

# DESERT THUNDER

The voice of Task Force Lightning



October 2006  
Vol. 1, Issue 2



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Photo by Pfc. Bryanna Poulin/  
Task Force Lightning PAO

A Stryker makes  
it's way through the  
city of Mosul, Iraq  
during a dismounted  
patrol with 1st  
Platoon, Company  
C, 2nd Battalion, 3rd  
Infantry Regiment,  
3rd Stryker Brigade  
Combat Team, 2nd  
Inf. Division

Photo by Sgt. Zach Mott/ 3-4 HBCT PAO

Dates from various villages across Diyala Province  
are displayed at tables set up at the Diyala Date  
Festival in Baqubah, Iraq, Sept. 18. See page 14 for  
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## Desert Thunder

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### Desert Thunder is

published monthly by Task  
Force Lightning Public Affairs  
Office, HHC DIV (PAO) 25th  
STB, Unit #72111, COB  
Speicher, APO AE 09393,  
DSN 856-0218.

**Desert Thunder** is an  
authorized publication of the  
Department of Defense. It is  
distributed free to members  
of Task Force Lightning.  
Circulation is 10,000.

Contents of **Desert  
Thunder** are not  
necessarily the official  
views of, or endorsed by  
the U.S. Government or the  
Department of the Army.

Editorial content is the  
responsibility of the Task  
Force Lightning Public  
Affairs Office.



# Lightning 6 Sends

Greetings from COB Speicher. I would first like to express my solemn condolences to the families, friends and comrades of the brave, dedicated Soldiers we've lost in this fight for freedom. The honorable men and women that have served with Task Force Lightning will always be remembered as we carry on the legacy of fighting and winning our Nation's wars. We will ensure their sacrifices are not in vain. We will strengthen our resolve as we continue this war against terror.

In executing this war, we must be vigilant in not setting patterns of maneuver. During the course of our daily operations remain aware of every action you take; do not set patterns or routines. Complacency causes casualties. The enemy observes what we do and exploits those observations to launch attacks against us. We must avoid giving them the tools to succeed, to include the knowledge of commonly used

routes, flight patterns and TTPs. Be vigilant in varying your actions. Leaders – be diligent in being unpredictable to the enemy, it is critical to keeping our Soldiers safe on the battlefield.

Continue to put Iraqi Security Forces in the lead. It is our mission to train and prepare the ISF to provide safety and security for their country. Keeping them in the lead, with TF Lightning in support, builds their confidence and bolsters their credibility to the Iraqi people. This will continue to foster hope in the Iraqi People and demonstrate that ISF are capable of independent operations.

them to seek help. Report immediately any indicator that they may harm themselves or fellow Soldiers. Continue to enhance unit morale by ensuring all members of TF Lightning have the opportunity to communicate with their families and loved ones. Family well-being is critical to the mindset of each individual Soldier. The result is a more focused war fighter who will undoubtedly accomplish the mission.

**Tropic Lightning!**

*“One Team, One Mission  
– Security for Iraq's People.”*

Continue to reinforce this message in everything we do. This will pay dividends for us in reaching our goal – security for the people of Iraq.

Look after each other. Be alert for the comrade who may be distressed or depressed. Talk to them and encourage







# Lightning 7 Sends

## Lightning

Tropic Lightning! As the Task Force forges ahead to accomplish the mission we continue to face difficult and complex challenges. The task of training and assisting Iraqi Security Forces in providing a safe and secure environment for the Iraqi people is not easy. We are making great strides but must diligently continue to build up the Iraqi forces.

I want to direct the focus of leaders at every level toward the well-being and readiness of our number one resource—the war fighter. Leaders must ensure our troops have the necessary, fully mission capable equipment to accomplish their missions, and must ensure it is utilized on every mission. The enemy is crafty and persistent and we must continuously analyze, adapt, and improve ourselves and our areas of operation.

Our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines must continuously adapt to the ever-changing conditions and environment.

They must be constantly alert and aware of their surroundings, while maintaining standards. Leaders must stay engaged with Soldiers at all levels to provide them the most up to date information. Knowledge is power and our Soldiers must have the knowledge required to keep them lethal and safe.

A key component to Task Force Lightning's success is physical fitness. A physically fit Soldier

is a combat multiplier. Our Soldiers possess the physical and mental toughness that the Army's new campaign expounds. "Army Strong" is true of our Task Force Lightning Soldiers, and leaders must continue to carve out time for their Soldiers to maintain their physical strength and endurance.

In addition to ensuring we care for our war fighter's physical and tactical needs, leaders must also ensure they remain connected with their families and loved ones back home. This support network is crucial to the morale of our troops which manifests itself in our combat effectiveness. Many times a Soldier's relationship with his or her family has the greatest impact on their ability to accomplish the mission with a mind that's clear and focused. Leaders cannot overlook this significant aspect of our war fighters. Take care of families and ensure Soldiers are afforded time to connect with their loved ones.

In closing, I would like to say thanks to every Soldier, Sailor, Airman and Marine in Task Force Lightning for what you do. When it comes to the premier fighting forces in the world – nobody does it better. I also want to thank our Coalition partners for their support. Together we will train and assist the ISF in stabilizing their country and defeat the insurgency.

"One Team, One Mission – security for Iraq's people."



# Wolfhounds and tribal leaders have historic meeting



STORY AND PHOTOS BY SPC. MIKE ALBERTS  
3RD INFANTRY BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM,  
25TH INFANTRY DIVISION PUBLIC AFFAIRS

**KIRKUK, Iraq** — Transferring a safe and secure Iraq back to its people will depend, in large part, on the establishment of a legitimate, representative government. Legitimizing the government may depend on how well coalition forces integrate Iraq's tribal culture.

For centuries, tribal sheiks have influenced the social, economic and political landscape of Iraq. They have the people's ear and influence their action. Leadership of the 25th Infantry Division's 3rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team recognizes this cultural reality and is taking historical strides to listen to tribal interests in the Kirkuk Province.

Coalition leaders and elders from the prominent area tribes convened in the Hawija District Sept. 20 to discuss tribal needs and concerns and to develop approaches to include tribal interests in the development of the district's future.

Hawija, located in the Kirkuk Province, has been the scene of significant opposition to coalition forces this year. Several influences there compete with democracy according to Lt. Col. Drew Meyerowich, battalion commander, 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment, 3IBCT.

"The people in this province have lived thousands of years within a tribal system," said Meyerowich. "So when you are trying to help provide a representative government in a society where tribal grand sheiks are the ones that historically provide for the people, [our effort] will not be successful unless the tribes are a part of the process," he emphasized.

The meeting was the first such cooperative meeting between American military leaders and the heads of each prominent tribe. Each sheik confirmed that never before had they all gathered under one roof with American military leaders to discuss solutions to the tribes' mutual concern over a lack of inclusion in the future of Iraq.

Afterward, elders shared a traditional meal with their American military guests as a symbol of cooperation.

"This meeting was tremendously significant," emphasized Capt. Jeff Fuller, fire support officer, 2-27. "If the sheiks feel like they are being ignored by the government they will communicate that to their people," said Fuller. "If you are not representing the tribal voice in the Iraqi government then the government does not truly represent the people in this district."

Captain Roland A. Keller, Jr., company commander, Company D, 2-27, interacts with one of the district's tribal leaders on a weekly basis. Keller, through interpreters, listens to tribal concerns and passes along information to the sheik so that the local citizens better understand coalition motivations and actions. By all accounts, the effort is proving successful.

"We talk to the people on a regular basis to see if our messages conveyed to the sheik are getting out into the villages and to the people," said Keller. "The people are beginning to understand that we're here to [bring] change and to help them return to a normal life where war isn't impacting them on a daily basis," he said.

"We need to bring about change in this region," said the Wolfhound commander. "This meeting is a very big step in that direction." 🇮🇶



# 149th IBCT keeps Speicher going

STORY AND PHOTOS BY  
STAFF SGT. TYRONE C. MARSHALL JR.  
TASK FORCE LIGHTNING PUBLIC AFFAIRS

**TIKRIT, Iraq** — Soldiers residing at Contingency Operating Base (COB) Speicher enjoy some of arguably the best living conditions of any of the various COBs, forward operating bases (FOBs) or camps in Iraq.

This is largely due to the diligence of a relatively small group of dedicated and passionate Soldiers in a unit that's been around quite a while.

The 149th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT), a National Guard unit home-based in Louisville, Ky., is the 'life blood' of COB Speicher.

The brigade is responsible for all garrison functions such as force protection, infrastructure, official mail management, life support, expansion and base defense with one goal — "To provide a safe and secure environment to enable Task Force Lightning to do their mission outside the fence," said Col. Charles T. Jones, commander, 149th IBCT, and native of London, Ky.

Since assuming command of COB Speicher's garrison functions June 1, the unit has prided itself on providing Soldiers with the highest possible standards of living.

"I believe we've changed the whole atmosphere of the camp," said Master Sgt. Jeffrey N. Kemper, brigade communications noncommissioned officer (NCO) and life support operations (LSO) noncommissioned officer in charge (NCOIC).

It has not been an easy task though for the 22 Soldiers in the



**Staff Sgt. Joseph Boccuzzi, range control NCOIC, 149th IBCT, conducts maintenance on a security system Tuesday en route to a range on Contingency Operating Base, Speicher.**

unit. Each has faced his or her own difficulties in executing their mission.

"We're a 22-person team executing several missions," said Maj. Tamara M. Hurst, COB Speicher's force protection officer and native of Frankfort, Ky. "We didn't come with any equipment, transportation or anything like that."

Other Soldiers in the unit had to adjust to conducting garrison

operations.

"I've always been in a [combat] unit," said 1st Sgt. William W. Hayes, first sergeant for Headquarters, and Headquarters Company (HHC), 149th IBCT. "Out of my 22 years, 18 of those were in a line unit."

Sgt. Cory L. Edwards, a resident of Clarksville, Tenn., had to overcome a similar challenge as the intelligence NCOIC.

"It was a 'learn on the fly'





**Pfc. Carlos Gutierrez and Spc. Jeffery Frasher, Company B, 209th ASB, review protocol for searching visitors at one of Contingency Operating Base Speicher's checkpoints while Staff Sgt. Joseph Boccuzzi looks on.**

type thing,” said Edwards.

“The biggest challenge was just learning how to do it ... either you sink or you swim. The good thing about this unit is that everybody talks to each other. If you don’t know something it’s not hard to get an answer.”

As tasks multiplied, the unit’s resiliency and resourcefulness began to show.

When the need arose, 14 Soldiers in the intelligence and operations sections, helmed by Maj. Michael A. Abell, had to conduct base defense missions for nearly 100 days. During this period, they captured and detained 23 anti-Iraqi forces.

“In our battle space we have 300 square kilometers outside the perimeter,” said Abell, a native of Louisville, Ky. “There wasn’t one Soldier, Sailor, Airman or Marine – anybody that

was killed or [severely] wounded.”

149th IBCT’s Soldiers are a proud group and rightfully so. The unit’s lineage dates back to the Civil War. According to the brigade’s written history, the Kentucky Militia was constituted and organized in Louisville, Ky., in January, 1839.

The infantry brigade served in such campaigns as the Mexican War, the Civil War (Shiloh, Murfreesborough, Chickamauga, Atlanta, Mississippi 1862 and Tennessee 1863), and World Wars I and II (New Guinea, Leyte and Luzon).

Units from the infantry brigade also served in Operations Enduring Freedom, Noble Eagle and its current tour – Iraqi Freedom. 149th IBCT began its latest campaign May 5, 2006.

Although they have only been here a few months, according to

Jones, a 29-year veteran himself, experience is not an issue. Only about 500 of approximately 3,500 troops under Jones’ command haven’t deployed before. He also has Soldiers serving in Multi-National Division Baghdad as well as two battalions in Kentucky and three in Alabama.

The unit seems to draw its pride from its rich history and the garrison command’s Soldiers take an enthusiastic approach to their challenging multitude of tasks.

“My job is to make sure everybody that lives on [COB] Speicher is successful,” said Jones in a thick Kentucky accent. “If you’re worrying about me doing my job you ain’t got time to focus on yours, right?”

“We’re just a group of Soldiers with a heart for service,” Hurst said. 🍷



# Iraqi Army learns PMCS

STORY AND PHOTO BY

PFC. BRYANNA POULIN

TASK FORCE LIGHTNING PUBLIC AFFAIRS

**MOSUL, Iraq** — Soldiers from 296th Brigade Support Battalion, Fort Lewis, Wash., and the Military Transition Team (MITT), 3rd Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 2nd Iraqi Army Division, have combined to train senior leaders of the IA on preventive maintenance checks and services (PMCS) on loaner vehicles at Forward Operating Base Spear, Mosul, Iraq, Sept. 19.

The purpose of teaching the IA PMCS is to avert equipment failures by locating and repairing minor problems before major defects occur, therefore, preparing them to be mission ready.

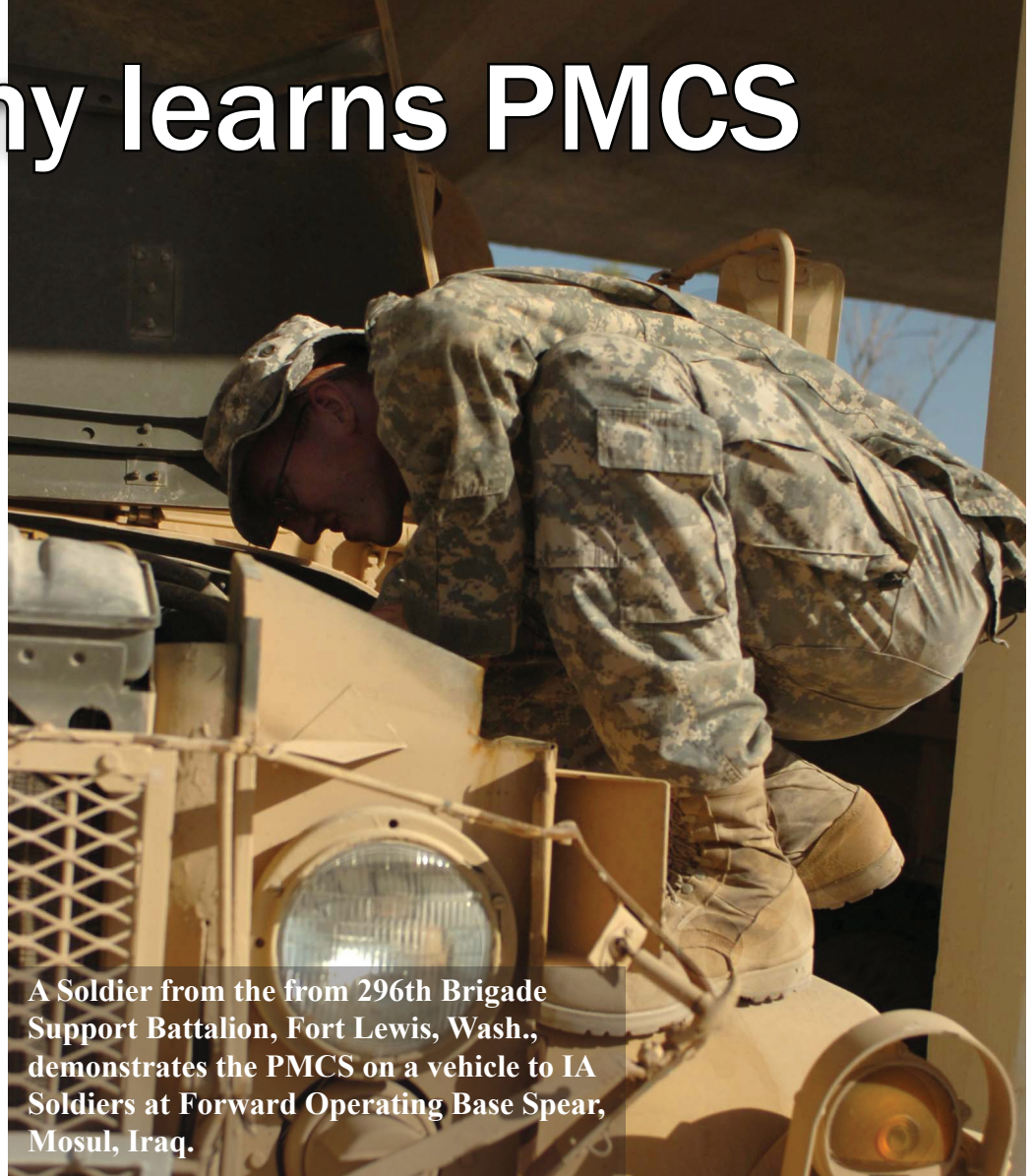
“We have partnered together to teach basic logistical skills to be able to support their combat units while out in the field,” said Maj. Scot D. Pears, operations officer, 296th BSB. “It’s critical to IA, in having a self-sustained operation without Coalition Force assistance.”

Although the IA is proficient in repairing vehicles, they do not have an organized system in maintaining them, which jeopardizes their safety.

“There is no detailed tracking mechanism assuring vehicles get fixed,” Pears stated. “Paperwork does not get documented identifying what needs to go where, so we are here to help IA create a system that works.”

If a vehicle leaves the gate and it hasn’t been properly checked it raises the chances of something going wrong outside the wire.

“Neglecting a vehicle beforehand could possibly cause



A Soldier from the from 296th Brigade Support Battalion, Fort Lewis, Wash., demonstrates the PMCS on a vehicle to IA Soldiers at Forward Operating Base Spear, Mosul, Iraq.

it to break down, causing us to have to send someone else to repair it,” noted Staff Sgt. Taryn Dixon, operations platoon sergeant, Company B, 296th BSB. “It’s important that the possibility of someone getting hurt outside the FOB is avoided.”

An additional dilemma the IA faces is getting the parts needed to fix broken vehicles.

“The IA needs some [type of] uniform supply system so they can receive the equipment they need,” Dixon said. “Right now they are trying to weld and piece things together making problems worse in the end.”

“We aren’t getting the parts we need to fix vehicles or some parts aren’t available here,” said Capt. Ghanim, Headquarters, 3rd

Battalion., 2nd Brigade, 2nd IA Division. “With MITT guidance we are being taught the ordering system.”

“For IA to receive the parts they need, some system to order supplies must not only be installed, but it has to work for the IA,” remarked Pears.

According to Pears, MITT is showing the IA how the U.S. Army operates, what works for us and guiding them in finding a system that is beneficial.

“We are learning a lot of information and are very happy with them,” Pvt. Ilman, mechanic, 3rd Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 2nd IA Division. “It’s going to help make our missions better by knowing basic procedures.” 🇮🇶



# Soldiers at Q-West learn life-saving skills



Combat life saver instructor Sgt. Hector Jasso supervises as 2nd Lt. Soonah Phem and Sgt. Ximena Hurtado use a buddy carry method to evacuate a simulated casualty from a danger zone.

STORY AND PHOTO BY SPC. KYNDAL HERNANDEZ  
45TH SUSTAINMENT BRIGADE PUBLIC AFFAIRS

## FORWARD OPERATING BASE Q-WEST, Iraq

— More than 30 Soldiers honed their combat life-saving skills during an informative four-day training course at Forward Operating Base Q-West Sept. 25 through 28.

Combat lifesavers are neither first aid providers nor fully qualified emergency medical technicians. They are a combination of both, optimized to provide lifesaving care for medical emergencies.

“We take this training very seriously, especially out here,” said Spc. Roy Frank, a CLS instructor from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 45th Sustainment Brigade. “There isn’t always going to be a medic around when something bad happens, so we need to have Soldiers who are CLS qualified to help prevent their fellow Soldiers from losing their lives.”

The crash course consisted of classroom instruction taught by medics at the base’s troop medical clinic, followed by “round robin” type training where Soldiers put into action the skills they learned during classroom instruction.

As part of the CLS certification, Soldiers practiced applying splints to broken bones and

fractures.

They also performed compressions and procedures for maintaining an open airway.

On the third day, troops tested their trust in each other, taking turns at giving intravenous fluids to each other.

“The best part was when we started the IV’s, I thought it was going to be scary, but it was fun,” said Spc. Mathew Arnold, a missile technician with 45th Sustainment Brigade.

On the final day, the troops applied all the skills they learned throughout the course.

“Being a support unit ... we train other Soldiers on the basic CLS techniques and rely on them to be the first responders,” explained Sgt. Timothy Laynor, TMC NCOIC, HHC 45th Sustainment Brigade. “This class also helps our medics who are teaching the course because ... they get to show off their skills and it gives them more confidence in their work.”

Frank said having more combat lifesavers on missions off base greatly improves the number of lives saved.

“We all have family and friends to go home to so having people who are CLS qualified out on convoys gives us a greater chance to save someone’s life and make sure they get back home in one piece.” 🍀



# Coming to an understanding



Photo by Spc. Juan Jimenez / TF Lightning PAO



**Lt. Gen. Abdul Aziz, 4th Iraqi Army commander, shakes hands with Maj. Gen. Benjamin R. Mixon, Task Force Lightning commander, during the Memorandum of Understanding signing at Contingency Operating Base Speicher, Iraq Sep. 28. This significant moment demonstrated the partnership between Iraqi Army and Coalition Forces in the Global War on Terrorism.**

Photo by Spc. Juan Jimenez / TF Lightning PAO



# Iraqi Security Forces wear combat badge

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SPC. RICH VOGT  
138TH MOBILE PUBLIC AFFAIRS DETACHMENT

**MOSUL, Iraq** — Iraqi Security Forces have a new combat badge to wear. The badge is earned after passing a basic skills course being taught at Forward Operating Base Marez, Mosul, Iraq.

The course consists of basic rifle marksmanship, first aid, hand signals, urban movement and, for officers and noncommissioned officers (NCOs), a map-reading test, where they have to plot a six-digit grid coordinate.

“If we go out on patrol with them in the city, and we give them a hand and arm signal, or if we tell them to pull security, to get down on a knee, they know exactly what to do,” said Staff Sgt. Steve Wertman, course noncommissioned officer in charge, Company B, 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team (SBCT), 2nd Infantry Division.

The Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) who are testing for the badge have already attended the training academy started by the 1st Battalion, 17th Infantry Regiment, 172nd SBCT. Wertman’s crew has assumed responsibility for the academy. His battalion, the 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, wanted a way to identify those who have reached a certain level of proficiency.

“They’re earning a badge, it’s kind of like our expert infantry badge, but it’s basic for the ISF,” Wertman said. “In the future they will be able to conduct this training on their own and add some more skill requirements. This is our second group to test. Yesterday we graduated 118 ISF who successfully earned the badge.

“To me, it feels great,” Wertman said. “Whenever our Soldiers end up leaving this country, ISF are going to have to do it on their own, by us training them and letting them apply what they have learned on the streets, it reinforces that they’re more than capable of providing security. It also increases their motivation to take control of their neighborhoods and no longer require our involvement.” 🇮🇶

(Above and below) Iraqi Security Forces earn an infantry skills badge at Forward Operating Base Marez on a course created by the 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment.





# An anniversary of success



Soldiers from Mosul's PRT and 37th Armor Regiment meet with Tal Afar's Mayor Najim to have lunch and discuss issues about reconstruction programs.

STORY AND PHOTOS SGT. 1ST CLASS STEVEN PETIBONE  
138TH MOBILE PUBLIC AFFAIRS DETACHMENT

**TAL AFAR, Iraq** — September, 2005 was a milestone for Coalition and Iraqi Forces.

It marked the end of Operation Restore Rights initiated by the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment and completed by the "Iron Dukes" of 2nd Battalion, 37th Armor Regiment.

Tal Afar is located 35 miles from the Syrian border in northern Iraq. It was a strategic location for Al Qaeda and their former leader, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

It is a city of more than 250,000 residents, roughly the population of Akron, Ohio. It has dozens of tribes of different ethnicities and religions. Most of the city residents are Sunnis of Turkoman origin.

Tal Afar was a key strategic point for terrorist operations in Iraq. After the removal of Saddam Hussein in April, 2003, terrorists began moving into the city. They sought to divide Tal Afar's many ethnic and religious groups and form an alliance with those who had benefited from Saddam's former regime and others with their own anti-Iraqi and Coalition Forces agenda.

Terrorists skillfully used propaganda to generate hostility toward Coalition Forces and the new Iraqi government. They exploited a weak economy and recruited young men to their cause and by September, 2004, the terrorists and insurgents had

seized control of Tal Afar. Terrorists and insurgents moved freely in the city.

Col. H.R. McMaster, commander, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment described Tal Afar this way – "When you come into a place in the grip of al Qaeda, you see a ghost town. There are no children playing in the streets. Shops are closed and boarded, all construction has stopped and local citizens stay inside as prisoners in their own homes."

The tactical plan was not to come in and remove the terrorists then move on, but to adopt a new approach called clear, hold and build. This new approach was successful because of the significant gains made in training large numbers of capable ISF.

Under this new approach, Iraqi and Coalition Forces cleared the city of terrorists, leaving well-trained Iraqi units behind to hold the cleared portions.

After hostilities and fighting were controlled, work began with local leaders to rebuild the economic and political infrastructure needed to maintain freedom.

A year after the successful operation, progress is still being made in the city.

The infrastructure rebuilding in Tal Afar is moving in a positive direction due to the efforts of Mayor Najim. The Provincial Reconstruction Team is in the early stages of build and aggressive infrastructure program through their relationship with



the mayor and his district.

Mayor Najim is proactive in his efforts to forge a modern Iraqi city. He made a trip to the U.S. to see how urban communities work in Colorado Springs, Colo., Denver and Washington D.C.

Mayor Najim also wrote letters to President George W. Bush thanking him for the valiant sacrifices of 3rd ACR Soldiers during the military operations that rid Tal Afar of Al Qaeda and their supporters.

The mayor is no stranger to the constant struggle for Iraq's democracy. He replaced Tal Afar's former mayor, in August, 2005, prior to the start of Operation Restore Rights, serving as mayor during a period of extreme unrest and violent insurgent activity.

Mayor Najim is now ready to work with the Mosul PRT to establish Tal Afar as a model city. He attended the Sept. 2 transition of authority ceremony with the 2-37th Armor Regiment commander, Lt. Col. John K. Tien.

"Thirty seven million U.S. dollars have been pledged to help rebuild the Tal Afar infrastructure," said Maj. Max Muramoto, Ninawa Province Reconstruction Team liaison officer. "We are

starting to see the first of those projects come on line now."

According to Muramoto, nearly \$10 million has already been spent to compensate the citizens of Tal Afar for damages due to fighting the insurgents in and around the city.

Although in its early stage, the Tal Afar urban planning program is comprehensive, aggressive and addresses basic needs such as repairable water systems, improvements to health care, and improvements to sewage and waste disposal.

"I met with the local director generals of sewage and municipality for the town of Tal Afar," said Capt. Rose Grimm, infrastructure officer, 403rd CA Battalion, Ninawa PRT. "We discussed the different options that are available for computer-assisted master planning for urban environment."

"The PRT has come to Tal Afar four times in the last nine months. Three of those visits have been for working group meetings, understanding the particulars of working in Tal Afar," said Muramoto.

The new director of the Mosul PRT, James Knight, will meet with Mayor Najim to present ideas that will effectively set the course for rebuilding a town once considered a "ghost town." 🇮🇶



The mayor of Tal Afar and Lt. Col. John K. Tien, commander, 2-37th visit a Tal Afar marketplace after the transition of authority ceremony.



# Date festival marks bountiful harvest

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SGT. ZACH MOTT  
3RD HEAVY BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM,  
4TH INFANTRY DIVISION PUBLIC AFFAIRS

**BAQUBAH, Iraq** — Diyala farmers celebrated one of the most prosperous date harvests in several years with a festival in the provincial capital of Baqubah Sept. 18.

The date crop was bolstered by a joint project in May in which the Iraqi government and Coalition Forces executed a crop spraying campaign with helicopters piloted by Moldova and Bulgaria citizens to prevent insect infestation.

“In previous years there has been a severe infestation of the dubas bug,” said Capt. Mark Cassill, executive officer, 404th Civil Affairs Battalion which is attached to the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Task Force Lightning. “Tiny dates were produced and they could only be sold as animal feed.”

Because the dates could only be sold as animal feed, it cut the amount of money farmers were able to earn. However, this year date production was up at least 50 percent across the board, and the produce is now fit for human consumption. This also means that farmers are able to charge more for their product.

Abdul Aziz Abbas Mohammed, who was judged

by provincial officials to be the best farmer in Diyala Province, saw his crop total increase by 85 percent over last year’s take.

“We’re optimistic that next year the crops will be a lot more and better,” Mohammed said through an interpreter after talking about the spraying campaign’s success.

He also said that he hopes plans are being made for next year’s campaign in order to maximize the date yield.

Cassill said that the Iraqi government is planning next season’s spraying utilizing Iraqi-owned helicopters and pilots funded by the government of Iraq.

Those attending the festival had the chance to sample the numerous dates from various farms throughout the province as well as purchase crafts made from date palms.

Members of the Diyala government and agriculture departments spoke about the successful crop harvest as well as the need to continue to develop the province’s most lucrative crop.

“I would like to thank the people and the government who worked on the spraying campaign and we wish for more support so the farmers will believe that the government cares about their needs,” Mohammed said. 🍌



(Top) The dates from the village of al-Mansuriya are displayed at a table during the Diyala Date Festival in Baqubah, Iraq, Sept. 18.

(Above) Abdul Aziz Abbas Mohammed speaks to a festival attendee about his date harvest.

(Right) Some of the goods being offered by farmers from throughout Diyala Province were on display at the date festival.





# Taking to the streets

(Left and Below) Soldiers from 1st Platoon, Company C, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division secures an area in Mosul, Iraq during a dismount patrol Sept. 12.

PHOTOS BY PFC. BRYANNA POULIN  
TASK FORCE LIGHTNING PUBLIC AFFAIRS

**MOSUL, Iraq** — Iraqi soldiers with support from Coalition Soldiers dismounted patrol in Mosul, Iraq Sept. 12 to gather information on recent terrorist activities in the area.

Soldiers from 1st Platoon, Company C, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division helped the IA soldiers by providing security as they conducted interviews with local civilians.

The mission was an opportunity for the IA soldiers to take the lead and demonstrate their mission planning and execution abilities.

“The IA is responsible for preparing mission details and together we execute a mission plan,” said Staff Sgt. Brian Ross, infantryman, Company C, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment. “They coordinated the mission intelligence and established our role which was to provide security.”

In the end, the mission was a success as the Soldiers gathered important information in order to provide security for the people of Mosul. 🇺🇸





An Iraqi child poses with a Soldier from 1st Platoon, Company C, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division.





# Speicher's Ed Center gets new life

STORY BY SPC. DANIEL BEARL  
TASK FORCE LIGHTNING PUBLIC AFFAIRS

## CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE SPEICHER, Iraq —

Thousands of miles from home and deployed to a combat zone, perhaps one of the last things Soldiers in Iraq would expect to see is a classroom.

But at Contingency Operating Base Speicher, one officer is doing everything he can to make sure Soldiers there have an opportunity to further their education.

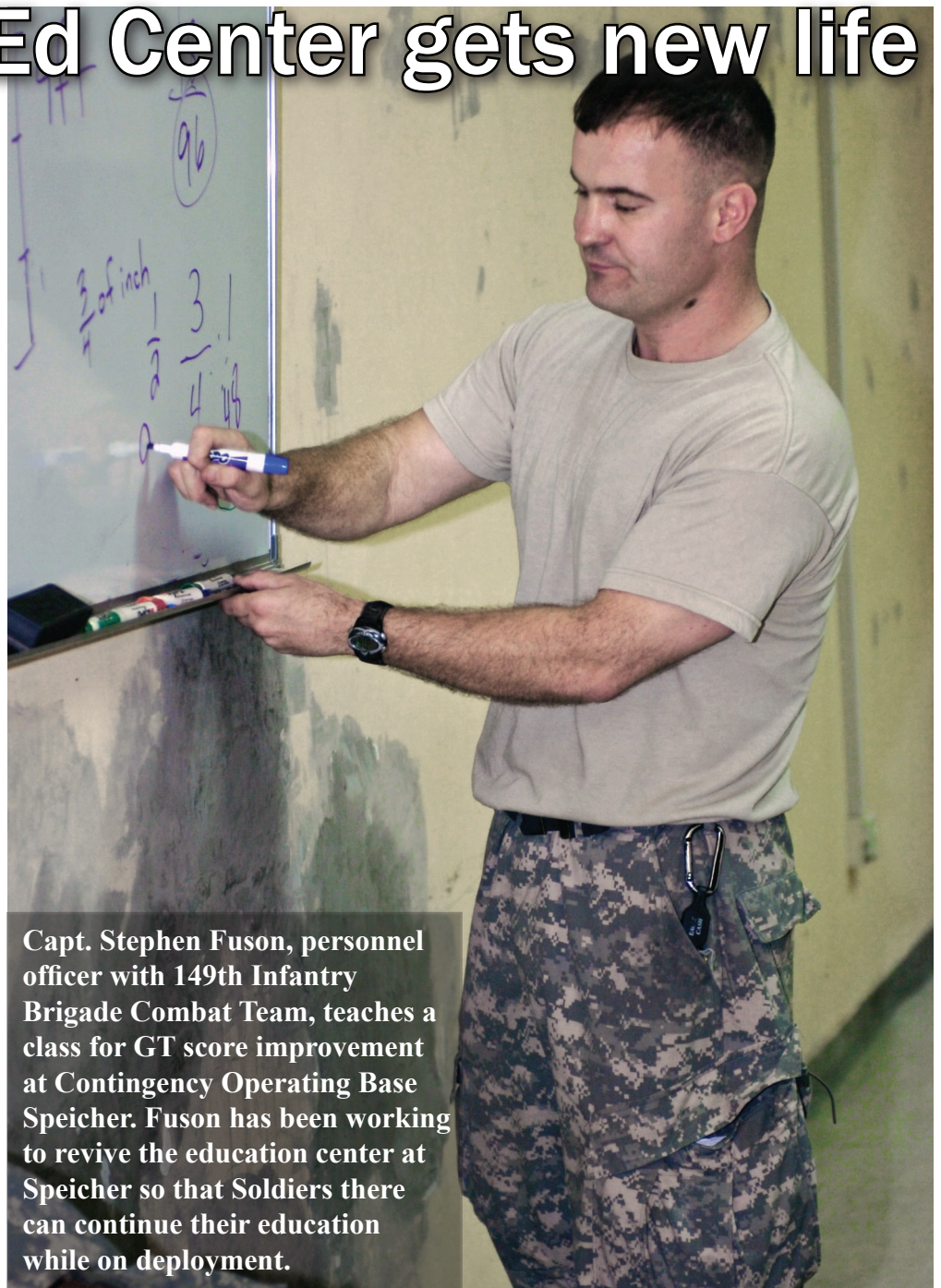
Capt. Stephen Fuson, personnel officer with 149th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Kentucky Army National Guard, has been spending his days toiling through a rags-to-riches tale of an education center that he hopes will provide service members the support they need to achieve their education goals.

"I'm trying to get Soldiers to increase their educational opportunities period," Fuson said. "Not everybody in Iraq, unfortunately, has the opportunities. But for those that do, we need to get the word out. Over here there are no distractions."

For Fuson, teaching is more of a passion than a job. A 7th and 8th grade mathematics teacher with 11 years' experience, Fuson is quick to express his enthusiasm for education.

"I love my job," Fuson said. "I kind of feel guilty because I love it so much. Here I am deployed and doing what I love to do."

Fuson teaches classes in an open room scattered with folding tables that serve as desks for his students. He doesn't wear his uniform jacket in the classroom,



**Capt. Stephen Fuson, personnel officer with 149th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, teaches a class for GT score improvement at Contingency Operating Base Speicher. Fuson has been working to revive the education center at Speicher so that Soldiers there can continue their education while on deployment.**

Photo by Spc. Daniel Bearl / Task Force Lightning Public Affairs Office

he said, because he doesn't want students put off by his rank.

"Officers don't usually instruct classes," Fuson said. "NCOs do."

The walls are yellowing and patched with grey plaster. The space works well enough for the time being, but it isn't what he would like it to be, he said.

"We're not in a college-like atmosphere," Fuson explained. "There's plaster on the walls. My long-term vision is to make this place look, act and feel like a real classroom."

His plans include nicely painted walls and even an overhead projector to provide a high-tech accomplice to the blackboard he now uses to draw examples for his students.

Just because he's looking to drastically improve the education center doesn't mean he hasn't already come a long way, though.

Prior to Fuson's energetic involvement, the ed center only provided testing once a month, said Maj. Tamara Hurst, force protection officer, 149th IBCT.



“Basically, the ed center was unused,” Hurst said.

One of the main goals in getting the ed center running is just getting the word out, she added.

“He’s had such a tremendous turn out of students,” Hurst said.

Monday through Friday, Fuson teaches “Fast” classes, courses designed to help Soldiers improve their general technical scores on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery. A higher GT score is valuable to many Soldiers as it allows more opportunities for jobs within the Army.

The classes focus on paragraph comprehension, word knowledge and arithmetic reasoning, which are components of the GT score.

Fuson’s march to facilitate learning for Soldiers at COB Speicher doesn’t end in the classroom though. In a small

room adjacent to his teaching space is a computer lab designed to help students get the resources they need to succeed in their education goals.

Each computer contains study guides and materials not only for GT score improvement, but for other areas of the ASVAB as well.

The majority of students want to increase their GT scores, Fuson said, but there are still those who need improvement in other areas.

The computers will allow students to take online courses, Fuson said. From the computers, students can access Army education sites like GoArmyEd.com.

Fuson is even working on obtaining a proctor’s certification so he can administer tests for students at Speicher.

And though he enjoys his work, it’s a lot for one person to

take on.

“My goal is to have it open 24 hours,” Fuson said, “but I can’t do that by myself.”

To accomplish his goal, he’ll need volunteers, he said.

Specifically, Fuson said he’s looking for Soldiers staff sergeant and above to help him make his goals a reality.

In the meantime, Fuson will continue doing what he loves to do as long as Soldiers continue coming to him for help.

“As a Soldier, I appreciate being a leader – a teacher,” Fuson said. “The best thing about being a teacher is having students who want to learn.”

And with luck, Fuson’s passion and hard work will lead to a permanent fixture at COB Speicher.

“We want to show people what right looks like,” Hurst said, “and hand it off to the next unit.”

**Sgt. 1st Class  
Terryl Green, 506th  
Quartermaster Company,  
uses the computer lab in  
the education center at  
Contingency Operating  
Base Speicher, Iraq, which  
is maintained by the 149th  
IBCT.**



Photo by Staff Sgt. Tyrone Marshall / Task Force Lightning Public Affairs Office



# Mechanics keep 'em turning

STORY AND PHOTOS BY  
SGT. 1ST CLASS MICHAEL MONTELLO  
25TH COMBAT AVIATION BRIGADE PUBLIC AFFAIRS

**TIKRIT, Iraq** — Maintaining military vehicles is a continuous cycle that requires daily attention. Changing the filters fluids and rotating the tires is serious business. A mechanical breakdown can leave Soldiers not just stranded, but in harm's way when conducting operations outside the safety of their operating bases in Iraq.

When Soldiers venture outside the wire to conduct missions, worrying about a vehicle breakdown is one concern they don't need. Fortunately, one group of Soldiers specializes in making sure that vehicles are running properly and completing the mission without incident.

Soldiers of the 2nd Squadron, 6th Cavalry, Troop E, 25th Combat Aviation Brigade, 25th Infantry Division, are a service crew of mechanics that perform daily inspections, repairs and maintenance on anything that transports Soldiers. Their responsibility is to make sure vehicles are dependable and bring Soldiers home safely from missions.

"If a vehicle goes down, the more likely we are to lose Soldiers. It is our job to make



**Spc. Dewees Loyd 2-6 Cav, E Troop, Process Specialist, jacks up a humvee in order to perform the 5000 mile inspection on September 20th. Spc. Dewees is cross training to become a Mechanic.**

sure the vehicles are in top notch shape when they go out," said Pfc. Marinia Norris, light-wheeled mechanic, 2-6th Cav., Troop E, 25th CAB, 25th ID.

The mechanics service, on average, about 50 vehicles monthly, and all vehicles get a full service maintenance check every 5,000 miles.

"The operator will tell the mechanic what needs to be done to the vehicle. From that point forward the responsibility falls on the mechanics. It's the mechanics job to make sure the vehicle leaves the motor pool with no faults. I don't want the vehicle to break down due to mechanical error because it puts Soldiers' lives and equipment

at risk," said Specialist Dewees Loyd, light-wheeled mechanic, 2-6th Cav., Troop E, 25th CAB, 25th ID.

Humvees and other wheeled equipment shuffles in and out of the motor pool on a regular basis for routine service and maintenance. The mechanics of 2-6th Cavalry take pride in their work – getting the vehicles back on the road and functioning at their very best for Soldiers.

"I like working on the humvees. It gives me a sense of accomplishment knowing I do my best to give the other Soldiers a dependable vehicle to complete their mission," said Juan Tejada, light-wheeled mechanic, Troop E, 2-6th Cav., 25th CAB, 25th ID. 🇺🇸



**Pvt. Juan Tajeda, 2-6 Cav., E Troop, light wheel vehicle mechanic, places a jack stand under a humvee as the service crew prepares to check the wheel bearings at FOB Warrior, Kirkurk Iraq.**



# Back to School

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SGT. ZACH MOTT  
3RD HEAVY BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM,  
4TH INFANTRY DIVISION PUBLIC AFFAIRS

**HAMRIN, Iraq** — Some may think that Iraqi Security Forces soldiers' only job is to go after the bad guys, but their role in the lives of Iraqis is much more involved than that.

To help children see a more human side to those responsible for protecting their country, soldiers from the 3rd Brigade, 5th Iraqi Army Division visited two schools in this lakeside village in northern Diyala Province to hand out school supplies and talk to the children about the importance of staying in school.

They're the ones that are going to be leading Iraq's future tomorrow, said Col. Yas, 3rd Brigade, 5th IAD, G-5, through an interpreter during a visit to a Hamrin secondary school. They should side with the Iraqi Army and the Iraqi Police and not side with the terrorists.

Some children were shy, others whimpered at the sight of the Soldiers, others still were eager to talk and mingle with the troops. But, as soon as the school supplies were brought into the room, each child smiled and anxiously awaited their turn to receive their treasure — a few pencils, a sharpener, an eraser, a ruler and a pair of scissors.

"A lot of the towns see the Iraqi Army out and about but they see them doing kinetic type operations," said Staff Sgt. Eric Viburs, a team chief with Tactical Psychological Operations Team 15-32nd, attached to 310th Psychological Operations Company. "They see them doing cordon and searches; they see them doing [traffic control points] and searching cars. I think it's important for the kids to see the softer side of the Iraqi Army. They live amongst them. They serve the Iraqi people. I think it's important for the kids to see that."

Soldiers from the 2nd Squadron, 9th Cavalry, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Task Force Lightning joined the Iraqi Army patrol as well and mingled with the younger Iraqi citizens. The soldiers also handed out soccer balls to each school. 🏆



(Top) Soldiers from Comanche Troop, 2nd Squadron, 9th Cavalry, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Task Force Lightning, are entertained by Iraqi schoolchildren during a visit to Hamrin.

(Above and Left) Iraqi Army soldiers from the 3rd Brigade, 5th Division hand out school supplies to a secondary school in Hamrin.



# Caring for the fallen

STORY AND PHOTO BY PFC. CARLEE ROSS  
TASK FORCE LIGHTNING PUBLIC AFFAIRS

**TIKRIT, Iraq** — Accounting for the remains and personal affects of a service member who has passed and bringing them home together is never a light subject.

The process of getting the fallen to their loved ones starts with the Soldiers from 111th

Quartermaster, 530th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion (CSSB) out of Fort Lee, Va., who are currently stationed in Iraq.

“When someone is brought here we process the remains and personal affects through mounds of paperwork and get them ready to be sent to Kuwait,” said Staff Sgt. Larry Johnson,

a native of Moss Point, Miss., noncommissioned officer in charge (NCOIC) of the 5th collection point which is located at Contingency Operating Base (COB) Speicher.

The unit receives all kinds of casualties including U.S. service members, civilians, contractors, local nationals, Coalition Forces and even anti-Iraqi-forces (AIF). They also receive personal affects, such as military gear, and personal items like wedding bands, pictures and letters. These things are all inventoried to accompany the remains to Kuwait.

The Soldiers try not to find out what happened to the casualty and stay emotionally uninvolved.

A sense of humor is a must-have in this environment, said Sgt. 1st Class Dennis Hayes, the Task Force Lightning Mortuary Affairs (MA) NCOIC, from Munford, Tenn.

Although they are laidback and mostly soft spoken, all of the Soldiers will tell you they are

proud of what they do.

When U.S. Soldiers and civilians are ready to be sent home, MA contacts the Combat Aviation Brigade (CAB) to schedule what they fittingly call a ‘Hero Mission’, said Boyd.

“The second day we got here we had a hero mission, the whole crew was lined up along the Black Hawk,” said Spc. Erik Dexter, the assistant NCOIC for the collection point. “A chaplain was

here, it was a big deal.”

In most cases a chaplain will be present to bless the remains and the whole unit will line up and render their honors with a five-second salute while the helicopter flies away, one step closer to their journey home.

Among the thoughts running through their minds when

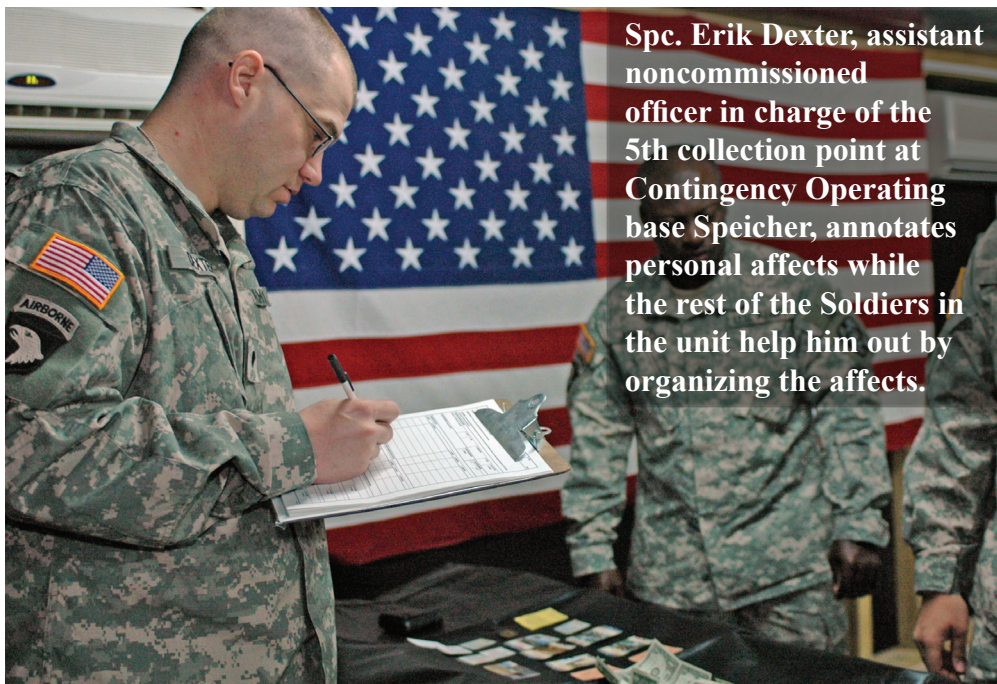
a comrade flies away are the MA motto, dignity, reverence and respect, and the Soldier’s Creed, never leave a fallen comrade, said Boyd and Dexter.

Pfc. Jeremy Wiles, a soft spoken MA specialist from Mesa, Ariz., dutifully agreed with his buddies about their job.

“I am glad to be deployed so I can actually put to use all I have been taught and have been able to realize how interesting my job is,” Wiles added.

“When people find out what we do we get one of two reactions, a curious asking questions kind of person, or the one who seems disgusted and stand-offish, you can see it in their eyes,” stated Dexter.

When the fallen are sent home, they aren’t just shoved off as quickly as possible, said Dexter. All their personal affects are in pristine condition, clothes have been washed and gear has been rid of the dust that collects out here. Everything is dress-right-dress, said Dexter. 🇺🇸



**Spc. Erik Dexter, assistant noncommissioned officer in charge of the 5th collection point at Contingency Operating base Speicher, annotates personal affects while the rest of the Soldiers in the unit help him out by organizing the affects.**



# Information Assurance keeps data safe

STORY AND PHOTO BY  
STAFF SGT. TYRONE C. MARSHALL JR.  
TASK FORCE LIGHTNING PUBLIC AFFAIRS

**TIKRIT, Iraq** — Control, alt, delete.

These three simple keys, in unison, open an entire world of information with a password – sometimes the simplest combination of key strokes.

However, the user that has logged on isn't always the only one privileged to this wealth of information. There are those that seek to intercept vital information and use it against Coalition Forces (CF) in the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT).

Enter information assurance (IA). The ever-changing war of information technology can provide challenges to any organization. Imagine being responsible for the overall safety and security of a network for thousands of Soldiers. The G-6 IA is responsible for just that.

IA, along with operational security (OPSEC) and physical security, serves to protect the Army's critical flow of information from individuals, both internally and externally, that wish to use it to derail CF efforts of achieving the ultimate goal of a safe, terror-free Iraq.

"Information assurance is the ability to ensure that information gets from point A to point B," said Capt. Heather Roszkowski, G-6 IA manager for Task Force Lightning. "Not the technical [aspect] – traveling through this switch or this router. But to make sure that it hasn't been compromised or corrupted on the way to its destination."

The G-6 IA is sometimes referred to as "watchdogs" or "gatekeepers" because of their vigilant and dedicated approach to safeguarding Task Force Lightning's information systems. Because of this steadfast commitment to network security they are often unfairly maligned.

"It's funny because people automatically think that we are trying to make their life harder," said Roszkowski. "We're not. Our

wearing flak vests and kevlar – you can see them standing watch ensuring only authorized people come onto the COB. You can't always see what we do. [People] don't realize how important information assurance is. The enemy's getting smarter. They're figuring ways to break into our network and get our information."

Some Soldiers tend to forget that the equipment they take

home with them and work on, on a daily basis ultimately doesn't belong to them. This concept seems lost on many.

"It's understanding that it's a government computer system – not a personally owned computer," said Sgt. 1st Class Catalina Lacuesta, G-6 IA noncommissioned officer in charge (NCOIC) for Task Force Lightning. "You're not paying for it, it's a government system."

"Everything has a vulnerability," said Roszkowski, a native of Weymouth, Mass. "Everything opens a back door. You might be letting someone in by using that software."

However, to help thwart the efforts of would-be hackers, G-6 IA uses an approach that proves sometimes simplicity is better.

"IA is searching 24 hours a day. We'll find the anomalies and intruders and shut them down," said Staff Sgt. Henry Freay, G-6 IA staff NCO, and Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. native.

"That's the biggest thing that keeps me going everyday, just knowing that what we do – securing the network – is saving people's lives," said Roszkowski. "That's what it comes down to."



Sgt. 1st Class Catalina Lacuesta, G-6 Information Assurance NCOIC, examines a "Yellow Jacket," a new piece of equipment designed to help locate wireless internet systems at COB Speicher, Iraq, as part of the IA program for Task Force Lightning.

job is to secure the network. I use the analogy that we are the gate guards for the network. You know what I mean?"

Roszkowski continued, "When you drive out the gate you see the [Soldiers] pulling duty



# Military Working Dog kennel breaking ground

STORY AND PHOTOS BY PFC. CARLEE ROSS  
TASK FORCE LIGHTNING PUBLIC AFFAIRS

**TIKRIT, Iraq** — When people think of the conflict in Iraq, perhaps images of Soldiers on patrol come to mind, but what is often overlooked are their nonhuman counterparts.

Military Working Dogs (MWD) and their handlers from every military service are vital tools in the war on terror and have been deploying worldwide to support and safeguard military bases and activities and to detect bombs and other explosives before they cause harm.

The dogs and their handlers who are based out of Contingency Operating Base (COB) Speicher, Iraq, are finally getting a gravely needed kennel built. Groundwork started early October and is scheduled for move-in around the end of November.

“The last three years we have had dogs in theater the requirements for proper facilities have not been met,” said Sgt. 1st Class Chris Laye, Task Force Lightning MWD Program Manager.

Currently dogs are living with the handlers in their rooms, which creates dependency and separation anxiety for the dogs, said Laye. He is also concerned for other personnel who could be in danger coming in contact with a dog without a handler.

Training is constantly needed with the dogs and has been almost impossible without a facility. Having the dogs living in the same place as their handler not only creates dependency problems but also creates obedience problems. There are no secluded areas to conduct obedience training and the dogs are easily distracted.

The dog kennel will be built as a closed compound, which means only personnel who have authorization to enter are allowed.

Misti, a Belgian Malinois is a four-year-old patrol explosives protective dog, has been with Staff Sgt. Philip Mohs for about three years. Mohs is the kennel master in charge of 10 dogs here, from the 17th Military Police (MP) Detachment, Fort Jackson, S.C. Misti will be one of 10 dogs to benefit from this new facility.

“They are highly trained animals, and we greatly need to have adequate care and facilities for them,” said Laye.

Just like Soldiers, the dogs need a place to be groomed and bathed. They also need a place to conduct their mandatory proficiency training once a week. Their training includes obedience training,

narcotics and bomb searching.

“The military invests more money in a dog than they do in training a single Soldier, our concern is to ensure their investment is being properly used,” said Laye.

They are trained to be apart of mission support by finding explosives, IED-making materials, weapons caches, cocaine, heroin and marijuana. A number of them are also patrol trained, they can search, pursue and detain escaping personnel or anti-Iraqi forces.

“The money this facility is going to take to build will ensure millions of dollars of assets are being properly maintained,” said Laye.

The main purpose of an MWD is to support the war on terror by being a ‘combat multiplier.’ The dog teams keep the service members safe, in order to accomplish that the dogs have to be taken care of as well, which is why this kennel compound is being built. ♥

Misti, a Belgian Malinois is a patrol explosives protective dog, and her handler, Staff Sgt. Philip Mohs, the Kennel Master for the Military Working Dog program, based out of 17th Military Police Detachment, Fort Jackson, S.C., are currently at Contingency Operating Base Speicher, Iraq. Here they are looking over groundwork for the much needed new dog kennel scheduled to be finished around the end of November.





# NCO Mentoring: *Maintaining communication with your troops*

CONTRIBUTED BY SGT. 1ST CLASS EDWARD BALDWIN  
TASK FORCE LIGHTNING PROVOST MARSHAL OFFICE

I will communicate consistently with my Soldiers and never leave them uninformed.

Every Soldier deserves to be informed. A Soldier's development begins with the exchange of information; and in turn, they use that knowledge to make their own sound decisions. NCOs are instrumental in this exchange. We communicate with our Soldiers to lay the cornerstone of a strong foundation that will ensure the mission gets accomplished, no matter what the circumstances. Communication is important as it shares new or alternate ideas, overcomes obstacles, and promotes unit cohesion. An informed Soldier will always add more to the fight.

As NCOs, we need to ensure our Soldiers know what we expect of them. Communication is vital to that process. New Soldiers, graduating from AIT, are not expected to know their job. They graduate with the basic skills of their MOS, but not the necessary knowledge required tying it all together with the unit's mission. It is the NCOs responsibility to teach our Soldiers their part of the puzzle. Our Soldiers not only need to learn their own tasks, but they need to learn ours as well. All NCOs should remain tactically and technically proficient, it is implied that we be able to convey that knowledge to our Soldiers to prepare them for increased roles of responsibility.

We counsel our Soldiers to ensure that they understand what we expect of them, to guide them through their career, set goals that they would like to accomplish, identify accomplishments they have done, create plans to improve weaknesses, and to organize future events. We critique our Soldiers to enhance performance, build their confidence, and strengthen independence. We use feedback to ensure that our orders, instructions, and teachings are fully understood and carried out.

Soldiers are getting smarter everyday. When being given instructions, there will be times when they need to be told the answer to "Why?" Soldiers must be taught that orders and instructions cannot be explained all the time, and that they must act



Sgt. 1st Class Edward Baldwin

accordingly to carry out the mission. NCOs should take the time and follow up after the mission is complete, to ensure that their Soldiers understand what occurred and why certain decisions were made. We are teaching them to become strong leaders, to carry on the mission and accept new roles throughout their careers. Our Soldiers are our replacements; we need to ensure they are successful, and by doing so, we are securing the future of our Army.

Mentorship is the role we automatically assume as NCOs. We all have mentors. We use mentorship to guide our Soldiers in a direction that is beneficial for them. With it, the message we are trying to convey is easily understood. Communication is a two way street. Part of being a mentor requires us to listen as well. A good listener can identify problems or concerns in their Soldiers. It can help recommending solutions to problems in which the Soldier can decide from. There will be times when listening is all that is needed. Experience and knowledge of your Soldiers will help identify the proper course of action.

All Soldiers are entitled to outstanding leadership. To become an effective leader, we must communicate consistently with them. We must remember that uncertainty and ignorance in our Soldiers is due to a lack of communication. With proper communication, we build trust, cohesion, and camaraderie. NCOs are responsible for the future of our Army. Communication is how we can accomplish that. 💖



# Kiowas keep the enemy running

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SPC. MIKE ALBERTS

3RD INFANTRY BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM,  
25TH INFANTRY DIVISION PUBLIC AFFAIRS

**KIRKUK, Iraq** — The sound of rotor blades in the sky over an infantryman's shoulder is music to his ears. It's the sound of an OH-58D, also known as a Kiowa Warrior. When it appears on the scene, the enemy retreats.

Attack helicopters are indispensable to the mission in Iraq, and not just for combat support but for supplies and intelligence as well. Soldiers of the 2nd Squadron, 6th Cavalry Regiment, 25th Combat Aviation Brigade, attached to the 3rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team tirelessly keep attack and reconnaissance air elements in the sky over the Kirkuk Province around the clock.

"We are contributing significantly to the fight, even though people may not see us," said Command Sgt. Maj. Alan R. Haynes, command sergeant major, 2-6. "For instance, people don't realize that every time we fly in support of a ground mission not one IED (improvised explosive device) has been placed or exploded," said Haynes.

"Also, we can send aircraft in support of [troops in contact] within minutes," he continued. "Just knowing that you have those kinds of air resources helps the ground fighting tremendously."

According to Master Sgt. Joseph Pagliaro, noncommissioned officer-in-charge, S-3, the "2-6 Aviation concept" is to have aircraft in the air at all times in support of troops on the ground. "The Kiowas will land, refuel, reload within minutes,



and get back into the fight. We keep them going '24/7,'" said Pagliaro.

For lift support, a "sister battalion," the 2nd Battalion, 25th Aviation, is attached to 2-6 Cav. 2-25 contributes a compliment of UH-60L to the aviation mission. Commonly known as Black Hawks, UH-60s are used primarily for support and personnel transport missions.

Also and for the first time in the Army's history, an unmanned aerial vehicle company has been attached to the aviation brigade to compliment the unit's already diverse capabilities.

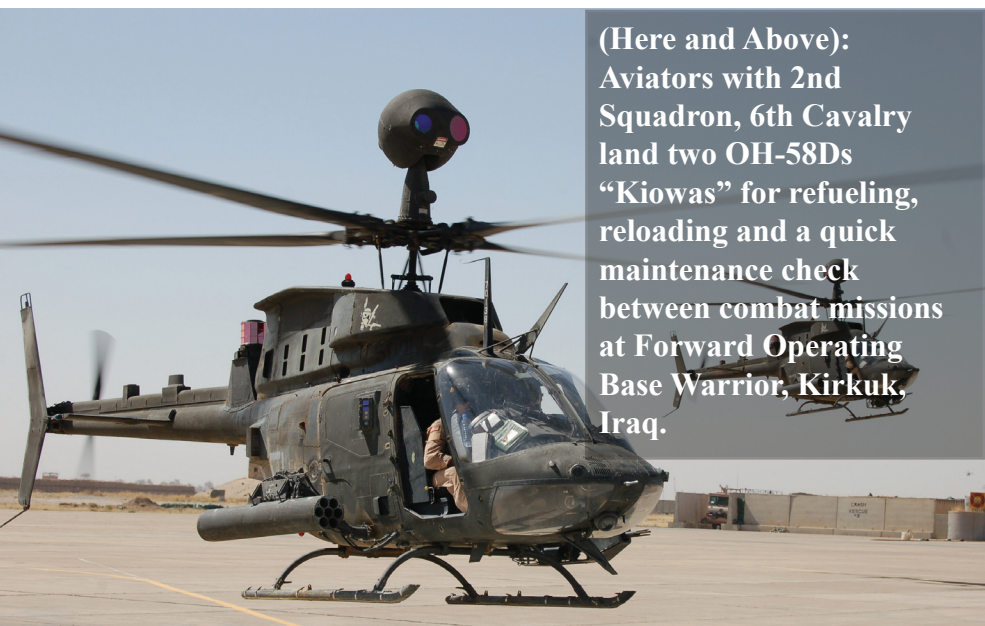
In garrison, 2-6 is stationed at Wheeler Army Airfield, Hawaii. The unit brought almost all of its components with to Kirkuk to handle everything from "parts and pilots" to "bullets and beans."

"The support that our troop brings to the aviation mission is critical" said Sgt. 1st Class Bru Ronaldo, air component repair supervisor, 2-6.

"They fly the missions and come to us whenever they need servicing, maintenance, repairs or parts so that they can do it all over again. Basically, anytime an aircraft is needed, we make sure it's out there [for the brigade]," said Ronaldo.

One of the 2-6 Soldiers who appreciates the importance of her role is Pvt. Natalia Sarceno, fueler, Echo Troop, 2-6.


"To be honest, I didn't like my job at all in AIT [advanced individual training]," said Sarceno. "But now that I'm at war doing my job, I love it," she said. "There is no better feeling than going home at the end of the day to sleep and knowing that we're all safer because those birds are fueled-up and flying." 🇺🇸



(Here and Above):  
Aviators with 2nd  
Squadron, 6th Cavalry  
land two OH-58Ds  
"Kiowas" for refueling,  
reloading and a quick  
maintenance check  
between combat missions  
at Forward Operating  
Base Warrior, Kirkuk,  
Iraq.



# Paratroopers Use Radio Show to Inform Iraqis



Lt. Col. Barry Di Ruzza, commander, 1st Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, listens to callers during his guest spot on the Salah ad Din Radio Show Sept. 21, 2006, in Tikrit, Iraq.

STORY AND PHOTO BY CAPT. KENNETH COSGRIFF  
3RD BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM,  
82ND AIRBORNE DIVISION PUBLIC AFFAIRS

**CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS BASE SPEICHER, Iraq** — For Army Lt. Col. Barry Di Ruzza and his Paratroopers, past deployments may have focused mainly on rooting out insurgency, but as the Iraqi security forces in the Salah ad Din Province continue to operate and maneuver more on their own, Di Ruzza has put more emphasis on “non-kinetic” operations.

His Paratroopers continue to patrol almost daily, but only in support of the local army and police.

As the commander of the 1st Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, Di Ruzza focuses much of his efforts to promoting the local security forces and informing the local populace of economic and infrastructure improvements.

The Salah ad Din Radio Show broadcasted from Tikrit, the largest city in the province, is one asset Di Ruzza has regularly used to spread information to the local citizens, he said.

“It’s important that the people of Tikrit have a positive perception of their government, security forces, and coalition forces,” Di Ruzza said. “The show provides an excellent platform for these elements to meet and discuss the current situation in Iraq.”

So far, Di Ruzza has been a guest on the radio show three times and will continue as a guest every other Thursday, he said.

Di Ruzza has addressed and discussed major

events, such as Ramadan and civil-military projects that were planned and developed by the Salah ad Din government, and how the overall quality of life throughout the region has improved.

Security is also a common topic, Di Ruzza said.

“Security is the single most important issue facing the people of Tikrit,” Di Ruzza explained. “If we can achieve peace and security, the city will flourish.”

On average, the show has enough time for six or seven call-ins, which Di Ruzza said is his favorite part of the show.

He characterizes the listeners and people of the region as passionate, intelligent, and having a strong desire for peace and security.

“I enjoy listening to their concerns and addressing the problems facing Tikrit and the surrounding region,” Di Ruzza said. “Every response we give to the listeners addresses the fact that their appointed and elected officials are improving peace and stability in Salah-Ad-Din.”

At times Di Ruzza doesn’t have an answer for the caller’s question. He makes it a point to research the question so he can relay the answer back to the public.

Di Ruzza said that “non-kinetic” approaches, such as doing the radio show and meetings with the local populace, governance and security officials are often the best solution.

“Our goal is to get to the point where kinetic operations are used only when absolutely necessary,” Di Ruzza said. “As the Iraqi security forces and coalition forces eliminate the insurgency, this goal can be slowly realized.” ♥



# TASK FORCE LIGHTNING

## WE WILL NEVER FORGET ...

Sep. 23  
Sgt. Velton Locklear  
3rd Brigade,  
25th Infantry Division  
El Paso, Texas



Sep. 23  
Pfc. Kenneth E. Kincaid  
3rd Brigade,  
25th Infantry Division  
Lilburn, Ga.



Sept. 25  
Cpl. Casey L. Mellen  
3rd Brigade,  
2nd Infantry Division  
Huachuca City, Ariz.



Sept. 30  
Cpl. Robert Weber  
3rd Brigade,  
2nd Infantry Division  
Cincinnati, Ohio



Oct. 3  
Staff Sgt. Daniel Isshak  
3rd Brigade,  
2nd Infantry Division  
Alta Loma, Calif.



Oct. 6  
Cpl. Nicholas A. Arvanitis  
3rd Brigade,  
82nd Airborne Division  
Salem, N.H.



Oct. 7  
Cpl. Carl W. Johnson  
3rd Brigade,  
2nd Infantry Division  
Philadelphia, Pa.



Oct. 8  
Spc. Timothy Fulkerson  
25th Combat Aviation Brigade,  
25th Infantry Division  
Utica, Ky.



Oct. 11  
Capt. Shane Adcock  
3rd Brigade,  
2nd Infantry Division  
Mechanicsville, Va.



Oct. 12  
Sgt. Gene Hawkins  
105th Engineers  
Orlando, Fla.



Oct. 15  
1st Lt. Joshua Deese  
3rd Brigade,  
25th Infantry Division  
Rowland, N.C.



Oct. 15  
Sgt. Jonathan Lootens  
3rd Brigade,  
25th Infantry Division  
Lyons, N.Y.



Oct. 17  
Staff Sgt. Ryan E. Haupt  
3rd Brigade,  
4th Infantry Division  
Phoenix, Ariz.



Oct. 17  
Sgt. Norman R. Taylor III  
3rd Brigade,  
4th Infantry Division  
Blythe, Calif.



Oct. 17  
Pfc. Nathan J. Frigo  
3rd Brigade,  
4th Infantry Division  
Kokomo, Ind.



(THESE ARE THE NAMES THAT HAVE BEEN RELEASED AS OF OCT. 17)

“NEVER IN THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD HAS ANY SOLDIER  
SACRIFICED MORE FOR THE FREEDOM AND LIBERTY OF  
TOTAL STRANGERS THAN THE AMERICAN SOLDIER.”

- ZELL MILLER