa Salam to coordinate joint training events, which also provides an opportunity for him and Aguilastratt to discuss other aspects of the relationship between their forces.

"(Company A) has been very cooperative and we solve problems together," Braohan said.

According to the two leaders, the security and stability in their area of operations is no coincidence.

"This is really a cooperative (mission) and our relationship with (Company A) has been contributive to the effort in the area," Braohan said.

Aguilastratt and Braohan have been working closely to ensure that cooperation. Rifle ranges, military classes, and instruction in medical skills are among the training events being planned in the coming months.

And in planning for those upcoming training events, the two leaders both draw on the experience gained in their long military careers.

Braohan, who joined the Iraqi military in 1984, has participated in every conflict Iraq has been involved in since that time. In 2003, Braohan was based with Iraqi forces in Karbala. Aguilastratt was there as well, as a member of the 82nd Airborne Division. Now, however, the two men are fighting the same fight.

Braohan said he is optimistic about the path forward for Iraq, but acknowledges the country still faces challenges.

"There are many (political and tribal) groups in Iraq, over 400 parties, and progress is slow," Braohan said. "If a ship has many drivers it never goes straight."

But, he said, his unit's partnership with Company A is one of the success stories as Iraq moves forward. Each day, progress is made between the partners in building a safer, more secure Iraq, Braohan said. And, as an added benefit, both units have strengthened their skills and professionalism.

"We are making good friends now," he said. "We will always be friends."



### 'DRAGONS' ESSENTIAL IN MILK PROCESSING PLANT REOPENING:

An Al Bahn Company chemist takes a sample of a batch of milk Jan. 20 processed by the newly-opened facility in Zaidon, Iraq. The 1st Bn., 63rd Armor Regt. began redevelopment of the facility on its 2008-2009 deployment and were able to see the fruits of their labor when the plant reopened in January 2011. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Justin Phe-mister, 2nd AAB, 1st Inf. Div.)

# 1-7 FIELD ARTILLERY REGIMENT "LIGHTNING"



## 'FIRST LIGHTNING' SOLDIERS CONDUCT

**P**  
**S**  
**D**

Sgt. 1st Class Ottis Crawford (right), with Battery A, 1st Battalion, 7th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, observes Iraqi Army Soldiers during a training exercise at Joint Security Station Old MoD.

## TRAINING WITH IA PARTNERS AT JSS OLD MOD

Story and photos by 1st Lt. William Simpson,  
*2nd AAB, 1st Inf. Div.*

Iraqi Army Soldiers conducting dismounted operations in the Rusafa area notice a cameraman recording their movement from an alleyway and notify their squad leader of the potential threat.

Simultaneously, the senior scout notices a roadside bomb 40 meters ahead. The scout immediately moves to cover as he alerts the other members of his patrol. The squad leader sends a fire team into the alleyway to detain the cameraman while he requests the support of the explosive ordnance

disposal unit.

This is just one of many different training scenarios conducted by 3rd Platoon, Battery A, 1st "First Lightning" Battalion, 7th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division during a tactics, techniques and procedures class taught to their Iraqi Army counterparts at Joint Security Station Old MoD in Baghdad.

The platoon's primary mission is serving as the personal security detachment for the Stability Transition Team at the Rusafa Area Command, safeguarding

and transporting military leadership during battlefield circulation. However, they have taken on the additional task of developing the PSD for Iraqi Army elements they partner with.

The 30 new Iraqi Soldiers arrived at JSS Old MoD immediately after their Basic Training Course, still discussing how well they had marched at their graduation the day prior.

Utilizing the crawl-walk-run style of training in which students progressively build on what is learned before, each day began with an hour of physical training



Spc. Zaine Mather (right), with Battery A, 1st Battalion, 7th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division and a Yuma, Ariz., native, is searched by an Iraqi Army Soldier during a training exercise at Joint Security Station Old MoD, Iraq.

ulations was to force the Iraqi PSD to react with the proper tactics and techniques while maintaining communication within their unit during confusing and difficult scenarios, said Sgt. 1st Class Ottis Crawford, with Battery A, 1st Bn., 7th FA Regt. and a Cleveland, Tenn., native.

These drills also gave the Iraqi leadership an opportunity to exercise effective command and control over their new Soldiers. In addition, the scenarios gave the Soldiers a valuable opportunity to train alongside their officers and noncommissioned officers, helping to build the relationship and trust between them.

Among the more noticeable characteristics of the training was the constant presence of at

least one Iraqi officer overseeing the training, observing the strengths of the Iraqi forces, and being directly involved in the development of their unit.

“This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to learn from the most professional Army in the world,” Khazal said. “We are lucky to have them here, so you need to ask the questions and soak up everything (the American leaders) and (their) Soldiers tell you.”

The efforts of 3rd Platoon, Battery A, 1st Bn., 7th FA Regt., coupled with the continued partnership efforts of remaining American forces deployed in support of Operation New Dawn, aim to allow the Iraqi Army to continue increasing its capabilities, ultimately securing a more stable and sovereign Iraq.

before moving into the classroom portion. Each class consisted of a two-hour lecture and instruction portion followed by hands-on and interactive drills.

Although physical training usually consisted of stretching, calisthenics, push-ups, sit-ups and running, the last morning was dedicated to a combined soccer game between the U.S. and Iraqi Soldiers to boost morale.

As a capstone to each day of training, a combat simulation was set up, with 3rd Platoon Soldiers acting as the opposing force to the Iraqis. Focusing on different scenarios challenged the Iraqi Soldiers and their leadership to react under stress while building competence and strength.

The intent behind the sim-

## IFP GENERAL VISITS WOUNDED ‘FIRST LIGHTNING’ SOLDIER AT JSS LOYALTY



Maj. Gen. Ali Ibrahim Daboon Al Maksusi (left), commander of the 1st Federal Police Division visits and Staff Sgt. Eric Johnson (right), with Company G, 1st Battalion, 7th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division and a Canton, Miss., native, as he recovers at the battalion aid station at Joint Security Station Loyalty, Iraq from injuries received during an indirect fire attack. (U.S. Army Photo by Capt. Brian Cotter, 2nd AAB, 1st Inf. Div.)



# LTC ANDREW GAINEY "LIGHTNING 6"



Family, friends and fellow Dagger Brigade Soldiers: we hope that you are enjoying winter's end and spring's beginning.

We in the Lightning Battalion have been hard at work in eastern Baghdad through our continued partnership with the 1st Iraqi Federal Police Division. Among the most amazing aspects of our mission so far is how our Soldiers have performed as representatives not only of our battalion, but of the Army as a whole. Junior Soldiers are working side-by-side with their Iraqi counterparts, while our young leaders are performing as seasoned diplomats. It is through their efforts that we will leave Iraq as a stable and secure nation at the end of the year.

The batteries have taken to their respective tasks with a fervent dedication to completing the mission worthy of those who have served before us in Baghdad. CSM Bauer and I take great pride in reporting to you that our Soldiers have met and exceeded the already high standards of the battalion, elevating their performance in spite of the rigors of deployment.

Battery A has maintained a difficult mission set with platoons spread out to three locations across the city. Between escorting senior military VIPs to key engagements, training our Iraqi partners in the operations of a personal security detail, and running two patrol sets directly partnered with the Federal Police in their efforts to maintain security in the city, the battery has had its hands full. Yet, the "Black Knights" have embraced the challenges of operating across such a wide swath of the city and have executed their missions extraordinarily.

The "Raging Bulls" of Battery B continue to excel in all tasks presented to them. They have established a perpetual partnership with the Federal Police that includes working directly with them in their operations center, as well as running partnered missions to keep the city secure. Among the key aspects of the partnered operations between the battery and the Federal Police has been the distribution of humanitarian aid goods to the people of Baghdad. It has been eye-opening to witness the compassion of our Soldiers; a side they don't often get the chance to display in a deployed environment.



The "Gunslingers" of Company G have played a critical part in the battalion's success through their enduring logistical support efforts. The distribution platoon has conducted combat logistics patrols across Baghdad, keeping the force sustained with supplies and equipment. The missions run by Batteries A and B have been supported by the efforts of the maintenance section which has kept the fleet of armored vehicles up and running. Additionally, Company G has taken on the responsibility of maintaining Joint Security Station Loyalty through the Mayor's cell, ensuring that the quality of life for Soldiers is at its peak.



For the "Hellhounds" of Headquarters Battery, the mission remains diverse, challenging, and above all, essential to the overall fortunes of the battalion. Their key role of protecting the force is complex and difficult, but they have risen to the occasion through the outstanding performance of the Base Defense Operations Center. Additionally, they have contributed to the partnership by committing medics to assist in training their Iraqi counterparts, developing a crucial skill set without which the Federal Police would be unable to treat their own in the event of a medical emergency. The Personal Security Detail has escorted both the command sergeant major and I across the battlefield, allowing us both to circulate to the various locations at which our Soldiers reside. Headquarters also became the new home of the Route Clearance Team, who was attached to the battalion upon our arrival in Iraq and has taken on the tall order of keeping the roads safe for our more vulnerable convoys. On top of everything, the Soldiers of the Tactical Operations Center and the battalion staff have helped run the battalion on a daily basis.

Unfortunately, it saddens me to report that we lost a member of our battalion in January when SPC Jose Torre was taken from us. SPC Torre came to the battalion, along with the Route Clearance Team, and had quickly assimilated into the First Lightning family and displayed a tremendous acumen for leadership and selfless service. This tragic loss has been felt by everyone in the battalion and it has galvanized us a unit determined not to let his sacrifice be in vain. I want to encourage you to keep SPC Torre and his Family in your hearts and prayers, now and always. In conclusion, I want to thank you for the continued support of the First Lightning Soldiers. Moving forward, we are all committed to living up to the highest standards of excellence as we complete the mission here in Iraq. In honoring the legacy of Jose Torre, we will continue to live up to our motto:

"Never broken by Hardship or Battle!"

FIRST LIGHTNING!

*Lightning 6*  
LTC Andrew C. Gainey  
*Lightning 7*  
CSM William F. Bauer



# CSM WILLIAM BAUER "LIGHTNING 7"





# LTC MATTHEW MOORE "LONGKNIFE 6"



Troopers of 5th Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment and members of the Longknife Family back home,

G'day; I hope everyone is well. I want to begin this month's column by giving thanks to the men and women of the Longknife Squadron. I can't begin to tell you how proud I am of the work they have done and continue to do.

The squadron is currently dispersed across the great city of Baghdad, but stands strongly as one. Seminole Troop currently resides in the heart of the city at Victory Base Complex. They conduct combat logistics patrols to ensure Troopers receive the supplies they need, as well as the care packages you send.

In the northern part of the city, near the famous Khadimiya shrine at Joint Security Station Justice, Comanche Troopers and the Squadron's combat advisors train the 2nd Iraqi Federal Police Division on important security tasks.

Located at the southern side of the city are Apache, Blackfoot, and Headquarters Troops at Joint Security Station Falcon. Troopers in Apache and Blackfoot Troops conduct assisted reconnaissance patrols with the 2nd IFP Div. and meet with key leaders of multiple IFP brigades. HHT manages the command posts and the squadron's critical functions at



all three bases, while the squadron's attached route clearance platoon is on the road ensuring we are safe for travel.

Our continued efforts of advising, training, and assisting our Iraqi counterparts are having positive effects. A highlight of the tour thus far was providing security during Vice President Biden's visit to Baghdad. The Squadron also supported our Iraqi partners through two Islamic holiday pilgrimages, which consisted of over three million people passing by the walls of JSS Falcon while on their way to holy sites throughout the city. With each day, we become a stronger fighting force to ensure a safer Iraq tomorrow.

The winter months in Baghdad are not nearly as bad as Kansas. The temperature usually stays between thirty and seventy degrees. We sympathize with you and commend you on

your valiant efforts in dealing with the Kansas weather. I'm sure there are days you feel as if you would gladly trade places with your Trooper overseas. Whether it is putting up with the kids all day when schools are closed, or shoveling the driveway when the wind-chill hits thirty below zero. We take our hats off to you for staying strong during the frigid winter months at home.

In closing, CSM Tompkins and I would like to say to the Families and friends of the Longknife Squadron: we think of you every day and will continue to hold you in our hearts and minds. We realize the struggle you endure, having your loved ones away from your side. We value your efforts and praise your dedication. Your love and support is a constant reminder of why we do what we do as Soldiers. Hard times will come and go, but knowing that you are there is something we never take for granted. Please see the Squadron's Facebook page for pictures and more, located at <http://www.facebook.com/5.4Cavalry>

**PREPARED AND LOYAL!**

**Longknife 6**

# 5-4 CAVALRY REGIMENT "LONGKNIFE"



Sgt. Richardo Spence, a civil affairs noncommissioned officer with 5th Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division and a Gahanna, Ohio, native, greets children outside of Al-Zawra Girls School Jan. 10 during a humanitarian assistance mission. (U.S. Army photo by 2nd Lt. John Pittman, 2nd AAB, 1st Inf. Div.)

## 'LONGKNIFE' SQUADRON PROVIDES HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE IN BAGHDAD

Story by 1st Lt. Joseph Malins, 2nd AAB, 1st Inf. Div.

Some of the most meaningful and effective missions undertaken by the 5th "Longknife" Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division are humanitarian assistance missions.

During these missions, Soldiers work with their Iraqi partners to distribute needed supplies and aid—such as food, blankets, shoes, school supplies and medical care—to the citizens of Iraq. These missions provide basic needs to the people of Iraq, as well as positive interac-

tions with U.S. forces and Iraqi Security Forces.

**"A LITTLE KINDNESS GOES A LONG WAY," DERENCIUS SAID. "IT BECOMES SOMEWHAT CONTAGIOUS AND BEFORE YOU KNOW IT, THE IRAQI SECURITY FORCES WILL WANT TO GO OUT THERE AGAIN AND DO WHAT THEY CAN TO HELP OUT."**

"We also work closely with the GoI to ensure that not only are (the Iraqi people) taken care of today, but that they will be provided essential services in the future," said Sgt. Richardo Spence, a civil

affairs noncommissioned officer with 5th Sqdn., 4th Cav. Regt. and a Gahanna, Ohio, native. "We firmly believe that if you give a man a fish you feed him for a day, but if you teach him how to fish you feed him for a lifetime. Today we are giving them the fish while we teach the local government to fish for themselves."

There are different kinds of humanitarian assistance. One of the most common types of missions is to distribute food, water, shoes and blankets to areas that lack these services to their families. Blankets and shoes are also given during the colder months when they are most needed. These missions provide the most basic level of subsistence for the people that receive it.

Longknife Soldiers have also been handing out school supplies to schools in the Baghdad area.

Spence said parents often are unable to provide their children with basic school supplies, such as paper and pencils. These humanitarian missions are frequently conducted at the school, and provide the U.S. forces and ISF a glimpse of its condition. The squadron's civil affairs personnel then work with the GoI to improve the school's facilities.

One of the most beneficial humanitarian assistance missions is to provide medical support to an area lacking that service. During these missions, military doctors, such as Capt. Anthony Derencius, a physician assistant

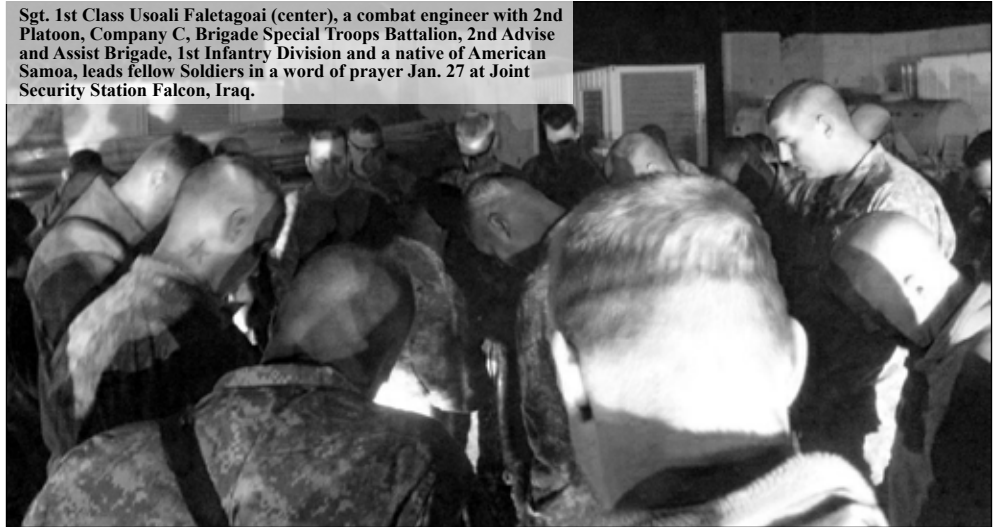


Lt. Col. Thursday (from left), commander of the 1st Federal Police Battalion, 7th Federal Police Brigade, a member of the local police, and an Iraqi Army Soldier distribute bags filled with humanitarian aid supplies Jan. 10 to the children of southwestern Baghdad during a humanitarian assistance mission. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Richardo Spence, 2nd AAB, 1st Inf. Div.)

with 5th Sqdn., 4th Cav. Regt. and an Oak Lawn, Ill., native, along with other military medical personnel, go to the community and provide medical treatment to its citizens.

“A little kindness goes a long way,” Derencius said. “It becomes somewhat contagious and before you know it, the Iraqi Security Forces will want to go out there again and do what they can to help out.”

Sgt. 1st Class Usoali Faletagoai (center), a combat engineer with 2nd Platoon, Company C, Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division and a native of American Samoa, leads fellow Soldiers in a word of prayer Jan. 27 at Joint Security Station Falcon, Iraq.



## ‘LONGKNIFE’ ROUTE CLEARANCE PLATOON SAFEGUARDS ROADS

Story and photos by 2nd Lt. Devin Osburn, 2nd AAB, 1st Inf. Div.



Staff Sgt. Joe Grant, a combat engineer with 2nd Platoon, Company C, Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, United States Division-Center and a Charleston, Ill., native, conducts a preventative maintenance check Jan. 27 before his mission out of Joint Security Station Falcon, Iraq.

Soldiers with the 5th ‘Longknife’ Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, partnered with the Iraqi Federal Police, travel the roads in search of any possible threat.

Using their training in detecting improvised explosive devices, these Soldiers go outside the wire often to provide clear roads for U.S. and Iraqi forces, as well as for the citizens of Iraq.

Second platoon, Company C, Special Troops Battalion, 2nd AAB, 1st Inf. Div., attached to 5th Sqdn, 4th Cav. Regt., has been operating out of Joint Security Station Falcon—in the southern part of Baghdad—for the past two months. During this time, the platoon has conducted more than 60 route clearance missions—clearing more than 2,500 kilometers of roadway. Nearly 20 of these missions were in combined patrols with the IFP.

“The IFP are very competent, friendly, and willing to work side-by-side with us, to help ensure the roadways are safe and clear of improvised explosive devices,” said 1st Lt. Cody Pucket, platoon leader with 2nd Platoon, Company C, STB and a Cove, Ore., native.

“The (IFP) are very quick to pick

up our tactics,” said Staff Sgt. Joe Grant, a combat engineer with 2nd Platoon, Company C, STB and a Charleston, Ill., native. “We just do things as we normally would and they fall in right beside us and mimic our movements.”

As the U.S. continues to draw down forces in Iraq, the platoon has evolved from doing combined patrols one or two times per week with the IFP, to making every operation a combined effort. The IFP have requested the assistance of the platoon’s Soldiers many times throughout the past several months to supplement their forces to help clear the streets of Iraq.

During the Ashura religious holiday, the platoon assisted the IFP by conducting nightly route clearance missions in the vicinity of the Kadamiyah Shrine, where more than a million visitors had flocked to pay homage. While the platoon was in the Kadamiyah area conducting patrols, there were no attacks or IEDs targeting the local populace.

“The relationship and continued training with the (IFPs) and the route clearance platoon is key to the success of the responsible withdrawal of U.S. Forces,” Pucket said. “Many of the IEDs found or detonated in the Baghdad area are targeting the local populace, Iraqi officials, Iraqi Army (Soldiers) and IFP (officers).”

# LTC CAMERON CANTLON

## “SABER 6”



To the Saber Troopers,  
friends, and Family,

I would like to start off by stating how proud I am of the men and women of Saber Squadron. These Soldiers have dedicated themselves and sacrificed their time and energy over the past several months to be thoroughly prepared for our deployment. It is a true honor and privilege to serve with the Troopers and extended Families over the next twelve months here in Iraq and back home.

While we originally deployed with our assigned brigade, 3rd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, I am excited about the privilege to work with the Soldiers of the 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division in our mission here in Baghdad.

Saber Squadron’s current mission is to serve as the United States Forces – Iraq reserve unit. Even though we have been in Iraq only a brief time, our Troopers have been busy



in support of this mission throughout Baghdad.

I, and the Soldiers of Saber Squadron, look forward to working with the Iraqi Security Forces, government leaders, and local citizen leadership to promote a safe and stable Iraq. We are anxious to serve the ISF and Iraqi people in any means possible.

I consider it an honor that we are a part of the responsible drawdown of U.S. forces from Iraq. For the past eight years, Soldiers from all units have made great sacrifices to achieve what we have gained in Iraq. I know our

actions on this final deployment will pay homage to the sacrifices and legacy of those Soldiers.

To the Saber Families -- thank you for all your wonderful support throughout the months we trained and the time we have already spent deployed. While we are thousands of miles away, the emails and packages you send us keep us close to home. We miss you and you are always in our thoughts and prayers.

In closing, I am proud to be working with the men and women of Saber Squadron on this mission to Iraq. I know we are going to witness great things on this mission, and through our actions, we will make Iraq a stronger and more stable nation.

**SABERS NEVER QUIT!**

**Saber 6**



# SGM RICHARD BURNETTE

## “SABER 9”



To the Saber Troopers,  
Friends, and Family,

It is great to be back in Iraq serving our nation. Having been deployed before to Iraq and Baghdad, it is an honor to be a part of one of the final missions in Iraq and seeing the safe re-deployment of all Soldiers from this campaign.

We have the honor of being part of the greatest cavalry brigade in the Army, the “Greywolfs,” and for this deployment, the honor of working with the “Dagger” brigade from the 1st Infantry Division. The Dagger brigade has always set and maintained high standards in all they do. We will uphold these standards and we will do everything in our power to make them proud of the Saber Squadron.

To the Saber Soldiers: Your time has finally arrived. You have put in countless hours of training for this mission and sacrificed precious time with your loved ones. I am confident in your abilities to successfully accomplish this mission. The 12 months we spend here will go quickly, but I expect you to endure the hard times and overcome the challenges we may face. Finally, it is an honor to be your squadron command



sergeant major and I will do everything in my power to assist you in your mission and ultimately get you back to your loved ones who are waiting for you at home.

Our current mission in Iraq is to serve as the United States Forces – Iraq reserve unit. This mission has granted us the unique opportunity to influence the Iraqi Security Forces and people in numerous ways. We will support our Iraqi counterparts in many different facets and will do our best to help bring stability and peace to this newly-formed democracy. We have already had troops called to support the ISF in the “Day of Demonstration” and are standing by to receive new orders. All of you must be ready to react at a moment’s notice. Never let your

guard down and continuously maintain the standards in all you do.

To the Saber Families, thank you for continued support as we successfully accomplish our mission here. Your support is invaluable to your Trooper, and I know he or she looks forward to every phone call, photograph, email, or package from home. We think about you every day, and we understand that without you doing your part back stateside, we could not do our part here. We look forward to getting back to you as soon as we can after we honorably complete our mission in Iraq.

Finally, there is a lot of work to be done here in Iraq for Saber Squadron. While we may not know all the challenges that lay before us, I am confident that Saber Squadron will leave a great legacy throughout this mission in Iraq that honors the countless sacrifices that Soldiers have made since 2003.

**SABERS NEVER QUIT!**

**SABER 9**

# 6-9 CAVALRY REGIMENT "SABER"



While some people might fear the sight of blood and hate the feeling of needles, the medics of 6th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division jump at every opportunity to improve their medical and life-saving skills.

All the medics of 6th Sqdn., 9th Cav. Regt. are trained to Level 1 care standards per Army regulations. These skills allow the Soldiers to set up and run an independent aid station to treat and stabilize Soldiers after an injury, especially those that threaten life, limb or eye sight.

However, when a patient comes into the aid station with a condition that requires skills outside of this training, such as dental problems, the patient must be sent off to a Level 2 medical facility. Fortunately for the Saber medics, the squadron has been advantageously situated next to a Level 2 care facility.

"Being next to this (TMC) has given us a unique opportunity to cross-train on a new set of skills that will allow us to better treat the Troopers of the squadron," said Staff Sgt. Robert Casto, treatment noncommissioned officer



## 'SABER' SQUADRON MEDICS BROADEN SKILLS

STORY AND PHOTOS BY 2ND LT. DANIEL ELMBLAD,  
2ND AAB, 1ST INF. DIV.

with 6th Sqdn., 9th Cav. Regt. and a Girard, Pa., native.



Taking advantage of this opportunity, the squadron's medics have set up a Level 2 training program with the Soldiers of the 546th Area Support Medical Company. There, the Soldiers learn new medical skills in the areas of lab work, dental, electrocardiograms, x-rays, and more.

"This training opportunity has allowed us to get some hands-on training in situations that we are not normally exposed to," said Pfc. Jesse Gould, 6th Sqdn., 9th Cav. Regt. and a Carrolton, Ga., native.

Currently, the training program is a two-week rotation that involves one squad from the medical platoon shadowing the soldiers from the 546th ASMC for a week and then getting hands-on training on these new Level 2 care skills the following week. The medics plan to continue rotating with the 546th ASMC as long as is possible.

"It is important to learn these skills because there may be heavier demands on medics and their abilities with the gradual drawdown of Soldiers from Iraq, and we may not always be next to a Level 2 care facility like this," said Sgt. Buddy Stratton, a treatment noncommissioned officer with 6th Sqdn., 9th Cav. Regt. and a St. Augustine, Fla., native.

By working with their fellow medical Soldiers, Saber medics are increasing their skill set, enabling them to provide the best care they can.

Pfc. Jesse Gould (right), a medic with 6th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, attached to 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division and a Carrolton, Ga., native, draws blood from a fellow Soldier during Level 2 care training with the 546th Area Support Medical Company Mar. 3 at Camp Liberty, Iraq.



Soldiers with A Troop, 6th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment prepare to walk to the aircraft that will take them to their area of operations in support of Operation New Dawn Feb. 23 at Victory Base Complex.

# SABER SQUADRON ARRIVES IN BAGHDAD TO SERVE WITH DAGGER BRIGADE

*Photos by Chief Warrant Officer 2 James Smotherman, 2nd AAB, 1st Inf. Div.*

*Organic to the 3rd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, out of Fort Hood, Texas, the Saber Squadron has been attached to the Dagger Brigade in its capacity as the United States Forces - Iraq reserve squadron.*

Sgt. 1st Class Laquinta Webster with 6th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment prepares to board an aircraft Feb. 23 at Camp Liberty, Iraq.



Sgt. Stefen Bowen, a cavalry scout with 1st Platoon, A Troop, 6th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment and a Charleston, W. Va., native, waits to board an aircraft Feb. 23 at Camp Liberty, Iraq.

Soldiers with A Troop, 6th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment buses that will take them to their area of operations in support of Operation New Dawn.



# 299TH BRIGADE SUPPORT BATTALION “LIFELINE”



Sgt. Jamal Fowler, left, an automated logistics specialist with Company A, 299th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division instructs members of the Iraqi Federal Police on container-handling operations Sunday, Feb. 6, 2011, at Joint Security Station Justice, Iraq. Soldiers from Co. A worked with the IFP members to develop greater logistics skills and focused on a variety of areas to include fuel handling, bulk movement of supplies and accountability procedures.



## ‘LIFELINE’ BATTALION AIDS IRAQI FEDERAL POLICE IN DEVELOPING LOGISTICS CAPABILITIES

*Story and photo by Capt. Jonathan Bingham,  
2nd AAB, 1st Inf. Div.*

On a warm, bright morning, members of Company A, 299th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division boarded a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter in order to move to Joint Security Station Justice to conduct logistics training with members of the logistics company with the 2nd Iraqi Federal Police Battalion.

After movement to JSS Justice, the team linked up with members of a Stability Transition

Team and other personnel from D Troop, 5th Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd AAB, 1st Inf. Div. who had done much of the leg-work in preparing the training site at the IFP compound adjacent to JSS Justice.

Composed of members from each of the sections in Co. A, 299th BSB, the training team consisted of trained logisticians from a broad spectrum of expertise to include transportation and maintenance, fuel handling and the storage and movement of bulk supplies, as well as other logistics specialties.

On the first day of training, Sgt. Marri L. Flores, a motor transport operator with Co. A, instructed IFP members on operator-level maintenance, showing them how to properly conduct preventative maintenance checks and services—a battery of tests used to determine a vehicle’s readiness for a mission—on the humvees and commercial trucks they use during missions.

During the second day of training, the IFP provided team members a tour of their ammunition storage areas where they offered suggestions on ways to improve storage safety.

Training on the third day focused primarily on the safe handling and movement of shipping containers. Team members first conducted a walk-around of the vehicles used to move the bulky containers, pointing out maintenance concerns and then giving personal instruction to each member of the class on safely operating the controls.

On the final day of training, team members toured the fuel-issue point and provided passed on tips for improved accountability procedures and storage safety.

“Overall, the training was well received and the (IFP) has taken another step in the process of progressing in support the stability of the Government of Iraq,” Flores said.

# COMPANY C CONDUCTS COMBINED MEDICAL ENGAGEMENT AND HUMANITARIAN AID OPERATION, HELPING HUNDREDS

Story by 1st Lt. Efther Samuel, & photos by 1st Lt. Teresa Egan, 299th BSB, 2nd AAB, 1st Inf. Div.

Soldiers with Company C, 299th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, in conjunction with the Iraqi Army's 54th Brigade, 6th Division and Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Regiment, 63rd Combined Arms Battalion, 2nd AAB, 1st Inf. Div. conducted a combined medical engagement and humanitarian assistance operation in Baghdad.

The event included a team of professionals consisting of three Iraqi Army medical providers, three 2nd AAB, 1st Inf. Div. medical providers, an Iraqi Army dentist and several Iraqi Army and U.S. Army medics.

"Working alongside my fellow U.S. providers and the Iraqi providers was very heartwarming and inspiring," said Capt. Karen Parker, senior physician assistant with 299th BSB, 2nd AAB and a Junction City, Kan., native. "I enjoyed seeing the Iraqi doctors taking care of their people in open forum and interacting in a caring manner."

The event brought out many individuals in the local community who do not often have the opportunity to receive medical care. Within just a few hours, the medical team evaluated and provided treatment to over 700 patients.

Maj. Jason Clark, brigade surgeon with 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division and a Columbia, S.C., native, listens to a patient's heartbeat during a combined medical engagement in Baghdad.



"(It) being my third deployment, I am seeing progress in the communities and the willingness of the locals to come to the events to meet their Iraqi medical providers and the American medical teams," said Parker.

Many of the patients who visited the providers were experiencing problems associated with malnutrition, high blood pressure, upper respiratory symptoms, and congenital genetic disorders. While some of these ailments are not treatable with medicine, education can be invaluable in reducing symptoms and preventing further health issues.

"As an Army Nurse, combined medical engagements give me the opportunity to teach local nationals about easy and inexpensive ways to take care of themselves and their

families," said 1st Lt. Teresa Egan, brigade nurse with 299th BSB, 2nd AAB and a Milwaukee, Wis., native. "Much of the mission focuses on educating the local populace about common ailments and how to care for them without having to rely on only taking pills."

Indeed, much of the mission was focused on education, said Parker. The local populace benefits from information on first aid and basic medical skills, in addition to receiving medications, she said. Egan agreed.

"I thoroughly enjoyed sitting side-by-side with Iraqi healthcare

professionals, while I explain to a few patients, for example, that a smoke-filled house does not help their children's asthma," she said. "It is a simple lifestyle change they can make to improve the health of their children. It does not cost money or require medication, and they are so happy to hear they can make a difference for themselves."

Medical care was not the only focus of this mission, said Parker—the team provided some humanitarian support as well. During the visit, they handed out over 400 food kits, 150 book bags, 300 soccer balls and a few wheelchairs to the families within the community.



# LTC DALE FARRAND

## “LIFELINE 6”



It has been a great couple of months for the Lifeline Battalion – months of landmarks and changes. Shortly after we assumed responsibility for sustaining Baghdad, we came upon the holiday season and the 1st “Old Ironsides” Armored Division, our USD-C headquarters, was replaced by the 25th “Tropic Lightning” Infantry Division. I would like to personally thank all of the Families and friends for their support by swamping us with Christmas decorations – the Soldiers of Lifeline were definitely in the holiday spirit as a result.

The battalion has been busy, busy, busy – conducting patrols almost nightly and remaining the only support battalion in all of Baghdad, sustaining U.S. Soldiers with everything from food to fuel, and first aid to fixing their equipment. We have seen one base controlled by the “Dagger” brigade close and before long will see another. Each base closure means we are closer to completing our mission in Iraq.

Meanwhile, Soldiers from Atlas, Bandit, and Cobra companies have trained Iraqi Security Forces on their specialties while Headhunter Company continues to protect the patrols we run around Baghdad. It is a tough environment. Daily, Lifeline Soldiers wake up in a foreign country, go to work, and show more restraint than they have ever



shown before while keeping their guard up. This is truly an environment where one Soldier can make a big difference in the lives of the Iraqis and the completion of our mission.

The battalion has endured the Iraqi winter and the one constant that comes with the cold weather and rain is mud. The days are starting to get longer, warmer and sunnier. This, of course, also brings with it the 101 days of 100+ degree heat that Iraq is famous for.

Besides the standard accolades, promotions, re-enlistments, and Soldiers/NCOs of the month, Lifeline Soldiers were inducted into a couple of elite groups. First, every Soldier deployed with the Lifeline Battalion is now authorized to wear the shoulder sleeve insignia, former wartime service of the Big Red One on their right arm – joining the roll of combat veterans of the old-

est division in the United States Army.

Secondly, we presented Combat Action and Medic Badges to 53 Lifeline Soldiers – a coveted award for actions on enemy contact that no one ever wants to earn twice. These Soldiers did their job and they did it well. They traveled down the most active route in Baghdad because there were 80 Soldiers living in the most remote base in Baghdad who were counting on receiving what those Soldiers were delivering. When engaged with the most deadly improvised explosive devices the enemy could produce, they conducted battle drills, maintained site security, provided medical care to the wounded, completed battlefield damage assessments and repair, and continued their mission.

Lastly, four Soldiers earned the rare opportunity to receive battlefield promotions—automatic advancement to the next rank—for their performance in combat. We are proud of their extraordinary performance of duties and exceptional leadership and we look forward to seeing each of them excel at their new rank.

### **Lifeline 6**



# LTC SHILISA GETER "GRIFFIN 6"



Dear Griffin Family,

As we enter the mid-way portion of what is likely our Army's historic last year in Iraq, through our own loss and sacrifice we have been reminded of the precious sacrifices of the brave Soldiers whom have preceded us over these last eight years, many of whom gave what President Lincoln called "the last full measure of devotion."

Following in the Army's noblest tradition, our engineers from Company C patrol the highways and byways of Baghdad province daily. The engineers have the dangerous mission of keeping our fellow Soldiers and civilian partners safe from enemy attack.

Our military police Soldiers are also regularly on patrol throughout the province and they too have met every mission with the courage and pride that has come to be expected of Griffins. While most travel these sometimes dangerous roads with the intent of avoiding deadly enemy entrapments, the engineers of Venom Nation and Hellraisers patrol with the intent of seeking them out. One would be hard pressed to find a truer definition of bravery than Soldiers whose mission is to seek out danger to protect their fellow Soldiers.

Our brave signaleers and military intelligence Soldiers, many operating out of remote and austere locations, also join with the work of the Engineers and MPs in enabling the "Dagger" brigade to take part in this histor-



ic endeavor. They must keep us connected through multi-faceted communication networks, while obtaining the most near real-time intelligence for early warning and proactive measures. Our support Soldiers too are located throughout the area, many doing jobs they were not formally trained to do, but all working tirelessly for a common purpose. Wherever you find any Griffin Soldier, there you find our nation's finest.

The Griffin Nation also proudly boasts the only MP company in Baghdad. The 94th MP Company deployed out of Fort Dix, New Jersey, and is well on their way to completing a successful tour. They deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and ventured into Operation New Dawn. Soon, they will be reunited with their loved ones. We wish them a safe return and truly thank them for their hard work and dedication. We will then welcome the 212th MP Company, out of Fort Bliss, Texas, to the Griffin team.

It's a profound honor for CSM Washington and I to walk

daily amongst heroes. My heart personally swells with pride when I think of the great work being done here. The sacrifices of our dear Family members are just as deep and heroic as our Soldiers. Each and every Soldier and Family member is a true hero.

As we ponder these sacrifices, we should recall also our reasons for joy. So far during this deployment, 11 little Griffins have been born. What a moment to contemplate—new American sons and daughters born to heroes while in combat. How many of our fellow Americans, numbering now over 300 million, can make the claim that their dad or mom answered our nation's call and heroically served in combat? I personally know 758 families who can proudly make that statement!

Please enjoy your time together as you reunite over your R & R leave. We understand that you can't fit a year's worth of love and joy into 2 weeks, but you can use this time to reflect on what is truly important in life.

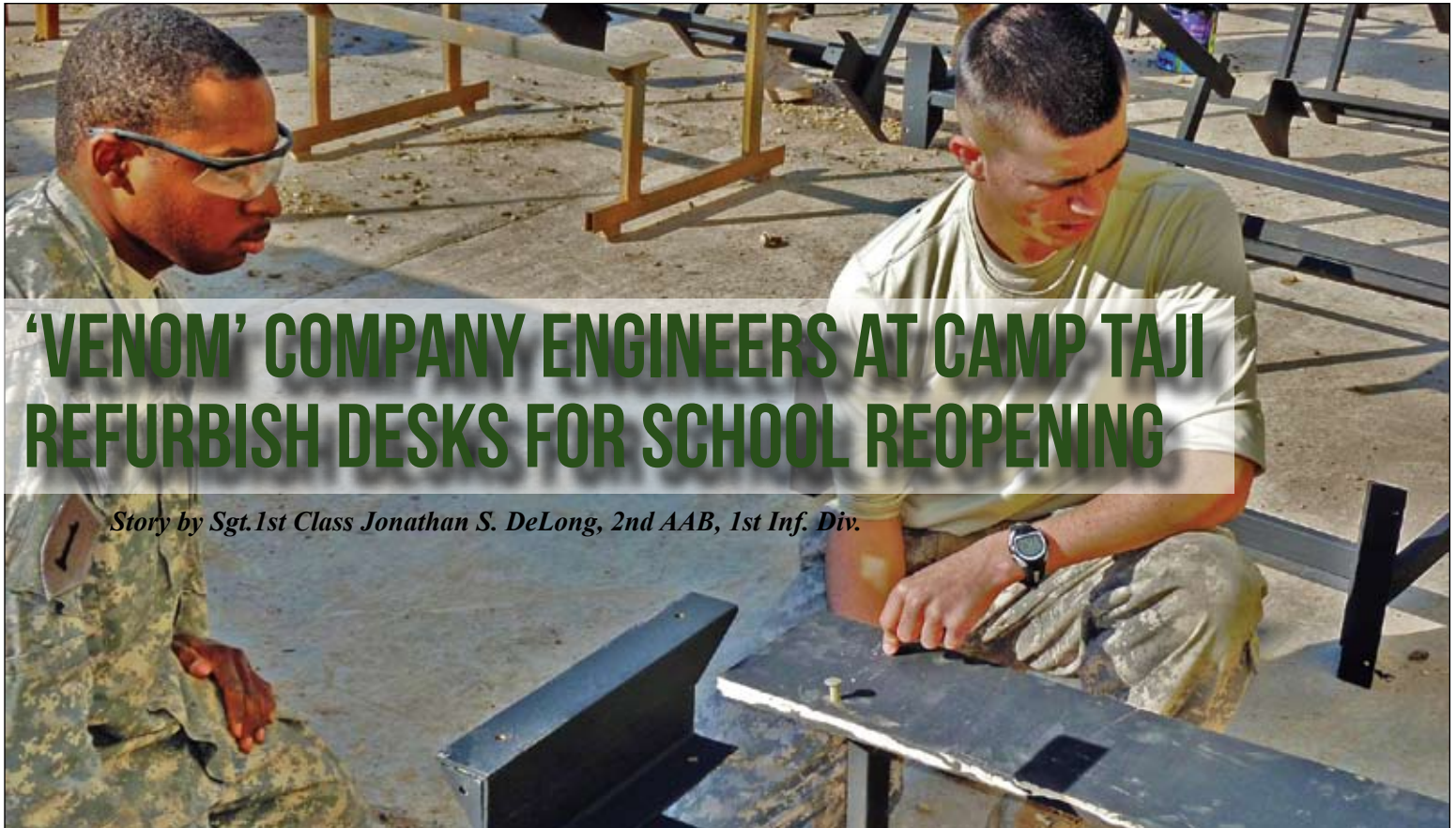
**GRIFFINS! POINT OF THE DAGGER!**

**No Mission Too Difficult! No Sacrifice Too Great!**

**LTC GETER**

**CSM WASHINGTON**

# 2-1 SPECIAL TROOPS BN. "GRIFFINS"



## 'VENOM' COMPANY ENGINEERS AT CAMP TAJI REFURBISH DESKS FOR SCHOOL REOPENING

*Story by Sgt. 1st Class Jonathan S. DeLong, 2nd AAB, 1st Inf. Div.*

The Al Duwaya Elementary School in northern Baghdad is seen by many as a symbol of both the hard times Iraq has faced, as well as possibilities for its future.

It was designated as a combat outpost for U.S. Soldiers during the troop surge in 2007. Once it was no longer needed in that capacity, it was returned to the Government of Iraq and designated as an Iraqi Police station. Today, it is a school again, but many would hardly consider it to be a place of

*Pfc. Ronald Patterson, left, an engineer with Company C, Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division and a Miami native, and Pvt. Gabriel Anzar, with the same unit and a Victorville, Calif., native, assemble new school desks for Iraqi children at Camp Taji, Iraq. The desks will be donated to the Al Duwaya Elementary School in northern Baghdad, which is scheduled to reopen in March.*

learning.

The school has no electricity and holes riddle the walls. Shards of broken glass hang from window frames and exposed pieces of metal protrude from the walls.

But all that is changing as a renovation project is underway to refurbish the school. A local contractor and

construction crew have built new classrooms, offices, and bathrooms to make the school a better learning environment for students.

One thing that wasn't included in the project was new desks. While the school has desks, many are old, worn and damaged.

For Capt. Richard

*Spc. Javanny Gonzalez, an engineer with Company C, Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division and a Miami native, volunteers his carpentry skills to rebuild school desks for Iraqi children at Camp Taji, Iraq.*



their free time to assist in the refurbishment of the desks.

After seeing the fliers, 1st Sgt. Jason Miller, first sergeant of Company C “Venom,” Special Troops Battalion, 2nd AAB, 1st Inf. Div. and a Pocatello,

those who may not have had a carpentry background.

“We set up stations—similar to an assembly line—where Soldiers would work on one specific task,” he said. “This way we could make it easier for Soldiers who didn’t have carpentry experience.”

Toland, civil affairs officer with 1st “Vanguard” Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division and a Shelton, Wash., native, there was a simple solution—develop a volunteer project to refurbish the desks, in which all of the effort and supplies needed would be donated.

“We could have just spent the money to buy new desks for the children, and that is certainly done in other schools with great results,” Toland said. “We saw a project (here) that could give another chance to Soldiers and civilians looking for ways to do more.”

Toland coordinated with the battalion to transport all of the broken desks to Camp Taji, Iraq, where most of the battalion is based. From there, he received paint from the Camp Taji Mayor’s Cell, and hardware and tools from civilian contractors. After coordinating all of the support requirements, he created a flyer asking for people to volunteer

Idaho, native, wanted to help out. He encouraged his Soldiers to participate in the desk refurbishment and many were eager to take part.

For Miller, helping the children is one of the ways to bring stability to the country.

“If the children of Iraq can receive a quality education, it will be the key to developing Iraq and making the country a success,” he said.

Sgt. Steven Culley, an



*Pvt. Tiofilo Guerrero, an engineer with Company C, Special Troops Battalion, 1st Infantry Division and a Long Beach, Calif., native, helps paint new school desks for Iraqi children at Camp Taji, Iraq.*

engineer with Company C, STB and a Red Oak, Texas, native, said he saw his Soldiers participating in the refurbishment and wanted to help out. Culley honed his carpentry skills from working at his father’s construction company, and said he wanted to put those skills to use, especially in a way that helped

More than 20 desks have been completed, and work will continue until the school’s opening ceremony, scheduled for March.



# THE DAGGER EDGE

IN MEMORIAM...



SPC JOSE A. TORRE

Co. C, 2-1 STB

1989-2011