



It's 'Game On!'

Soldiers Send Message to Insurgents

By Spc. Jeffrey Ledesma
1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD - The essence of an insurgent-dominated neighborhood of the Iraqi capital's East Rashid District is evident as Soldiers weave through the desolate, maze-like streets peppered with improvised explosive devices. Several doors and gates are painted with evidence of a fanatic Muslim stronghold.

"In the name of God, I take back this house from the non-Muslim," a Sunni interpreter reads from a gate. "Signed, al-Qaeda in Iraq."

Despite the dangers that linger behind street corners and on rooftops, the Vilseck, Germany-based 3rd Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, currently with Multi-National Division - Baghdad, wanted to send a clear message to the insurgency Sept. 20.

The Stryker Soldiers, who have been in the country for less than two months, are tackling their clearing mission one weapons cache, suspected insurgent and roadside bomb at a



(Photo by Spc. Jeffrey Ledesma, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

1st Lt. Eric Owens of Richmond, Va., and platoon leader with Company G, 3rd Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, radios in for medical assistance after one of his Soldiers, Spc. J. Jacobs, goes down during an insurgent attack in Baghdad's East Rashid district Sept. 20. 32-year-old Jacobs was later stabilized after a piece of shrapnel pierced his neck.

time in a fight that Staff Sgt. Jared Utter briefly described as possibly being "one of the biggest fights in Iraq right now."

Only a month into the unit's

projected 15-month tour, Utter, a native of Columbus, S.C., and the a squad leader with Company G's 2nd Platoon, said his troops have seen more than a month's worth of experience

now on their fifth back-to-back day out in this sector.

This particular day started

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"Dagger" Brigade Reenlists its 1000th Soldier

By Sgt. 1st Class Keith Laird
2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div.

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq — One year into its 15-month deployment, Soldiers continue to reenlist with the 2nd "Dagger" Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, in Iraq. The brigade reenlisted its

1000th Soldier on Sept. 8, as Spc. Matthew Adams, an infantryman with Company A, 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment.

Gen. David McKiernan, the commanding general of U.S. Army-Europe and 7th Army, was the reenlisting officer during a visit to Baghdad.

"Our mission as leaders, at every eche-

lon, is to retain quality Soldiers to ensure that our Army is well-prepared for its enduring mission to fight and win our nation's wars," said Col. J.B. Burton, the Dagger Brigade commander. "This achievement is

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'Dagger' Finds Continued Growth In Big Reenlistment Achievement

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a prideful one for this BCT and our Army. It is reflective of the tremendous commitment of our Soldiers to 'stay with the team,' and it is also a great testament to leaders at every echelon who have created an environment within which Soldiers and their Family Members are proud to serve."

While supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom since August of 2006, the Soldiers of the Dagger Brigade continue to reenlist in record numbers. The Brigade kicked off the fiscal year with a huge reenlistment ceremony October 4, 2006, in Kuwait. Maj. Gen. Fred D. Robinson Jr., then the commanding general of the 1st Armored Division, was the reenlisting officer for 82 Soldiers who chose to stay "Army Strong."

Since then, the Dagger Brigade has averaged 20 Soldiers reenlisting every week for the past year. More than \$9 million have been given to Soldiers as bonuses for their commitment to further their military career.

Forty-three percent of reenlisting Dagger Soldiers chose to remain at their present duty station, within the brigade for

their next enlistment.

"That percentage shows that Soldiers are proud to be part of the Dagger Brigade," said Master Sgt. Robert Staley, the brigade's senior career counselor. "It is also an indicator of high morale within the units of this great brigade combat team."

"Of the many reasons, the vast majority of Soldiers reenlisted for stabilization because of the stability that comes after the deployment," said Sgt. 1st Class Cole Arnold, a brigade career counselor.

The Dagger Brigade also earned the "Commanding General's First Strike Retention Award," an award given by Maj. Gen. Joseph F. Fil Jr., the commanding general of the Multi-National Division – Baghdad and the 1st Cavalry Division, to the first brigade to meet their retention goal for the fiscal year. The award this year is even more significant because there are 12 brigades working for the 1st Cavalry Division in Baghdad, instead of the standard six brigade-sized units assigned.

"Army-wide, our brigade was one of four brigade combat teams to reach 1000 reenlistments this year," said Staley, "That is a remarkable achievement and I take pride in saying that the Dagger Brigade has the finest retention team in the entire Army."

Baghdad in Brief

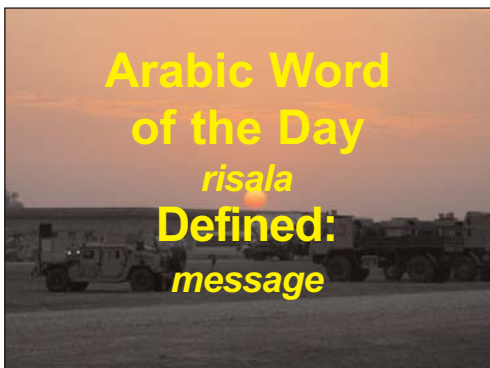
ISF and MND-B Troops Pressure Terrorists

4-1 Inf. Div. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD – Iraqi Security Forces continue to uncover caches and capture suspected insurgents with their Multi-National Division – Baghdad counterparts in the Rashid District as Operation Dragon Talon II continued Sep. 21-23.

Troops from the 4th "Dragon" Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division and the "Dragoons" from the 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment continued to work closely with forces from the Iraqi Army and National Police, making arrests and seizing weapons caches in East Rashid.

Soldiers assigned to "Ghost Rider" Company, 3rd Squadron, 2nd SCR found a cache hidden in a south Doura neighborhood, confiscating more than 35 weapons and more than 16,000 rounds of small arms ammunition along with explosives and other bomb-making materials. Also seized in the cache were numerous sniper rifles of various makes and types.



Iraq 3-Day Weather Report



Today

High: 103
Low: 72



Tomorrow

High: 103
Low: 71



Thursday

High: 102
Low: 71

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Stryker Soldiers Determined to Oust Al-Qaeda



(Photo by Spc. Jeffrey Ledesma, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Columbus, S.C., native, and squad leader Staff Sgt. Jared Utter Company G, 3rd Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, tries to keep his Soldier, Spc. J. Jacobs of Bloomington, Ind., calm by holding his hand while he is assessed by medical personnel after being injured in an insurgent attack Sept. 20.

Message

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off like all the others with the sun peeking above the horizon creating an orange backdrop behind the company's formation of eight-wheeled Stryker vehicles.

It took about an hour to get to the neighborhood and begin searching; a place where only six out of 36 houses were occupied.

The Soldiers with 2nd Platoon, led by 1st Lt. Eric Owens, discovered hand-made, highly-explosive materials in a house they had cleared out the day prior.

After an explosive ordnance disposal team detonated the explosive material, the company continued with the mission.

Behind a shield of white smoke, 3rd Squad maneuvered across 60th Street, a road with a direct view of an open field, when

something exploded and rounds started to fly.

"I saw tracers hit the ground. They opened up on us with PKCs (machine guns). We don't know if it was a mortar or (rocket-propelled grenade that exploded), but it couldn't have hit more than 20 feet away from us," said Spc. Eric Horvath of Mentor, Ohio, who later found pieces of shrapnel melted onto his gear. "It all happened so fast. It was like I teleported to cover."

While they continued to receive heavy machine gun fire from the second story of a building across the open field, Spc. J. Jacobs of Bloomington, Ind., fell face down onto the cement.

Jacobs said he felt the blast, grabbed his neck, saw the blood and instinctively applied pressure to the wound, a piece of shrapnel in his neck.

"I felt loopy, was hot and dizzy, and fell," the 32-year-old said. "At some point, I must have lost consciousness."

"I heard the machine gun fire and turned around and got blasted in the face with something. I went to the corner and didn't know he was down," said Spc. Jason "Doc" Kucharski, the squad's medic.

Sgt. Michael Huffman said he saw his Soldier moving on the ground and then he stopped.

Pfc. Victor Flores who was the second Soldier in the file moving down the street rushed behind the cover of a building's corner and quickly laid down suppressive fire with his squad automatic weapon.

"The first thing that came to mind was to take cover and shoot back," said Flores of San Jose, Calif. "I saw someone in a white shirt, blue collar, black jeans about 16 to 18 years old run into the building right before the contact."

"We turn around and all we could see is Jacobs lying face first on the corner," said Horvath. "We weren't sure if he was dead or if he was shot. I thought he was shot and so did Hawkins (Spc. Michael Hawkins, an infantryman from Palm Springs, Calif.)"

"We have a man down," Owens echoed over the radio.

Huffman, a team leader, said he shot an M-203 grenade, as the rest of the company started to lay out suppressive fire.

"It took me about half a second to realize what was happening. You see bullets flying at you and that's all it takes," said Spc. Richard

Main of Reno, Nev., "I was in the (vehicle commander's) hole in the truck manning my 50-caliber machine gun."

Main said knowing his buddy was down definitely made him fight that much harder. The infantryman fired more than 450 rounds at the enemy from the truck.

Still under enemy fire, Huffman and Kucharski grabbed the downed Soldier and pulled him into the closest courtyard.

"When we moved him, I saw a blood spot right where his face was," said Kucharski. "He was struggling to breathe, but he was trying to."

"When I came to, I was disoriented. I saw the blood. I couldn't see or hear very well," Jacobs said. "My chest felt like it was hit by a sledge hammer. I had a hard time breathing and I started to panic because I didn't know what was going on."

With a combat life saver, a combat medic, a physician's assistant and his fellow Soldiers surrounding him, they assessed his wounds. He was quickly loaded onto a truck and medically evacuated out of the area.

"It was pretty much 'game on' after that. Everybody ran to the rooftop, started opening up on them (the insurgents). I dropped almost two mags at the building that was shooting at us," Horvath said. "It's like an ultimate feeling of safety to fire back. Every round they shoot at us, we shoot a hundred back."

The company fired back with an AT4 (anti-tank rocket), two javelins and one wire-guided missile. They also support from attack aviation assets, both rotary and fixed-wing. Two hellfire missiles and a 500-pound bomb hit the structure.

"(The building) is nothing but the burnt skeleton of what once was a house," said Hawkins as he pulled over watch on the rooftop.

Once the firefight came to an end, Utter told his Soldiers that they did a good job maneuvering. They went to their guy under fire and pulled him out.

As they loaded up and headed back to their base, they knew they will be back at it again tomorrow. This is just the beginning their 15-month deployment.

Jacobs, who suffered a concussion, a hairline fracture of the left cheek and sinus cavity, as well as the shrapnel wound in his neck, is recovering and is scheduled to be back out with his comrades in a week.

First Team Remembers Fallen Comrades

By Sgt. Robert Strain
1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

FORT HOOD, Texas – “Sabers never quit!”

With the sounding of their unit motto, Capt. Chris Wooldridge, the rear detachment commander of the 6th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, gave the order to fall out.

With that order, about 20 troopers slowly moved across the grass of the 1st Cavalry Division’s Memorial Chapel to meet Robert Baloga, the father of Pvt. Michael Baloga, who was killed in Muqadiyah, Iraq, July 26.

One by one, the Soldiers tell him about their experiences working with his son, and how he will be greatly missed.

Wooldridge explained that the families of the unit’s fallen troopers always requested to speak with some of the Soldiers that served alongside their trooper.

“It provides them a sense of closure,” Wooldridge said.

He explained that although he can’t always get a formation together following the division’s memorial ceremony, Soldiers will exchange phone numbers or email addresses in order to keep in touch with their fallen comrade’s family.

According to Wooldridge, meeting the Gold Star families also helps out the Soldiers, who get the opportunity to get to know the fallen at a another

level.

“It takes it beyond the Army,” Wooldridge said.

Baloga, a cavalry scout who joined the Army in November 2006, exhibited a motivated and can-do attitude and always enjoyed learning something new, said Spc. Joe Jenkins Sept. 20 during the division’s memorial ceremony.

“He wanted to learn, and saw everything as a learning opportunity,” Jenkins said.

According to Jenkins, Baloga was also a very dedicated father. He joined the Army in order to provide for his daughter Isis.

“He loved her unconditionally and more than anything in this world,” Jenkins said. “Everything he did was devoted to providing her with the best life possible.”

The First Team honored seven fallen troopers during the ceremony, including Spc. Donald Young, an infantryman with the 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment of the division’s 2nd Brigade Combat Team.

According to Sgt. 1st Class Blaine Dowell, Young loved fishing – but he wasn’t very good at it, he seldom caught any fish.

“I guess it would be better to state he loved spending time with family and friends while sitting in a boat with a string dangling in the water,” Dowell said.

Dowell said not being very good at fishing was frustrating



(Photo by Sgt. Robert Strain, 1st Cavalry Division Public Affairs)

Spc. Patrick Colwell, with the 4th Infantry Division Band, plays taps following the firing of volleys at the 1st Cavalry Division Memorial Ceremony Sept 20. First Team troopers, friend and family members honored seven fallen troopers during the ceremony at the division’s Memorial Chapel on Fort Hood.

for Young, who spent part of his life growing up in Montana, but he never quit trying.

“He never gave up and always strived to get better at whatever he set out to accomplish,” Dowell said.

Dowell explained that

everyone who met or worked with Young will never forget the positive times they shared together.

“He was a Soldier’s Soldier and will be dearly missed by his fellow comrades,” Dowell said.

Safety Message of the Day

Enforcing The Standards = Enforced Safety