

WARHORSE STABLE

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Iraqis assume control of historic province



Brig. Gen. Razzak Abid Ali Mohammed, Karbala provincial police chief, Dr. Aqueel Mahmoud Kareem Al Khazali, Governor of Karbala, Maj. Gen. Oothman Ali Farhood, commander, 8th Iraqi Army Division, and Brig. Gen. Thomas C. Maffey, assistant division commander-manuver, 4th Infantry Div., sign documents officially turning over responsibility of the Karbala province from 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Inf. Div. to 4th Bde., 8th IA Div. June 2 at the 1st Battalion, 4th Bde., 8th IA Div. compound in Hindiniyah. This is the second brigade of the 8th IA Div. to assume responsibility of an operational area in the past three months from the Warhorse brigade.

Cpl. Michael Molinaro
Editor

FOB KALSU, Iraq—

A new era began in the Karbala province as Iraqi soldiers from the 4th Brigade, 8th Iraqi Army division assumed responsibility of the historic province from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, June 2 at the 1st Battalion, 4/8 IA Div. compound in Hindiniyah.

In a rousing ceremony befitting such an occasion, roughly 52, 856 square kilometers were passed to the 4/8 IA Div. as it became the second brigade in the 8th IA division in the past three months to assume responsibility of

an entire province south of Baghdad.

"Today is a significant step on the Iraqi Army's journey to bring peace and stability to Iraq," said Col. John Tully, commander, 2nd BCT. "It marks a step closer to normalcy, a step closer to the goal of full Iraqi control without any assistance from Coalition Forces."

A year ago, there were seven IA battalions that owned operational area in Iraq. Today, two IA divisions, 17 brigades, and 59 IA battalions now control operational area, reflecting the commitment by the Iraqi military and its leadership. The leaders from the 8th IA div. pledged to work closely with Iraqi police in Karbala and stay faithful to Iraqi civilians in their quest to end terrorism in the country.

As much as the 4/8 IA is energized in accepting its new duties, there was the same amount of appreciation given to Coalition Forces for the work they put in with the 4/8 over the past few years.

"We must thank Coalition Forces for helping us achieve this monumental goal," said Maj. Gen. Oothman Ali Farhood, commander, 8th IA Div. "They trained and supplied us and remain our partners as we deter terrorism in Iraq."

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Hello friends and family,

Well six months have been peeled off the calendar since we deployed in November and much has been accomplished throughout 2nd Brigade's area of responsibility.

We have started to pass the lead to the Iraqi Army in Najaf Province and will soon follow in Karbala and parts of Babil.

We still have plenty to do but the Iraqi army and police are slowly assuming more responsibility and getting stronger every day.

Training the Iraqi Army and Police remains a key task and they are coming together.

As the Iraqi Army and Police get stronger the number of Americans required to maintain order in Iraq will decrease, and that's the strategy for getting out of Iraq.

Go to any Forward Operating Base in the brigade's area and you will find our Soldiers training Iraqi Army Soldiers and Police Officers.

You will also find Soldiers out working with Iraqis to improve their water supplies, fix roads, repair schools, clean canals, find business for their factories, etc.

In this environment you have to be flexible.

Sadly over the past months we have lost some dear

friends and American heroes.

Heroes who answered our nation's calling and proudly suited up and wore the uniform when others sat on the sidelines.

We remain dedicated to honoring our fallen friends by continuing the mission

and finishing this fight so democracy and the rule of law will dominate Iraq not chaos and evil men.

Our nation and this brigade have sacrificed too much to walk away without finishing this fight properly.

This country is filled with evil men but we find more and more good men to work with who just want to end the violence and improve the lives of their families and communities.

With the formation of the new Iraqi Government, a body that will serve for the next 4 years, I am optimistic the Iraqis can put aside sectarian differences and pull together to find stability in this worn torn country.

You should be very proud of your Soldier; he/she does remarkable things every day, quietly getting the job done to the highest standard.

Thanks to all you do to support your Soldier.

Col. John N. Tully
Warhorse 6



CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

Appreciation: The Unspoken, Spoken.

By Ch (Capt.) Carl Otis
1st Battalion, 67th Armor Regiment

Among the emotions experienced by soldiers and families during deployment are loneliness, worry, anxiety and sadness. But there is another emotion that swims among the others that does not seem to belong. It is a dolphin among the sharks. It is appreciation. It is not appreciation for the emotions that seek to tear down, but for what the tearing down reveals: our inner most thoughts and feelings. Often, we build walls of protection around our soul to keep out the uncaring jabs of a cold world. Unfortunately those walls often keep loved ones out too. To discuss feelings is like poking a needle in our eye. Distance and separation may have put miles between us, but deployment creates a path for intimate communication. Once off limits, discussions of life, death and love are now open doors. Many recognize that life is short and that we cannot let the important things of life go unsaid.

But let me issue a word of warning: Like a kid in his first visit to a candy store, so too is the person who utilizes this communication without checking their emotions first. Harsh, uncontrolled words at a distance are more damaging to a relationship than trivial words about nothing. We cannot easily fix the damage of an angry word spoken as we could when we were together. Take care of your words and speak encouragement to each other. Do not leave the important things unsaid.

God bless.

Chaplain (CPT) Carl Otis

THE WARHORSE



STABLE

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IRAQIS ASSUME, CONTINUED FROM Page 1

Karbala is a model province for Iraq with a better security situation than the provinces that border Karbala to the north, Tully said. It achieved this reputation because of the presence of a very capable 4th brigade, a large Iraqi police force, and a strong governor.

"With strong political leadership and strong Iraqi security forces, Karbala will be secure," Tully remarked. "With security comes stability, and stability will lead to increased investments and economic opportunity."

Soldiers from the Warhorse brigade have been training with their Iraqi counterparts from the 4/8 since their arrival last year. The transition does not mean that the training or the support Coalition Forces provide IA soldiers in the province will cease. Tully stressed the fact that his Soldiers will not be leaving the province but instead moving to a support role as the IA takes the lead in the counterinsurgency fight.

"Coalition Forces remain team members and partners," said Tully. "We will continue to work to improve their equipment and logistics systems, and also continue to provide combat resources such as attack aviation, intelligence support, and logistics support."

"This is a good day."

MND-B commander meets with Babil leaders



Maj. Gen. James D. Thurman, commander, Multi-National Division-Baghdad, talks to sheiks and Iraqi security force leaders during a meeting June 3 at the Babylon Iraqi police academy in Hillah. The leaders discussed the current state of the security situation in the Babil province, one of four provinces Thurman's forces command.

By Cpl. Michael Molinaro
Staff Writer

FOB KALSU, Iraq – Maj. Gen. J.D. Thurman, commander, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, made a visit to the Babil province to talk about the region's security June 3 at the Babil Police academy in Hillah.

Maj. Gen. Qais Hamza, Babil provincial police chief, Col. Hatem, commander, 2nd Brigade, 8th Iraqi Army Division, and more than 100 sheiks representing various tribes throughout Babil invited Thurman and Col. John Tully, commander, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Inf. Div., to the meeting to hear Thurman's plans for stabilizing the area.

"I appreciate the chance to sit down with these leaders and assess the situation in Babil," Thurman remarked.

Qais opened the meeting by telling the sheiks and those in attendance that the Babil province has a good security situation and is in much better shape than other provinces in Iraq. He stated that it was up to everyone in the room to continue the progress in the region.

Thurman then took over the discussion and explained to everyone his duties and responsibilities as commander of MND-B, including being in command of more than 61,000 Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces, overseeing four provinces, meeting with provincial governors and chairmen and discussing ways to improve the IP with members of the Ministry of Interior.

Terrorism, sectarianism, armed groups and militias,

and criminal groups were the four reasons Thurman gave as to why violence exists in Iraq. He told the audience the goal of Coalition Forces is to help the Iraqis live in a state of security and not have the threat of terrorism or violence.

Disputes are solved through dialogue and the political process, like the meeting held today, Thurman said. There is no reason for the end result to be violence.

Unity, security, and prosperity are three key points that would enable Iraq to end the bloodshed and become the peaceful region that it is destined to be, Thurman continued. But to achieve that end state, all three must be in place.

"To have prosperity, you must have security," he said. "To have security, you must have unity."

Unity was the theme driven throughout the meeting by sheiks who spoke after Thurman addressed the crowd. One sheik said that terrorism thrives on sectarianism; it was the duty of all Iraqis to stand as one and prevent terrorism.

"This is our country, and it is ultimately up to us to get rid of terrorism so Coalition Forces can go home and we can enjoy a united Iraq," said another tribal sheik.

Once the meeting adjourned, those in attendance walked over to the dining facility for some traditional Iraqi fare. Some approached Thurman for some frank one-on-one discussion, and he

shook hands with many of the leaders and had his photo taken with them.

"Now is the time for all of us to unite, move forward and establish a stable and secure environment for all in Iraq," Thurman said.



Maj. Gen. James D. Thurman, commander, Multi-National Division-Baghdad, talks with Iraqi community leaders after a candid meeting with sheiks and Iraqi security forces from the Babil province June 3 in Hillah.

Soldiers honor heroes from past

By Cpl. Michael Molinaro
Editor

FOB KALSU, Iraq — Paying tribute and respect to the veterans of their battalion, Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, commemorated the 62nd anniversary of D-Day at Forward Operating Base Kalsu Tuesday.

Soldiers participated in the first annual 2-8 Inf. Regt. D-Day Ironman competition early in the morning, followed by a ceremony that celebrated the battalion's battle-tested Soldiers of yesterday and today.

"We will never forget the people who served during that time," said Command Sgt. Maj. Gabriel Cervantes, the architect behind the event. "They gave their life for our great country and were great American heroes."

The competition started at approximately the same pre-dawn timeframe, when 62 years ago, Soldiers from 2-8 Inf. Regt. were storming Utah Beach in Normandy, the first American troops to make it ashore on the fateful day.

Nineteen teams trekked their way around a 4.6 mile road track with 30-pound rucksacks strapped to their backs. Once their march was complete, Soldiers unpacked their interceptor body armor system, Kevlar helmets and proceeded to Sage/Morberg range to perform the weapons qualification portion of the competition. They had four minutes to shoot forty rounds, 20 rounds in the prone position and 20 standing, to achieve the best score possible.

Soldiers then made their way toward FOB Kalsu's North Gate area to conduct a standard Army physical fitness test once the weapons qualification round was over. They had two-minutes to do as many pushups as they could, two-minutes to accomplish as many

sit-ups as possible, and promptly perform a two-mile run.

Sweat-drenched teams soon followed with the final three segments of the competition: weapons proficiency, which had Soldiers clear, take apart, disassemble and assemble three separate machine guns; properly send digital unexploded ordnance reports; and correctly relay nine-line medical evacuation and improvised-explosive device reports.

After the competitors took a short break to catch their breath and enjoy a late breakfast, the remainder of the battalion's Soldiers returned from combat patrol missions and daily routines to gather for an inspiring 2-8 Inf. Regt. historical tribute.

As the battalion was called to attention, a thunderous "First at Normandy!" echoed in unison throughout FOB Kalsu. Cervantes talked with the Soldiers for a few

minutes about June 6, 1944, and what that day meant in American history. Spc. Jamie Boot, Company E (Forward Support Company), led the Talons in reciting the Soldier's Creed, then nine deserving Soldiers received Purple Hearts from Col. John Tully, commander, 2nd BCT, for wounds suffered while deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. One Soldier, Staff Sgt. Xavier Dominguez, squad leader, Co. A, was awarded the Army Commendation Medal with Valor for saving the lives of four comrades during combat in February.

Without further adieu, the top three finishers in the Ironman competition were recognized. Third place was the team of Boot and Pfc. Chase Miller, fire control systems repair, Co. E (FSC). Second place went to the team of Pfc. Kory Hahn, infantryman, Co. A., and Cpl. Michael Foreback, infantryman, Co. A. The first place team consisted of Capt. Kevin Lewis, task force engineer, and Capt. Alphonse Lemaire, intelligence fusion officer. Everyone who competed was given a "Hooah" award and acknowledged for their effort.

Tully spoke to the Talons for a few minutes and drew a comparison between today's Soldiers and yesterday's Soldiers that were being honored. He told them that they too can become a part of history by helping to make Iraq a secure and stable country in a notoriously unstable Middle East.

Lt. Col. James Howard, commander, 2-8 Inf. Regt., wrapped things up by thanking the veterans of Normandy and the sacrifices they made that day, telling his troops he was proud of the accomplishments they have made thus far during the current deployment and to continue striving to make Iraq a better place.

Cervantes revealed that he plans to bring the D-Day competition back to Fort Hood with the battalion upon redeployment and make it a rite of passage. He said it will always be on June 6 and will always start early in the morning, just like when those brave Soldiers began their quest in 1944.

"It was an honor to help recognize so many great Soldiers, not only from World War II but also guys I get to serve with everyday," said Foreback. "The Soldiers from the past paved the way for our country to be great, and it's now our duty to keep it that way. And you can bet that we will."



PHOTOS BY CPL MICHAEL MOLINARO

1st Lt. Sam Luke, platoon leader, Company D, 2nd Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, 2nd BCT, knocks out some pushups during the physical fitness portion of the 2-8 Inf. D-Day Ironman competition June 6. Soldiers from the unit were the first to storm the beaches of Normandy on the historic day in 1944.



Capt. Kevin Lewis, task force engineer, 2nd Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, is congratulated by Lt. Col. James Howard, commander, 2-8 Inf., for winning the D-Day Ironman competition here Tuesday with teammate Capt. Alphonse Lemaire, S-2 fusion officer, 2-8 Inf. Soldiers from 2-8 Inf. held the competition as part of a day long commemoration of the battalion's World War II veterans, who were the first to storm the beaches of Normandy 62 years ago.

Dragoon Spear nets 12 detainees

By Spc. Edgar Reyes
Staff Writer

FOB KALSU, Iraq — Soldiers from Company D, 2nd Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, supervised as the 2nd Bn., 2nd Bde., 8th Iraqi army division took the lead in several raids near Diyarrah Friday.

During Operation Dragoon Spear, Coalition Forces provided a cordon around the towns as the IA soldiers searched the homes for a criminal listed on an arrest warrant and other suspected terrorists. They detained approximately 47 service age men from the towns and held them for questioning.

Twelve men out of the group were detained as suspects and taken to the Mahawil IA compound.

Out of the 12 detained, one appeared on the 2/28 IAD arrest warrant list and the rest for other recorded charges.

In total, IA forces confiscated 13 AK-47s, a RPK machine gun, a Seminoff rifle, seven vehicles and two personal computers.

The IA is getting closer to handling missions by themselves, but we are still standing by to assist, said Sgt. Joseph Richter, gunner, Co. D, 2-8 Inf., 2nd BCT. "For the most part though, they are doing a pretty good job."

Communication is a very important aspect of any mission, whether it's on the radio or with people on the streets or in their homes. "The IA soldiers are very people centric, evident during this operation," said Capt. Ben Simms, commander, Co. D, 2-8 Inf., 2nd BCT.

The IA soldiers talked to the people and explained to them why they were there and made a point of telling the families they were a new unit in town trying to remove terrorists from the streets, Simms said. "I think they made a connection with the people, which will help them in the long run when they take over."

This operation is another example of how the IA soldiers are becoming more capable of providing for the security of their piece of Iraq and removing terrorists from the region, Simms added.



PHOTO BY SPC EDGAR REYES

FOB CHARLIE, Iraq — Col. John Tully, commander, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, signs an official document handing over Forward Operating Base Charlie to the Iraqi National Police during a transfer of authority ceremony here May 31. The base, located in Hillah, will serve as a regional headquarters for the Iraqi security force.

Soldiers take education personally

By Maj. Anna Friederich
2nd BCT Public Affairs Officer

FOB KALSU, Iraq – As Soldiers contemplated the mission ahead, there was certain energy in the air Wednesday as they checked their gear and vehicles and ate the remainder of their “to-go” breakfasts from the dining facility here.

The Soldiers of 2nd Platoon, Company D, 2nd Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, knew that although it was preparing for yet another combat patrol, what lay at the other end was well worth the journey.

Children in the area surrounding the small community of Diyarrah, located in the northern Babil province, were much in need of school supplies and clothes. Some of the children who attend schools in Diyarrah walk an average of three to four miles to receive an education.

They don’t always have the tools they need to capitalize on the education offered them, that’s why Spc. Howard Stricklin, dismount crew member, Co. D, 2-8 Inf., said he solicited the support of “anysoldier.com.”



An Iraqi Soldier with 2nd Battalion, 4th Brigade, 8th Iraqi Army Division, hands out much needed clothes to children from Diyarrah, a small village in the northern Babil province,

“This organization is actually for Soldiers, but I deviated from the norm by requesting items be sent for the children of Diyarrah,” said Stricklin. He heard about the organization through his roommate and promptly requested assistance through emails to the Website.

“It only took a couple of weeks to start receiving the supplies after my initial request,” he said.

The Soldiers were pleasantly surprised to see the support coming from the organization, which is supported through donations from people all over the U.S., Stricklin added.

Accompanied by soldiers of 2nd Battalion, 4th Brigade, 8th Iraqi Army Division, Soldiers loaded all the goods in their “ruck” sacks and headed out to the town to knock on doors and offer the items to the families.

This is a great way to build a stronger relationship with the local community, said 1st Lt. Andrew Merchant, platoon leader, Co. D, 2-8 Inf. “Normally our missions are strictly combat patrols; this was the

first time we conducted a mission where we focused explicitly on the children in the town,” he added.

Merchant said when they first began conducting patrols through the town, the local citizens were a little reluctant to engage them in conversation.

“We show them our genuine concern for their well-being, and they seem to be very receptive. They understand that we are there to assist them through our partnership with the Iraqi army to achieve their very real goal of stability and prosperity,” he said.

This is evident with the numerous projects in the Diyarrah region scheduled to begin in the next several months. The Iraqi army compound located in the town is nearing the groundbreaking of needed renovations.

What was once a thriving market area outside the compound is now a ghost town. Two vehicle-borne improvised-explosive devices exploded outside the compound last fall and destroyed the outer wall and a majority of the market.

The town is seeing scattered produce stands populate the area, and local citizens are beginning to feel a sense of security as the Iraqi soldiers are becoming increasingly competent in their security mission, said Merchant.

Contracts to improve the water system in the region were signed during the Diyarrah city council meeting. The renovations will repair the existing water system, increasing the water supply to the population and improving the quality of water provided.

“We still have a long way to go in helping to bring back the stability and security in the region,” said Stricklin.



PHOTOS BY MAJ. ANNA FRIEDERICH

Spc. Howard Stricklin, dismount crew member, 2nd Platoon, Company D, 2nd Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, hands school supplies to children in Diyarrah, a small village in the northern Babil province May 10.

Career Day enlightens students



PHOTO BY CPL. MICHAEL MOLINARO

Capt. Walter Bowers, battalion S-2, Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th ID, was among a handful of Soldiers from FOB Kalsu that accompanied Iraqi Highway Patrolmen to the Al-Secuty secondary school. The IHP held a “Career Day” where they talked to students about their job and the childrens’ future. The visitors played soccer with students during their recess hour.

By Cpl. Michael Molinaro
Editor

FOB KALSU, Iraq – Iraqi highway patrolmen held a “Career Day” at the Al-Secuty secondary school in Obeid May 2.

Accompanied by Soldiers from Company C, 2nd Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, the event was held to meet children from the area and explain to them what is involved in being an Iraqi highway patrolman.

“These kids deserve to meet who is responsible for protecting them and their families,” said Capt. Satar Jabir, commander, North Babil IHP. “It is our duty to serve them, and that is why we came here today – to serve them.”

IHP distributed backpacks, school supplies and soccer balls to more than 300 children who attend the school. Jabir and men from his force talked at great length about the duties and responsibilities of being an IHP and gave pep talks to the students about the future of Iraq.

“You are all going to be champions one day!” explained Lt. Ahmed Mohammed, assistant police chief, IHP. “Every single day our country gets better and better. It is up to us to make it safe and up to you to make it prosper.”

Soldiers from 2nd Bn., 8th Inf. Regt., helped unload supplies, provide security outside the school and talked to school adminis-

trators about repairs the school needs. Soldiers were invited to play a friendly game of soccer during the students’ recess hour, and the students promptly showed them a thing or two about their favorite sport.

“It is important for the kids to see where their future lies, that there is a security force they can trust and depend on,” said Capt. Eric Reed, commander, Co. C, 2nd Bn., 8th Inf. Regt.

The Obeid and Shaka regions, predominate areas where the students reside, have been trouble spots in the past, Reed said. Having the IHP explain to the kids a good future awaits them here if they do the right thing could, over time, drastically change things in the area.

The IHPs stressed the fact that they had every intention on visiting the school as much as possible in the future. They said they realize that the vulnerability of the children leaves them as prime candidates to be recruited by terrorists and that terrorists can easily use fear to make sure children don’t report anything they see that may be illegal. But as long as the children continue seeing and talking to their own security forces and know that they are seriously here for their protection, things could turn for the better rather quickly.

“Terrorists like to prey on the young,” said Mohammed. “Getting (the children) to know the difference between right and wrong can crush the insurgency and allow Iraq to be great again.”

Coalition Forces transfer Najaf to Iraqis

By Maj. Anna Friederich
2nd BCT Public Affairs Officer

FOB HOTEL, Iraq — Spirits soared April 24 as the 1st Brigade, 8th Iraqi Army Division prepared to take responsibility of more than 28,000 square kilometers of operational area during a ceremony here.

The 1st Bde, 8th IA Div assumed responsibility for the entire Najaf province from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division.

The ceremony began with the playing of the Iraqi National Anthem and introduction and reading from the Quran by Col. Saadi Saleh Muhsin, commander, 1st Bde., 8th IAD. He asked everyone to bow their heads and offer a special prayer for their fallen comrades.

A pass and review followed as Saadi and Col. John Tully, commander, 2nd BCT, inspected the Iraqi troops.

The commanders made their way back to the reviewing stand as the combined color guard moved to the middle of the parade field.

Lt. Col. John McCarthy, Military Transition Team commander, 2nd BCT, and Sgt. Maj. Antoine Overstreet shared the honors of casing the 2nd BCT colors, signifying the end of the 2nd BCT's direct responsibility of the province.

McCarthy and Overstreet spent the last four months training the 1st Bde. staff on tactics, techniques and procedures.

McCarthy said he feels the unit has successfully achieved the level of readiness appropriate to take the "reigns."

"We've shown them the basics, and they have a solid base, but they know their soldiers the best and know what works for them — we have seen it applied," he said.

After casing the 2nd BCT colors was complete, the Iraqi color guard proudly raised the 1st Bde., 8th IAD colors to full mast on the flag pole located at the center of the compound.

When the color guards exited the field, Maj. Gen. Othman Ali Farhod Al Gamini, commander, 8th IAD, welcomed his guests and Coalition Forces. He said he was very happy to receive the security responsibility of the province from the 2nd BCT.

"I thank you for training the 1st Bde. and division units. They are now prepared for any mission, and we look forward to our continued training and partnership in the future," he said.

Tully lauded 1st Bde., the Iraqi police force and the Provincial Government for their success with the security of the Najaf province and the strong teamwork he had seen between the three entities.

"Today's transition does not mean the Coalition Forces goes away, it means the Iraqi Army is in the lead and the Coalition Forces moves to a support role. We remain team members and partners," said Tully. "This is good, and this is appropriate as the Iraqi army is growing stronger every day."



PHOTO BY SPC EDGAR REYES

Soldiers from Company D, 2nd Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, search the perimeter for weapons caches and roadside bombs with a K-9 in the early morning during operations in the Babil province. Around-the-clock operations have had considerable impact in the Warhorse area of operations since deploying in November, as Soldiers have detained numerous terrorists and taken countless amounts of weapons and roadside bomb-making material out of the hands of terrorists. Soldiers have crossed the half-way mark as they now start the downhill cruise towards eventual redeployment to Fort Hood later this year.

Coalition Forces kick off Operation Harvest Light



PHOTO BY MAJ ANNA FRIEDERICH

Maj. Scott Gerber, operations officer, 1st Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division and Imad Lefta, Hillah mayor, and members of the Babil province agricultural council, look over maps and data at the Regional Embassy in Hillah today as they develop the plan for spraying date palm trees with insecticide in the Babil province. Operation Harvest Light will begin later this month which is part of larger Iraqi government program to provide jobs in farming, packaging and date industry jobs as well as distribution of dates on the global market which will produce positive results for the economy.

By Maj. Anna Friederich
2nd BCT Public Affairs Officer

FOB KALSU, Iraq — The date palm industry in Iraq once supplied roughly 30 percent of the world's dates, an estimated 600,000 tons. Currently there are less than fifteen million date palms left in Iraq, which produce approximately 250,000 tons annually.

To control the progressive loss of the crop and regenerate the industry, the Iraqi Government's Ministry of Agriculture and Coalition Forces have teamed up to combat the problem by conducting aerial spraying operations in April and May.

The Najaf, Karbala and Babil Provincial Departments of Agriculture met April 28 with CF representatives at the Regional Embassy Office in Hillah to discuss Harvest Light, an operation to spray date palm trees with insecticide to eliminate the insects that threaten to obliterate the crop.

Iraq dates were once considered top quality because of their high sugar content, superb flavor and texture. Drought, security issues and insect infestation have contributed to reduced yields in recent years.

In addition, Iraq's small crop dusting helicopter fleet was destroyed during the Iraq conflict, and the MOA's pesticides were looted in the chaos following the regime's collapse.

Previous aerial spraying operations were carried out during the sanctions period by the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization under the auspices of the Oil For Food Program. No large scale aerial spraying has been conducted since 2002.

Maj. Jeff Smith, civil affairs officer, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, spearheaded the meeting, bringing the group together to discuss the schedule and solicit the representative's expertise. Together, they reviewed maps of the provinces, along with past statistics on the hatch rates and palm tree density, to develop a plan of attack.

"In recent years, ground spraying has been used but proven to be less and less effective against the insects," said Smith.

Due to the structure of the date palm tree and the way it is infected, aerial spraying is the most effective way of combating the problem, Smith said. "In addition, spraying at this time will pay off because the bugs are at a stage where they have hatched but are not mature, meaning their bodies are still soft and will absorb the chemical, killing them."

Coalition Forces, in conjunction with the MOA, contracted a company to conduct the spraying by using helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft. Iraqi Security and Coalition Forces will provide security measures for protecting the pesticides, fuel, equipment, crew and aircraft prior to and during the spraying operation.

Master Sgt. Ronald Wegner, operations sergeant, 490th Civil Affairs Battalion, 4th Inf. Div., assisted in the meeting and emphasized that the Iraqi government and the MOA are in the lead in this operation.

"Everyone of you sitting here are the experts and we are here to assist in any way we can," he said.

One of the main concerns on the DAG representatives' minds was the priority of spraying. Imad Lefta, Hillah mayor, voiced his concerns about the window of opportunity for the spraying to be most effective.

Due to the milder weather in southern Iraq, he said, the insects hatch sooner in some areas, requiring earlier spraying than in other areas. This is one of the considerations the team took into account as it developed the plan.

The group concluded the meeting by developing a prioritization of spraying by province and geographic area inside each province.

Date palm preservation is an economic opportunity for Iraq. The scheduled crop dusting is part of a larger Iraqi government program, which will provide jobs in farming, packaging and in the date industry. The program also focuses on the distribution of dates on the global market.

Soldiers help mend girl's heart

By Cpl. Michael Molinaro
Editor

FOB KALSU, Iraq — With the help of Soldiers from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, a 9-year-old Iraqi girl, sick with a serious heart condition, is on her way to receiving a medical procedure her parents only dreamed about.

Zenab Maan Fares, from the city of Hillah, has a condition known as Tetralogy of Fallot, which is basically a hole between the ventricles of the heart. Soldiers from 2nd BCT have been instrumental in helping coordinate for the surgery, which will be quite extensive, and the post-surgery care.

It all started when Soldiers from 1st Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd BCT, conducted a reconnaissance of the children's hospital in Hillah to assess the state of the hospital and find out what supplies were needed to keep the facility functioning properly.

A friendly Iraqi man and his young daughter, Zenab, who had a bluish tint to her face and looked very sick, approached Sgt. 1st Class Sean Brack, a platoon sergeant in Troop A, 1-10 Cav. The man explained the condition of his daughter and the difficulties he faced trying to find the proper care for her. Brack listened intently. Upon his return to Forward Operating Base Charlie, he approached Capt. Jon Bodenhamer, commander, Troop A, 1-10 Cav., about what had occurred.

Bodenhamer immediately began the process of getting the Fares family the help they needed. He proceeded to call a longtime friend of his family, retired Lt. Col. Thomas Parr. Parr, an orthopedic surgeon in Houston and West Point classmate of Bodenhamer's father. Bodenhamer said he was optimistic that Parr would have connections in the medical field that could possibly help.

In the meantime, Capt. Chris McNeil, surgeon, 1-10 Cav., began checking frequently on Zenab, assessing her condition. McNeil performed an ultrasound scan on Zenab and made a more precise diagnosis compared to the one she received in Hillah.

"Capt. McNeil has been instrumental in the process," said Bodenhamer. "His medical knowledge allowed him to make a much better diagnosis."

Parr and his wife, Joannie, set out to make things happen. The first thing on the list was finding a surgeon to perform the procedure and a hospital to deal with the issue. They convinced Texas Children's hospital in Houston to take the case.

"Once again, Capt. McNeil's efforts allowed Texas Children's hospital to make a good enough assessment of the girl's condition and make a decision regarding the case," Bodenhamer said.

1st Lt. Tim Trimbur, medical platoon leader, Troop A, 1-10 Cav., and Capt. Robert Johnson, physician assistant, 1-10 Cav., have also been vital parts of the process, said Bodenhamer. They keep in contact with Zenab and her parents, coordinated a lot of the medical treatments to prepare for the trip to Houston, and have been the link between the Iraqi assistance center and 1-10 Cav.

This is the second deployment to Iraq for Bodenhamer. He said he feels that winning the hearts and minds of the Iraqi people may do more in the long run for this country than just combating terrorism, he said.

"Even though we are Soldiers, we are also citizens of the world. Something like this makes what we are doing here more meaningful," he said.

The West Point Society of Greater Houston, made up of graduates from the academy, including father and son Bodenhamer and Parr, has taken the lead on organizing everything for the family when they arrive in the U.S., Bodenhamer said. Members donated enough funding to purchase commercial airline tickets to Houston from Kuwait for Zenab and her father. They also set aside spending money for the family for their stay in Houston.

The family is expected to be in Houston up to four months, depending on how Zenab progresses after the surgery. Mrs. Parr arranged for an Iraqi-American support group, available for the Fares' at all times, and translators.

It's a huge thing for the Apache troop and the squadron, Bodenhamer said. Doing good for someone in the area we work in is rewarding; showing them that we do more than kick down doors is important. "It's something that will change Zenab's life and make us feel good for the rest of our lives."

Soldiers journey to freedom complete

By Spc. Edgar Reyes
Staff Writer

FOB KALSU, Iraq —

Four Soldiers from 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, received their American citizenship during a ceremony Monday at the Victory Chapel on Camp Victory.

Soldiers raised their hands in front of a crowd of supporters and recited the Oath of Citizenship to finalize their journey to becoming Americans; which was filled with what seemed to be never ending flood of paper work and interviews.

"It was pretty easy for me," said Spc. Miguel Preciado, combat engineer, Co. E, 1st Bn., 67th Armor Regiment, 2nd BCT. "All I had left to do was the interviews here in Iraq because I filled out the required paper work in the United States. The entire process took a total of eight months."

To receive an American citizenship, Soldiers have to fill out a lengthy packet of personal information. When the packet is completed, it is turned in to the brigade legal office with their fingerprints and a passport-sized photo.

From there it goes to the 502nd Personnel and Services Battalion, located at Camp Liberty, for review. Upon approval, the 502nd PSB sends it to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services in Rome, Italy for further examination.

USCIS contacts the Division G1 office and provides the brigade legal office a schedule of interviews to be conducted using internet webcams.

"After the interviews, Soldiers wait for a ceremony date," said Sgt. 1st Class George Estes, brigade legal non-commissioned officer in charge, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Special Troops Battalion, 2nd

BCT. "A day prior to the ceremony, Soldiers sign the final paperwork and give up their green card and are sworn in as American citizens during the ceremony."

Obtaining citizenship while serving in combat in the military expedites the citizenship process, said Capt. Carlos Calderon, trial council, HHC, STB, 2nd BCT.

Calderon took a personal interest in the program, having obtained his U.S. citizenship several years ago, and knowing what a drawn out process it can be. He feels very pas-

sionately about the program and volunteered to take it on as an extra project in addition to his myriad of legal duties.

"A typical case involving a civilian trying to obtain American citizenship could take between two to three years or more depending on the person's origin," said Calderon.

A person enlisted in the military can obtain their American citizenship in three to six months if serving in a combat zone.

Gaining American citizenship gives Soldiers the ability to vote, opportunity for employment with the federal government and ability to obtain a security clearance.



PHOTO BY SPC EDGAR REYES

Spc. Ahmed Jordan, translator, HHC, 2nd BCT, Pfc. Marcin Kalisz, gunner, Battery A, 3-16 FA, Spc. Miguel Preciado, combat engineer, Co. E, 1-67 AR, and Spc. Mark Powell, mechanic, Troop D, 1-10 Cav., pose after receiving their American citizenship during a ceremony May 21 in Camp Victory, Baghdad.

"I am very happy, very proud of being a U.S. citizen and I feel tremendous freedom," said Spc. Ahmed Jordan, translator, HHC, STB, 2nd BCT. "I feel the doors of the future are open for me and now I just have to seize the opportunity."

"I feel so relieved," said Spc. Mark Powell, tank mechanic, Troop D, 1st Bn., 10th Cavalry Regt., 2nd BCT. "I feel like my opportunities are limitless now. I have had many roadblocks in my life for not having my citizenship. Now, my path is clear."

**"I feel the doors of the future
are open for me and now I just
have to seize the opportunity"**
-Spc. Ahmed Jordan

IA Soldiers help Babil village beat the heat

By Maj. Anna Friederich
2nd BCT Public Affairs Officer

FOB KALSU, Iraq –

Citizens of the Bedrani village in the northern Babil province beat the heat Wednesday after receiving hundreds of gallons of water from Iraqi army and Coalition Forces.

Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 4th Brigade, 8th Iraqi Army Division and 3rd Platoon, Company B, 2nd Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, initially visited the Bedrani village two days prior to the operation and found the village had a serious water problem.

"The village had not seen a CF or Iraqi Security Force presence in the area for over a year," said Staff Sgt. Morris Terry, Bradley section leader, Co. B, 2-8 Inf. Regt. "We went to the village to meet the citizens, establish a relationship and discuss issues they may be having."

Upon meeting with the tribal sheik the Soldiers found the village was facing a very dry and dangerous summer. Currently, there is not a formal water system to bring water to the village. Water used for consumption, crops and animals must be hand carried from the canals. The few pumping systems that have been built must be run by generators requiring gas and maintenance, which is sometimes a challenge for an area so far away from a major town or city.

1st Lt. Leon Satchell, platoon leader, 3rd Platoon, Co. B, 2-8 Inf. Regt., said the villagers were very concerned about the challenges they face this summer.

"The canals are becoming more and more contaminated with debris, making the water unsafe for consumption."

"The village needs a long term plan to create a working water pumping system, but in the meantime, we provided a short-term solution," added Satchell.

Although CF provided the water and truck, it was the IA who executed the plan. The combined patrol entered the dusty village, established security and began pumping water within minutes. The people brought cans, barrels, tubs and bottles to fill with the cool liquid. While the water was flowing, the IA and CF Soldiers also handed out school supplies and humanitarian aid. The children, reluctant at first, followed the lead of a small boy of about seven years old and accepted the gifts from the Soldiers.

The adults of the village then moved forward to speak to the IA and CF Soldiers.

During the conversations, Soldiers discovered that the entire village was attending the funeral of one of the elders of the village.

Hamid Hassan, a local teacher from Mussayib, said he was attending the funeral of his friend. He was very grateful for the delivery of the water, but was more interested in the long-term solution to the water problem.

Hassan said that the water in the village is very unclean and that they are soliciting the help of the Iraqi government. This coincided with the civic unity meetings that began in April and have built momentum since.

The meetings are a way to get the leaders of the northern Babil province together, regardless of religious or tribal affiliation, and work through issues by talking, said Satchell.

"So far these meetings seem to be working; this is the perfect forum to address the Bedrani water problems," said Satchell.

When the Soldiers satisfied the village's current need for water, they loaded back into their vehicles and headed out of the town. As they prepared to leave, the people of the village waved and cheered as they rolled out.

"Seeing their faces and obvious acceptance of both CF and IA elements was all the proof we needed to know we had planted the seeds of a positive relationship," added Satchell.



PHOTO BY MAJ. ANNA FRIEDERICH

Iraqi Army soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 4th Brigade, 8th Iraqi army division, fill water containers from a water truck they brought to the Bedrani village in the northern Babil province Wednesday. The water resupply is only a short term fix until a formal water system can be developed.

New recruits hold blood drive

By 2nd Lt. Alexander Callahan
3rd Battalion, 16th Field Artillery

FOB DUKE, Iraq – The Imam Ali Police Academy in Najaf hosted a graduation ceremony last week inducting more than 280 new policemen into their ranks and sponsored a blood drive, receiving the needed blood from the new recruits and a Coalition Force commander.

Soldiers from 3rd Battalion, 16th Field Artillery, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, were on hand to witness the auspicious occasion and to help out their brothers-in-arms.

The event was co-hosted by Najaf Governor, Assad Sultaan Abu Gelal with Major General Kareem Hussain Abbas, Najaf Chief of Police, as his co-host. Several demonstrations took place during the ceremony to include drill and ceremony and a display of recently learned hand-to-hand combat techniques.

After the entertainment portion of the ceremony, Abbas gave a speech outlining the progressions made by local police and security forces, while acknowledging areas where improvements were still in progress.

He thanked the citizens of Najaf for their cooperation and support and later thanked Lt. Col Michael Hilliard, commander, 3-16th FA, 2nd BCT, who reinforced the continued support provided by his unit from Forward Operating Base Duke.

In a private conversation after the ceremony, Assad and Hilliard discussed many issues to include an existing shortage of O positive blood.

Recently, this all-important blood type stock has been shrinking to critical levels, said Assad. "If a rash of violence similar to the one that gripped areas closer to Baghdad were to occur, emergency workers would have too little of the precious resource to help the critically wounded."

Hilliard not only recognized the plea for help, but also answered it personally. Speaking briefly to the observers, Hilliard pledged to nurture the IP and Iraqi Security Force's growth. He then backed up his words announcing that he was O positive and ready to donate.

Local medical workers from the newly renovated Najaf Teaching Hospital were on hand to perform the blood draw and the 3-16 FA's commander was soon sporting a tube in his forearm.

Many citizens stepped up after the ceremony and followed suit – an encouraging sign of the Iraqi's eagerness to begin supporting themselves.



PHOTO COURTESY OF 3-16 FA

Lt. Col Michael Hilliard, commander, 3rd Battalion, 16th Field Artillery, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, along with his interpreter Sam, gives blood after learning of an O positive blood shortage in the area of Najaf.

Locals elect new leaders for Agricultural union

By Spc. Edgar Reyes
Staff Writer

FOB KALSU, Iraq – Citizens of Muelha, in the northern Babil province, elected leaders of the newly organized Agricultural Union May 30. The Ministry of Agriculture approved assembly of the Agricultural Union to assist local farmers with rebuilding the farming industry and community infrastructure. The union focuses its efforts on providing the farmers with needed supplies such as fertilizer, farm implements and seed for crops.

Previously, farmers obtained fertilizer at exuberant black market prices which caused the farmers to fall into debt, barely turning a profit from their crops. The Agricultural Union can now help farmers get better deals on supplies and equipment without having to purchase them from the black market.

The union is also initiating the construction of water pumping stations, a program to clean the canals of trash and debris and offering educational agricultural programs.

"The first step in making the Agricultural Union a reality is to get leadership in place," said Capt. Brooks, commander, Company B, 2nd Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division. "Allowing them to vote for their leaders is showing them a side of democracy which most have not seen in their lifetime."

Hundreds of people from the area swarmed the gates of a local school to be a part of the elections.

A judge and representatives from the MOA attended the elections to ensure the enforcement of voting rules and to allow the judge to announce the outcome of the elections as the electoral official.

"A lot of people came out here obviously excited about participating in the election," said Staff Sgt. Carey Ford, kennel master, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Special Troops Battalion, 2nd BCT, 4th Inf. Div. "More than 150 people showed up to vote. It was a peaceful gathering during the entire voting process."

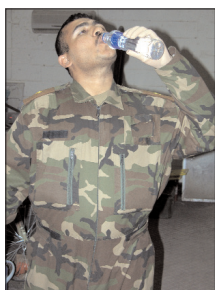
IA soldier gets new hand

By Spc. Edgar Reyes
Staff Writer

FOB KALSU, Iraq —

A Soldier from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, surprised an Iraqi soldier this month with a gift of a prosthetic hand donated from a private source.

Maj. Steven Bauer, brigade surgeon, 2nd BCT, presented the gift to Lt. Cesar Hamed Hassan, military intelligence officer, 2nd Bn., 4th Bde., 8th Iraqi army Div., during a surprise meeting at Forward Operating Base Iskandariyah.



"It is a satisfying end to a long process," said Bauer. "I am happy it works and it fits Hassan perfectly."

Hassan lost his left hand when his vehicle collided with two separate vehicles loaded with bombs during a routine patrol. He also lost his comrades; all the other soldiers inside his vehicle died in the explosion.

Iraqi doctors treated Hassan for extensive shrapnel wounds and traumatic injuries to his left hand and arm.

After much debate, his doctors recommended amputation near his shoulder to stop the gangrene and infection from advancing to the rest of his body. Army doctors consulted with the Iraqi doctors and recommended amputating below the forearm to preserve most of the arm giving Hassan the opportunity to use a prosthetic hand in the future.

Despite the ordeal, Hassan continues to push forward and see life with a positive outlook, willing to learn new ways of doing old things.

"I am going to spend some time getting used to the new hand," said Hassan. "I have been able to learn to shoot weapons with one hand but now it will be easier for me to practice with my new hand."

Hassan concluded, "I am very grateful for the gift the Coalition Forces have given me. I want to thank them for taking time to help me with my situation. I know it took a long time to make something like this possible. I am very thankful."



PHOTOS BY SPC. EDGAR REYES

Maj. Steven Bauer, brigade surgeon, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, instructs Lt. Cesar Hamed Hassan, military intelligence officer, 2nd Bn., 4th Bde., 8th Iraqi army Div., on how to close and open his newly received prosthetic hand May 4 at FOB Iskandariyah.

Iskan aid station ready to save lives

By Spc. Edgar Reyes
Staff Writer

FOB ISKANDARIYAH, Iraq — Soldiers from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 67th Armor Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, are helping to keep Soldiers in the fight at the aid station on Forward Operating Base Iskandariyah.

"Our main goal here at the aid station is to conserve the fighting strength and get Soldiers back in the fight," said Sgt. 1st Class Denny Brown, combat medic, HHC, 1-67 AR.

As an echelon-one aid station, the clinic is responsible for diagnosing injuries and stabilizing trauma victims until medically evacuated to a facility with the proper equipment to treat the injuries.

"Even though we have no surgical capabilities, we play a major role in saving Soldiers' lives if they suffer a traumatic injury," said Brown. "The first few minutes after a traumatic injury are the most crucial. The treatment the combat medic performs at the scene, and the treatment our aid station conducts when they get here, could mean the difference between life and death."

One way the aid station is helping to increase survivability in the first few minutes of a trauma injury is by conducting Combat Lifesaver courses every week.

"One of our goals is to ensure that all Soldiers have the knowledge and skills to save lives on the battlefield," said Staff Sgt. Dominic Smith, combat medic, HHC, 1-67 AR. "Soldiers cannot just depend on the medic because a medic could be injured during a firefight or roadside-bomb attack. Everyone needs to know how to treat and stabilize a victim until more qualified personnel take over."

The aid station is responsible for more than 1,000 person-



PHOTO BY SPC. EDGAR REYES

Spc. Michael Clay, Company F, 204th Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, and Pfc. Dustin Spangler, Company B, 1st Battalion, 67th Armor Regiment, 2nd BCT, practice intravenous catheter insertion during a weekly Combat Lifesaver Course at the aid-station in Forward Operating Base Iskandariyah.

nel, which include civilian contractors, Iraqi army soldiers, Iraqi police and detainees.

"We take care of detainees because everyone deserves the right to treatment," said Spc. John Schmidt, combat medic, HHC, 1-67 AR, a St. Louis, Mo., native. "As a medic, it is our duty to take care of the injured no matter the circumstances. Everyone deserves treatment, from your worst enemy to your best friend."

The aid station currently has a doctor and a physician's assistant alongside the 23 medics on hand. It has the capability of handling three trauma patients at a time, said Brown. It also contains a patient hold for people placed on overnight stay for observation.

"We see around six to ten people on a busy day," said Brown. "Although we do not do a lot of business, that's okay; a boring time for a medic is a good time because that means

MPs help Iraqi police get aid

By Spc. Edgar Reyes
Staff Writer

FOB KALSU, Iraq — The recently completed construction of a new aid station at the Babil provincial police headquarters was celebrated with a grand opening May 15 in Hillah.

Soldiers from the 988th Military Police Company, Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, assisted in stocking the station with medical supplies and furnishings and providing medical care for its first day of business.

This is the first time the station has had a facility of this type, said Staff Sgt. Jamie Negron, combat medic, 988th MP Co, 2nd BCT. "They are very happy to have a well equipped aid station at the headquarters."

The completion of the aid station gives the Iraqi police access to medical treatment for minor injuries and illnesses instantaneously, said SSG Anthony Dilday, combat medic, 988th MPs, 2BCT. They can be treated here without missing much work, keeping them on the streets to provide needed security to the citizens of the province.

Iraqi police continue to make great strides as they progress from a force needing assistance for the simplest of missions to one that is taking on complex and dangerous tasks on a daily basis.

"The terrorists can and will not defeat us on our own land," said one policeman. "The more we train, the more we take them head-on, the better we get and the more hungry we get to stop what they are trying to do and bring peace to our great country."

More facilities and more

"It was a lot of work but we are very proud of what they have accomplished," added Dilday.

Dealers train IAs on how to get around

By Spc. Edgar Reyes
Staff Writer

FOB KALSU, Iraq — Soldiers from Company D, 1st Battalion 67th Armor Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, conducted map reading and land navigation training with eight Iraqi police officers at the Mussayyib IP headquarters Monday.

The block of instruction was used as refresher training to supplement the map reading course taken by IPs during their initial training at the IP Academy.

The map reading training consisted of learning color codes on maps, measuring scales, plotting grid coordinates and measuring distances between straight lines and curved routes.

The land navigation portion of the training dealt with the numerous types of terrain features such as cliffs, plateaus and valleys to familiarize them with rough terrain. This also gives them the capability to find identity routes previously not accessible, which would enable IPs to provide a quicker reaction-force when called upon.

Coalition Forces took turns giving instruction on a dry-erase-board while interpreters explained the lessons to the IPs. After the block of instruction, IPs took a certified test to show their proficiency in map reading and land navigation. All eight IPs passed the certification and received certificates allowing them to teach other IPs the training.

We taught the IPs the basics slowly at first, said Sgt. Jahmali Samuel, tanker, Co. D, 1-67 AR, 2nd BCT. They probably learned more about map reading and land navigation in the two-hour class than they have in their lifetime, so we do not want to overload them with too much information in one day.

Enlisted members and officers alike receive this training to ensure everyone in the station has a basic understanding of land navigation. The course was designed as a "train the trainer" block of instruction enabling the IPs to teach the course themselves



PHOTO BY SPC EDGAR REYES

Staff Sgt. Andre Christian and Sgt. Jahmali Samuel, tankers, Company D, 1st Battalion, 67th Armor Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, teach Iraqi police officers how to read maps during a training meeting at the Mussayyib Iraqi Police Headquarters Monday. Although IPS have had some prior training on map reading and land navigation, the training they received from the 1-67 Soldiers was the most helpful they have ever been given.

to fellow IPs in their native tongue.

"Learning map reading is a good thing," said Mohammed Aalahid Mujad, Iraqi police officer, Mussayyib IP HQ. "It will help us send back-up to the right place if we ever get outnumbered by the terrorists. It will also help us to tell the CF exactly where roadside bombs are found allowing them to keep a safe distance from the coordinates we give them."

Warhorse commo lets us do the talkin'



PHOTO BY SPC EDGAR REYES

Spc. Steven Lesher and Pfc. Maria Staryhorn, information systems operators, Company B, Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, connecting new users to secured and unsecured lines on the 2nd BCT network.

By Spc. Edgar Reyes
Staff Writer

FOB KALSU, Iraq — With the significant amount of equipment allocated and Soldiers conducting missions at any given time during a deployment, chaos and mismanagement of resources would occur if communication systems did not work.

The team responsible for planning and synchronizing communication systems for the brigade is the S-6 section in the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division.

Our main mission here at S-6 is to make sure the brigade commander can communicate with his subordinate units wherever and whenever required," said Maj. Gary Ridenhour, brigade S-6, HHC, 2nd BCT.

The S-6 mission is composed of two general tasks: automation tasks and transmission tasks.

Automation tasks involve installing software, troubleshooting computers for users, creating computer networks, and

managing servers. Transmission tasks are comprised of passing information via radios, including hand-held radios, to satellite transmissions and then establishing communication security.

The section is also responsible for ordering satellite antennas, radio systems, communication system parts and helping other subordinate units get their radio maintenance on line.

"Each day is a constant challenge in the communication world," said Master Sgt. Howard Charles, HHC, 2nd BCT. "The hardest thing for our section is dealing with the growing requirements of each Forward Operating Base with the limited amount of resources available to us."

As each FOB gets larger and houses more Soldiers, the brigade S-6 has to strategically plan and allocate its communication assets to keep up with the expansion.

"We are currently working on a fiber ring to expand non-secret internet protocol routing and secret internet protocol routing service throughout FOB Kalsu to keep up with the rapid influx

of Soldiers needing these services," said Ridenhour.

With more users comes more problems, said Ridenhour. Users who inadvertently change a setting in the network cause the most problems. Other times it is the technology or equipment failure causing glitches in the brigade communication systems.

"For the brigade commander to make a phone call to the division commander, it involves four main equipment sites, 100 Soldiers and more equipment after that," said Ridenhour. "If any part of that goes wrong we have to figure out what the source of the problem is and fix it so the brigade commander can complete his mission."

As redeployment draws near, the S-6 section wants to ensure the unit replacing them is successful by improving long-range communications and local area network equipment.

Ridenhour concluded, "I want to make sure they are equipped to do what they need to do here. A brigade without communication is just camping. Brigades have to be able to communicate."

Around AO Warhorse

A look inside some of the stories shaping the Babil, Karbala, and Najaf Provinces

CF, IAs conduct raid, find cache



PHOTO BY SPC EDGAR REYES

Soldiers from the Explosive Ordnance Disposal team analyze artillery shells found in a cache near the town of Al-Hak during a raid led by the Iraqi army.

Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 8th Iraqi Army Division, took the lead, assisted by Soldiers from Company D, 2nd Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, and performed a raid in the town of Al-Hak during Operation Babil Perimeter early Friday morning.

As the 2-8 Inf. Regt. Soldiers provided a cordon around the town, the IA soldiers conducted a search of the homes in an effort to find suspected terrorists.

IA soldiers separated the men from the children and women for processing and questioning, with five being detained.

They discovered two caches around the immediate area of Al-Hak, which contained several munitions and weapons. After the initial search by the IA, Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers used K-9 dogs and metal detectors to search the areas again and located two additional caches.

In total, IA and MND-B Soldiers discovered bomb-making materials, triggering devices, a 152mm round, a 132mm round, three 82mm rounds, two PKC machine guns, an RPK, a rocket-propelled grenade launcher with two RPG rockets, and a 57mm aerial rocket with an improvised launcher.

"We are trying to make this town as safe as possible," said Capt. Kaoheem Salim, executive officer, 2nd Bn., 2nd Bde., 8th IAD.

"I am an Iraqi," said Salim. "I must protect my country. My people need me to work. Every time we take the lead in these operations, it takes us closer to standing up on our own one day."

Defeating the terrorist without the help of American Soldiers is the level IA soldiers are trying to achieve, he added.

"I think the operation went smoothly," said Capt. Ben Simms, commander, Co. D, 2-8 Inf. Regt., 2nd BCT.

The IA soldiers were very aggressive and very competent, he said. The IA operation was the largest to date in the area of operations.

"I look forward to doing another joint operation with this unit in the future," concluded Simms.

Local citizen foils terrorists plans

A local citizen called the TIPS hotline April 16 to inform Mahawil policemen that a roadside bomb was placed on the road between Hillah and Mahawil.

Iraqi police from Mahawil moved to the location and discovered two artillery rounds configured into a bomb.

"If more people had the courage of this local hero and

told us about these dangerous bombs, then we would be able to save many lives," said Lt. Col. Hazem, Mahawil IP chief.

The trust Iraqi Security Forces have built with the citizens of Iraq is beginning to pay off.

A Motorola radio was set to trigger a 155mm round and a 120mm round. The Babil IP explosive ordnance disposal team dismantled the bomb and transported the items back to the Babil station.

"This is a big blow to the terrorists," said Capt. Brian McCarthy, commander, Troop B, 1st Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division. "If we can quell the people's fear of the terrorists, and let the ISF know when they see these cowards and roadside bombs, then the Iraqis will win the war on terror."

SWAT training for IA elite

Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers continued their mission of training Iraqi Security Forces last week in the Babil province as Soldiers from Troop B, 1st Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, conducted advanced marksmanship training with the Mahawil SWAT Iraqi policemen April 18 in Mahawil.

The training predominantly consisted of reflexive-fire drills and was held to enhance the IPs' marksmanship skills to help them become more accurate with their weapons.

The training is part of a six-day program developed by the leaders of Troop B to improve and refine the techniques of the SWAT. The reflexive-fire drills were aimed at enhancing their ability to quickly draw their weapons and fire them.

The IPs enjoyed the training very much, said Hamza Nayf Jasim, officer, Mahawil SWAT, adding that the team needs to get more ammunition so they can go out and shoot on the range more often and get the practice that is required.

"We want 1-10 Cav. Regt. to extend the training schedule so that we can train with them longer," said Nabil Ali Salam, officer, Mahawil SWAT.

Soldiers from 1-10 Cav, continue to train Iraqi Security Forces from all units in order to enable the ISF to eventually work independently of Coalition Forces in the future.

Potential recruits line up for service

Iraqis, seemingly fed up with terrorism in their country,



PHOTO COURTESY OF 1-67

Iraqis line up at the Taheer police station to sign up for jobs within the Iraqi police department. Those in line consisted of new recruits and former IPs looking to regain their jobs.

are flocking to recruiting stations to join the ranks of the Iraqi Security Forces.

Today, 56 former Iraqi policemen from Jurf As-Sakr showed up at the Taheer police station to be re-hired. Included were two former officers, ready to provide leadership. The men stood in line to receive new identification cards as Gen. Qais Hamza, Babil provincial police chief,

and Lt. Col. Ahmed, Musayib police chief, eagerly looked on.

Qais arrived with 37 new recruits, all of whom will report to Hillah this week to begin training at the IP academy. This is in addition to the 50 recruits already signed up to begin training this summer.

Also today, Musayib IPs arrested one of their own from the Karbala IP department, who is suspected of being involved in a roadside bomb attack that resulted in the death of an IP lieutenant and wounding two other IPs.

Soldiers conduct combined checkpoint



PHOTO COURTESY OF 1-10 CAV

Soldiers from Troop A, 1st Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, conduct joint checkpoint operations alongside the 1st Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 8th Iraqi Army Division, in Hillah last week.

Soldiers from Troop A, 1st Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, conducted combined checkpoint operations with 1st Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 8th Iraqi Army Division, last week in Hillah.

The operations not only increased security at checkpoints, but also doubled as a training scenario for Iraqi army soldiers increasing their proficiency in checkpoint operations.

We have seen a drastic improvement in the IA soldier's ability to provide security, said Sgt. Michael Hahn, Bradley gunner, Troop A, 1-10 Cav.

"The men have a very good grasp on how to properly search vehicles and personnel," said Staff. Sgt. Benito Flores, section sergeant, Troop A, 1-10 Cav. "The Coalition Forces do not have to man checkpoints in the Babil Province because they know the IA is extremely good at it and do not need our help."

In addition to the combined operations with the IA, Troop A assists the Iraqi police with security efforts as well. The IP also man checkpoints inside Hillah requiring concrete barriers. These barriers identify the checkpoints, help to slow traffic and provide protection.

Bringing supplies to Iraqi security forces in Hillah, is a great way to enhance the security of the local area, said 1st Lt. Adam Ropelewski, platoon leader, Troop A, 1-10 Cav.

Coalition Forces delivered the barriers freeing up ISF resources and in turn allowing them to maintain security.

"We continue to work closely with the ISF to assist in providing security ensuring the safety of Hillah citizens," concluded Capt. Jon Bodenhammer, commander, Troop A, 1-10 Cav.

Kalsu Express flies into 21st century

By 2nd Lt. Adhana Townsell
STB, 2nd BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

FOB KALSU, Iraq — Acting as eyes and ears for pilots of 4th Attack Battalion, Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, crew chief Spc. William Wayne Hahn, Jr. helps air crews avoid obstacles, look out for dangerous situations and stay prepared for any contingencies.

After pointing Soldiers to their seats, the 24-year-old Augusta, Ga., native asks where they are going, hops into the side window seat of his UH-60 Black Hawk Helicopter, and begins scanning the landscape below as he mans the 240B machine gun on his side of the chopper.

The Kalsu Express is a Division asset run by 4th Inf. Div.'s CAB, which operates in the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Inf. Div. area of operations. It connects Forward Operating Base Kalsu and surrounding FOBs — Iskandariyah, Duke and Charlie, to the Taji-based Ironhorse Express, which serves Baghdad and the rest of the 4th Inf. Div. footprint. Hahn is a part of the crew that serves on the Kalsu Express.

The express is a streamlined network for civilian and military passengers to easily manifest and fly in and out of the area. Everyone, from the chaplain and everyday Soldiers to civilian contractors seeking duty flights or well-deserved rest, uses the system. It wasn't always this way.

"It used to be that every passenger who wanted to fly somewhere would have to walk into the brigade tactical operations center and fill out a pen and paper request, then come back later to check on whether they got a seat and when their flight was scheduled," said Maj. Chris Watrud, aviation officer, 2nd BCT. "It meant first-class service for a few, but many passengers not getting served at all."

Such a labor-intensive process is not very efficient for would-be travelers. The new, automated, Kalsu Express process uses shared networks to manifest passengers and post schedules. There is also an electronic chat network to ensure passengers can check real-time flight updates.

Although the system design is well done, passengers can create their own glitches. Unless passenger names are

added to the centralized manifest 48 hours prior to flight, passengers are restricted to space-available flights. Once they get on the helicopter, they still have to get off at the right stop.

Since January when the service began, FOBs have painted signs on their airfields to identify them to incoming passengers. The chiefs ask where passengers are going when they board and then announce each stop. Despite all this attention to detail, passengers still sometimes get off at the wrong stop.

"They fly around from Duke to Echo and realize that they should have gotten off two hours ago," said Chief Warrant Officer Rodric Williams, pilot-in-command, 4th Bn. "They're either sleeping or just enjoying the ride."

The sign-in/sign out rosters and real-time chat systems help to alleviate the potential problems posed when passengers need clarity to help in their travel plans. That's where FOB Kalsu's Arrival/Departure Airfield Control Group steps in.

"We are in charge of moving personnel on and off the birds when they come in," said Staff Sgt. Joseph Stormringer, day shift supervisor. Personnel make an extra effort to ensure 100 percent accountability. "We have personnel to walk them to the aircraft and bring them back."

Their excellence is measured in accountability and hospitality, said Master Sgt. Ray Kaloplastos, noncommissioned officer in charge. The airfield processes anywhere from 25-40 helicopters and 80-120 passengers daily. Kaloplastos, known as 'Master Sgt. K' to his Soldiers, said their record is impeccable. "Everyone signs in, everyone signs out," he said. "We don't let anybody slide by, and we haven't lost anyone yet."

For the most part, the number of people who want to fly is about the same as the number of seats they have available, said Watrud. After that, they work it according to mission priority list, and the Soldiers running the system do their best to make things happen for their passengers. Ask pilots who their favorite passengers are, and most answer without hesitation.



PHOTO BY 2ND LT. ADHANA TOWNSELL

Chief Warrant Officer Casey Green, pilot-in-command, 4th Battalion, 4th Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, conducts post-flight checks with Spc. Brandon Budred, crew chief, 4-4 Avn., at FOB Kalsu.

"The soldiers going on (Environmental Morale Leave)," said Williams.

Williams, a native of Dallas, is responsible for ensuring the safety of all the crews and passengers. He flies five to seven hours per day. Occasionally, when division needs an extra stop at some of the smaller FOBs in the area, they'll stop there also. They're here to serve.

"Because of restrictions on how many hours a pilot can fly per month, crew chiefs may work with a different crew every day," said Hahn. His professionalism is equal to his love for the job.

"I didn't fly the last time I was over here," said Hahn. "I had to do a lot of convoys. I love flying. I can't get enough of it."

On all levels, the Kalsu Express aims to serve, but passengers should remain patient during the process. According to Kaloplastos, the team will do its best to "bring them in, log them in, and push them out."

Preparation key to successful missions

By Spc. Edgar Reyes
Staff Writer

FOB KALSU, Iraq — Soldiers from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, prepare their vehicles and minds daily before going out on missions.

"Every morning we make sure we know exactly the status of our vehicles," said Sgt. Donovan Edmond, command driver, HHC, STB, 2nd BCT. "We also make sure every Soldier is 100 percent mission capable."

After conducting physical training, Soldiers visit the motor pool to start their preventive maintenance checks and services on their vehicles. They use Training Manual-10 as a guide to ensure the vehicle is inspected thoroughly.

After vehicles are inspected, Soldiers participate in refresher courses with subjects such as: Force Battle Command Brigade and Below system, Combat Lifesaver Course, night driving, Counter Remote Electronic Warfare systems and Single Channel Ground and Airborne Radio system. One of the systems Soldiers from HHC, STB, 2nd BCT try to become



PHOTO BY SPC EDGAR REYES

Sgt. Brandon Jackson, Sgt. Donovan Edmond and Sgt. Chervaldric Williams, command drivers, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd BCT, take a Force Battle Command Brigade and Below system refresher course before going on a patrol. The crew rehearses all battle-drill procedures whenever they are not on a mission so they are always ready whenever the times comes to roll out the gate

proficient at is the FBCB2 system.

During the FBCB2 refresher course, Soldiers learn to properly initiate the system, upload and change graphics on maps

and make and send quick messages. Edmond said, "If we were to call in a medical evacuation with the FBCB2, we would just hit a button and the nine-line medevac

would come up."

Using the quick messages learned in the refresher course makes it faster to call in a medevac, possibly saving lives.

"These refresher courses help us retain knowledge for greater leadership responsibilities," said Sgt. Chervaldric Williams, command driver, HHC, STB, 2nd BCT.

After Soldiers participate in the refresher courses, they perform pre-combat checks and inspections before exiting the gates of Kalsu for a mission.

All vehicles go through inspections again for any leaks or problems and Soldiers are checked by their team leaders to ensure they have proper ammunition loads, clean weapons, earplugs, gloves, eye protection, water and all other equipment necessary to complete the mission.

Once missions are completed, Soldiers perform an after-PMCS, top off fluids in the vehicles, perform sensitive equipment inventories, clean the inside and outside of the vehicle and gather for an after action review to discuss goals that were met throughout the day and improvement needed.

Edmond concluded, "taking the time to prepare before a mission and continuing to learn makes us better Soldiers in the long-run."

Chaplain flies to the rescue for catholics

By Cpl. Michael Molinaro
Editor

FOB KALSU, Iraq – As the Easter holiday approaches, being able to worship in their faith is important to Soldiers. Religious services during deployments are sacred moments that can provide a mental state of peace.

Unlike other brigades in the 4th Infantry Division, the 2nd Brigade Combat Team is spread throughout three provinces and four forward operating bases in Iraq. On top of that, a catholic priest is not assigned to the brigade.

Capt. John Quinn, chaplain, 4th Battalion, 4th Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, not only serves the Soldiers from his battalion and Catholic Soldiers at Camp Taji, but devotes his Mondays to serving Catholic Soldiers from the Warhorse brigade. It is a task that can be trying at times but very rewarding.

"The hunger and desire the catholic community in 2nd BCT has to go to mass gets me up in the morning," Quinn said.

Two catholic priests are assigned to the 4th Inf. Div. Quinn is stationed at Camp Taji, where 1st BCT and Combat Aviation Brigade reside. The other priest is stationed in the International Zone with the 4th BCT and takes care of services throughout Camps Victory, Liberty, and Prosperity. The camps contain the 4th Inf. Div. headquarters, Fires brigade, and other various units that fall under the Multi-National Division – Baghdad banner in Iraq.

Every Monday morning, Quinn departs Camp Taji for the 2nd BCT area of operations. Due to security measures put in place, he doesn't know until Sunday evening where the first stop is and what time they are leaving. He said the travel schedule is the biggest issue Quinn faces on a weekly basis. The inconsistency can make it extremely hard for Soldiers and civilians to be able to make mass every week. One week mass may be held at 10 a.m. and the next week at 3:30 p.m.

When this operation first began, Quinn said, it was not an easy task. Making one or two FOBs was an accom-

plishment some days; other days allowed for just communion service.

The cooperation of the Kalsu Express personnel has made the mission easier, he added. The Soldiers got on board with Quinn and made the proper travel arrangements throughout Warhorse's area of operations.

Quinn doesn't do it alone. Sgt. Samuel Hess, chaplain assistant, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th Battalion, Combat Avn. Bde., serves as the Soldier behind the scenes to help make the operation a success.

"I am blessed and very fortunate to have such a strong right-hand man," Quinn said. "It's a team effort, and the chaplain cannot function properly without the capable help from the chaplain assistant."

Hess takes care of logistics to and from Camp Taji every week. That is one of the most integral parts of the chaplain's mission, said Quinn. The slightest problem getting out of the camp can spoil an entire Monday for the catholic community.

Hess takes care of setting up the altar for Quinn while he gets dressed for the services, makes sure Quinn's IPOD is set to play music during the service and gets Quinn lunch wherever they are during lunch hours. Not to mention, Hess is Quinn's very own personal security detachment.

"It's great flying over the country from FOB to FOB, seeing the kids waving and then seeing how happy Soldiers are when we arrive for mass," Hess said. "It makes you feel like you have more of a purpose over here."

Quinn joined the Army after a 30-year hiatus from Marine service. He said he heard that some Soldiers and Marines from Operation Iraqi Freedom I had never seen a catholic priest during their deployment and he wanted to do something about that statistic.



PHOTO BY CPL MICHAEL MOLINARO

Ch (Capt.) John Quinn, 4th Battalion, 4th Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, performs Catholic mass at Forward Operating Base Iskandariyah. Quinn travels to each FOB in the 2nd Brigade Combat Team area of operations every Monday to perform Catholic mass for the Soldiers void of catholic representation in their brigade.

"I joined the Army specifically to minister to forward-deployed Soldiers serving in harms way," he said. "4th Inf. Div. was next up in the rotation back to the Sandbox of Iraq, so here I am."

Quinn has served communion to Soldiers and Marines prior to mass because they have had to go on missions and wouldn't be able to attend. On his way to board a helicopter for another FOB, he once gave communion to a Soldier because the Soldier was told the wrong time of the mass and caught up with Quinn seconds before leaving.

"Bringing the sacraments to our Soldiers is extremely gratifying and fulfilling work," Quinn said. "Many have to think about their faith in a radically different way under combat conditions."

Soldier joins to preserve rights

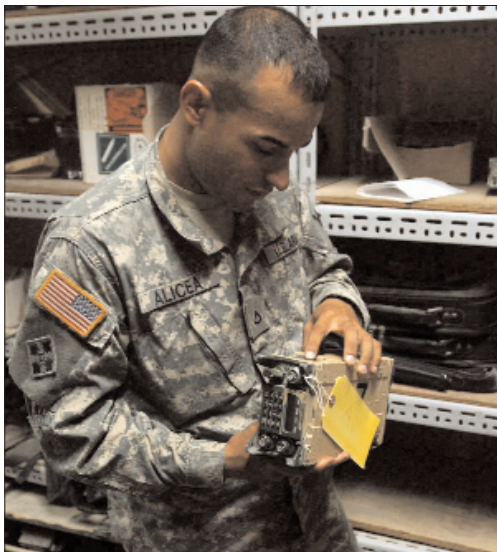


PHOTO BY SPC EDGAR REYES

Pfc. Enrique Alicea, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 67th Armor Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, verifies the serial number on a radio so he can install it on a vehicle before it leaves out on a mission Wednesday.

FOB KALSU, Iraq – The Army is like a big pot of authentic New Orleans-style gumbo. It is rich in cultural diversity and ethnic flavor with Soldiers from different parts of the United States and the world risking their lives to preserve our human rights: "the right to life and liberty, freedom of thought and expression, and equality before the law."

One Soldier who plays a role in the mission in Iraq is Pfc. Enrique Alicea, communications specialist, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 67th Armor Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division.

Born and raised in Puerto Rico, Alicea grew up in the impoverished streets of Bayamon where he learned the true meaning of freedom and human rights.

"Being born and raised in Puerto Rico makes you tough," said Alicea. "It makes you smarter and more mature at an early age. I have been in the streets since I was 14, so I have seen things that have humbled

me and made me appreciate things like human rights, which people sometimes take for granted."

Before joining the Army, Alicea worked as a security guard, pharmacy technician and bank teller before realizing the income he was bringing in was not enough to make ends meet for his family.

"The money was pretty good in the beginning, but when my wife got pregnant I had to take a different route," said Alicea.

Alicea had several options to choose from, including becoming a police officer in Puerto Rico, but he chose the military instead. He wanted to set the example for his country.

"My grandfather was in World War II and the Korean War," said Alicea. "He is my hero and I wanted to be just like him; someone who stood up to represent his country and fought for human rights."

On May 12, 2005, he joined the United States Army as a communication specialist responsible for maintaining and fixing

communication systems.

"I wanted to do a job that would help me in the civilian world if I ever decided to leave the military," said Alicea.

"When a radio or communication system breaks down, I am there to fix it so that the Soldiers can carry on with their missions," said Alicea.

Although Alicea has only been in the military for 13 months, he has plans of one day becoming a drill sergeant and completing 20 years in the military.

"A drill sergeant is the first experience a Soldier has when he joins the Army," said Alicea. "If I could share my experiences with new Soldiers it would be extremely satisfying."

"You find there are a lot of Puerto Ricans in the Army," said Cpl. Javier Martinez, administrative specialist, HHC, 1-67 AR. "It does not matter if we do not know each other; all Puerto Ricans treat each other like family because we share similar experiences and we fight for the same cause."

Late night logpacks keep brigade going

By Spc. Edgar Reyes
Staff Writer

FOB KALSU, Iraq – As Soldiers from 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, fights terrorists and helps the Iraqi army protect their country, a group of Soldiers from Company A, 204th Support Battalion, 2nd BCT, silently creep through the streets of Iraq in order to re-supply the Soldiers in the fight.

"Everything from food, water and office supplies to oil, wood and serviceable parts are sent on the log packs to each base in the 2nd BCT area of operations," said Sgt. Pretoria Johnson, automated logistical specialist, Co. A, 204th Spt. Bn.

New shipments of supplies and equipment arrive at Forward Operating Base Duke everyday, where they are processed by Co. A, 204th Spt. Bn., and distributed to the receiving section in the company, said Johnson.

"We sometimes receive about 46 Air Force pallets full of equipment and supplies a day, which measure around 108 feet by 108 feet," said Johnson. "If we have any surplus items, we place them in storage that way we have them ready in the event a unit places an order for them in the future."

The receiving section distributes any items placed on order by a base to the issue section, which allocates them on a log pack headed towards the destination on the order sheet, said Johnson.

"Our main mission is to get a log pack from point A to point B as safely as possible," said Pfc. Joseph Teutsch, Co. A, 240th Spt. Bn. "Our supply trips enable units to continue to be in the fight."

The mission starts early in the day with Soldiers performing maintenance on all of the vehicles to make sure everything is working properly during the convoy. All of the supplies and equipment undergoes inspection as Soldiers tie down everything going on the trip to prevent accidental drops or damage to the equipment while out on the mission.

The Soldiers get together four hours prior to the combat patrol departure time to make last minute checks and mount their machine guns on top of their vehicles.

After everything undergoes inspection for the last time, Soldiers gather for a convoy

briefing. The briefing lasts between 30 to 45 minutes and involves everything from safety to reaction procedures under enemy fire.

The convoys are on high alert because even though they have the cover of the night, the visibility is not as good as in the daytime and the log pack contains a large amount of vehicles, said Teutsch.

"The enemy can see a large convoy of American vehicles coming from a distance," said Teutsch. "That is why we it is so dangerous and why we have to stay vigilant throughout the entire trip."

After the log-pack arrives at its destination, Soldiers download the new equipment and exchange it for unserviceable parts. Soldiers upload the unserviceable parts on to the vehicles before attending a second convoy brief prior to making their return trip to FOB Duke.

"Doing a convoy during the middle of the night is a dangerous job at times, but someone has to do it," said Teutsch.



Sgt. Chris Holden and Pfc. Justin Woodburn, light-wheel vehicle mechanics, Company B, 204th Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, perform maintenance on a ten-ton Wrecker prior to a logpack to FOB Kalsu.



Toby Keith made his way to FOB Iskandariyah to perform for Soldiers on one of the more remote FOBs in Iraq. Lt. Col. Patrick Donahoe, commander, 1st Battalion, 67th Armor Regiment, 2nd BCT, 4th ID, shows his appreciation to Keith by presenting him with a banner from the "Death Dealers." Keith visited the dining facility after the concert to have a little lunch, talk with Soldiers and sign autographs.



Toby rocks Iskan

photos by Maj. Anna Friederich

Country music superstar Toby Keith plays for Soldiers from 1-67 and attached units at Fob Iskandariyah. Keith played for 45 minutes as Iskan was the final stop on his USO tour throughout FOBs in Iraq. He signed several autographs, took pictures, and spoke with as many Soldiers as possible while at Iskan.



Pvt. Andrew Thomas, 988th Military Police Company, 1st Battalion, 67th Armor Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, shows his appreciation to Toby Keith in his own way at FOB Iskandariyah. Keith visited the dining facility for lunch and took time to talk with Soldiers and sign autographs after his concert earlier that morning.

Ask the Judge

By Capt. Carlos Calderon
2nd BCT Legal Office

Most American Soldiers, like most Americans, are fortunate enough to have been born and raised in the land of freedom and democracy. For a few others however, something akin to being born in America is about to happen, appropriately enough, on the 4th of July: they will officially become American citizens at a naturalization ceremony in Camp Liberty, Baghdad. Ten soldiers from the 2d Brigade Combat Team are among those happy soldiers that will be sworn in as new citizens with all the privileges, responsibilities and pride that it implies.

There are three ways to be an American citizen: by birth; by virtue of the citizenship of the parents; and through the process of "Naturalization." The latter is the only way to voluntarily become an American citizen. It has for many years signified a remarkable step in the life of every naturalized American.

Becoming a Naturalized American is a long and arduous, not to mention confusing, procedure that usually takes a number of years. Serving in the Armed Forces significantly simplifies and accelerates that process. Non-citizen Soldiers are eligible for waiver of Naturalization fees, and the JAG office is available to steer them through the complicated and overwhelming application process.

It all starts with the filing of a packet of four federal forms, 2 passport style pictures, and two sets of fingerprints on an FD285 form or an FBI Criminal fingerprint form. By signing an SF Form 85 (Authorization for Release of Information) the Soldier authorizes the USCIS (United States Citizenship and Immigration Services) to conduct a background investigation to determine initial eligibility. Concurrently, the Personnel Services Battalion certifies the soldier as a Service Member in good standing via the N426 form. The USCIS also requires two copies of the biographical information on Form G325B, and of course, a completed and signed Citizenship application Form N400. At that point, the USCIS in conjunction with G1 personnel and your JAG office arrange for an interview where the Soldier undergoes a final assessment of his fitness to become an American and his English language skills.

Got a headache yet? Not to worry. Your local JAG office has plenty of help to offer to prospective citizens, and all the forms necessary to complete the application. To date, the 2BCT legal office has steered over 80 Soldiers through the complete Naturalization process. Ten of those have passed final interviews with a USCIS agent, and have been approved as qualified citizens for the 4th of July ceremony.

The USCIS plans to continue processing applications throughout our deployment and it is the goal of your JAG legal office to assist every eligible Soldier in the brigade to acquire United States citizenship and to officially become an American - thus joining those lucky enough to be born in the land of the free and the home of the brave.



PHOTO BY MAJ. ANNA FRIEDERICH

Maj. Gen. J.D. Thurman, commander, Multi National Division-Baghdad, walks with Sebah Aafaji, Hateen Bus Factory manager, as they tour the factory. Thurman met with Aafaji to discuss the future of the once thriving industry that supplied the majority of buses and automobiles in the Babil Province in the 1980s and 90s.

Ask a Soldier

What do you usually do on the Fourth of July?



Pfc. Stephon Kowalski, scout, Troop C, 1-10 Cav.

"I usually get together with my family and cook because we like to get together as a family and spend quality time together."



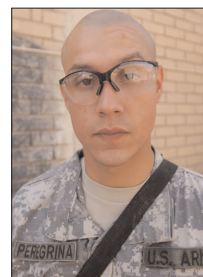
Spc. Maira Cifuentes, admin clerk, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd BCT.

"We go out to Shoreline Village in Long Beach, California and watch fireworks from a boat named Queen Mary."



Staff Sgt. Michael Bedsole, scout, Troop B, 1-10 Cav.

"Normally I barbecue with my family and go out to see the fireworks in whatever city we are currently staying at."



Spc. Jofrank Peregrina, infantryman, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2-8 Inf.

"I usually spend time with my family at a large cookout watching the kids play with fireworks while all the adults talk about the good times."

Coming in the next issue:

- * FOURTH OF JULY IN IRAQ
- * SOLDIERLY LOVE HEALS HEARTACHE
- * CHARLIE MED ALWAYS ON CALL
- * AROUND AO WARHORSE
- * WARHORSE 7 ON POINT
- * AND MUCH MORE.....

Faces and Places

Photos by Navy PH2 Katrina Beeler



Sgt. Caulleno, Company B, 2nd Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, runs with Iraqi Army soldiers as they carry a litter during a litter run. B Co. 2-8 gives an Iraqi Army division a two week training course in basic military training.



(Above) Sgt. Delonte Pippins, Company B, 3rd Battalion, 16th Field Artillery Unit, talks over the radio as he prepares to perform crew drill in the Howitzer M109A6.

(Right) Cpl. Joshua Selfe, Company B, 2nd Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, talks with a local boy while on a dismounted patrol through the town.

