

THE DESERT RAIDER

الله أكبر

Raider Harvest Heroes



Col. Jon S. Lehr

Raider 6

were put in to check every village for those who have fought against us and those who have tried to dismantle the Iraqi government. For that I thank you.

Even though the clearing phase is complete, I ask you to remain focused while supporting our Iraqi counterparts in their mission of keeping the area secured. Even though AQIs main body has been severely hurt by our efforts, the threat is still out there. Remain vigilant when traveling along routes known to have IEDs and areas with a high sniper threat.

Although we rely heavily on lethal operations, we need to continue to focus on our non-lethal operations, as well. Humanitarian aid drops and Combined Medical Engagements need to continue in the magnitude that they are currently operating. These missions are essential for separating the insurgent from the population

As I think about the upcoming months, I can't help but to believe a brighter future is ahead for the people of Diyala province. The ISF have continued to improve their abilities to fight and have improved in numbers. The Concerned Local Citizens persist in keeping their towns secured. We must also continue to build up the ISF

and support the government, as they are the future for peace and security in Iraq.

Every one of you remains in my thoughts and prayers. Both Command Sgt. Maj. Troxell and I look forward to seeing you on the battlefield.

To the Objective! Raider 6



Raiders,

Congratulations and thank you for all of your dedication and hard work during the operations in January. Many outstanding accomplishments were made during the efforts to drive AQI out of Diyala province.

Operation Raider Harvest marked a turning point for military operations in the northern Diyala River Valley. Great progress has been made in securing our area of operations. The Iraqi Security Forces and Concerned Local Citizens have stood up in great numbers to keep their towns secured.

During the past month you have re-claimed the breadbasket and other others in the DRV. Many long days

4-2 SBCT Commander
Col. Jon S. Lehr

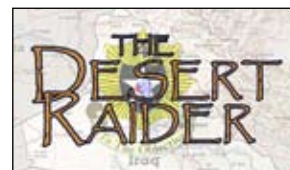
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THE DESERT RAIDER is prepared monthly by the 4-2 SBCT Public Affairs Office, which includes Soldiers of the 115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment. Any story or photo submissions should be forwarded to the editor at russell.bassett@4bct2id.army.mil



On the Cover: A U.S. and Iraqi Army Soldier stand in front of the new Iraqi flag. The new, temporary flag was adopted by the Iraqi parliament Jan. 22 to show that Iraq is no longer the same country it was under Saddam Hussein.



Command Sgt. Maj. John W. Troxell

Raider 7

Greetings to all fellow Dragoon Raiders,

Since we have taken over the Diyala province, the amount of SIGACTS in the area has dramatically decreased, thanks to your hard work and the will power of the Iraqi people.

This month I want to talk to you about Situational Awareness. Not knowing what is going on around you can be the biggest killer on the battle field. Do not become complacent when moving around the battlespace. The enemy, while degraded, is still capable of carrying out spectacular attacks, as evidenced by the increase in suicide attacks we have seen recently.

I have talked numerous times about the enemy's ability to adapt to our tactics. Even though things are currently at a low, that does not mean the enemy is not watching and waiting for

a time to strike.

The enemy has regularly been using house-borne IEDs to achieve its objectives. We need to be constantly vigilant against this attack. Be aware that any house you enter could be booby-trapped. Using dogs to sniff out this threat has proven very effective and I encourage you to continue to use this asset.

The enemy is also using females and children to detonated IEDs, whether they be via suicide-vest, suicide-belt, or as IED emplacements and detonators. Do not assume just because someone is young or female that they are not a threat.

The month of January saw our brigade finding and clearing hundreds of IEDs, whether they be on roads, in houses or in cars. We have also found and cleared dozens of weapon caches, including caches that contained suicide vests.



If you keep a heightened sense of situational awareness and remain vigilant, we will continue to deny the enemy their weapons.

Thank you all for everything and the sacrifices you and your family make everyday. The brigade commander and I are proud of each and every one of you.

I will see you on the battlefield!
Raider 7

STAY FOUR DEUCE

This check could be yours

DRAGOON RAIDERS RETENTION TEAM

 RAIDER NATION 42 IN SBCT APO AE 09378		\$600 12-3456 789
PAY TO THE ORDER OF: <i>Soldiers Name</i>		DATE: _____ \$ 600.00 DOLLARS
REENLISTMENT BONUS 123456789 123456789101112 5600		UNCLE SAM SIGNATURE: _____

CAMP WARHORSE

SFC MOORE

SFC MCMANUS

SSG SOWELLS

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Raider Harvest reaps the Breadbasket

4-2 Soldiers and Iraqi Security Forces drive al-Qaida from the northern Diyala River Valley

By Spc. John Crosby

115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Coalition and Iraqi Army Soldiers are focusing their combat strength on clearing al-Qaida from Diyala Province, Iraq, in support of Operation Raider Harvest. The operation is a part of Operation Phantom Phoenix, an Iraq wide offensive to destroy AQI and provide stability to the Iraqi government.

Operation Raider Harvest, executed by the 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division from Fort Lewis, Wash., is a complex mission with many moving parts and several phases.

“Deny, hold and build,” said 4-2 SBCT Commander Col. Jon Lehr. “We must deny safe haven to al-Qaida and other insurgents throughout our area of responsibility wherever they hope to find it. We must set the conditions for Iraqi Security Forces to hold these hard fought areas so they don’t slip back into the enemy’s hands. And we must assist the government of Iraq to build the economic, governance and essential services infrastructures in these areas.”

The operation started with the 2nd Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment and the 2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment clearing around the Breadbasket into blocking positions and securing a route for 3-2 SCR to move into position for the main push.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Russell Bassett

Soldiers from 3rd Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment help a crippled Iraqi man after being treated by U.S. and Iraqi doctors in Himbus, Iraq, Jan. 21. 3-2 SCR was the main effort for clearing the Breadbasket of AQI during Operation Raider Harvest, and while they are still working with the Iraqi Army to clear remaining AQI, they are also conducting humanitarian aid missions to help the people of the area that had been cut off from the Iraqi government by AQI.

“Based on the geography of the Breadbasket, it was feasible to confront them on multiple axis all at once, simultaneously, with other forces isolating the area,” said Lt. Col. Rod Coffey, 3-2 SCR commander.

With the other battalions providing blocking positions, 3-2 SCR moved from northeast to southwest, clearing house to house, searching for AQI operatives, weapons caches, improvised explosive devices, documents and training sites.

As of Jan. 21, CF working in the Breadbasket had found and cleared more than 30 IEDs, eight car bombs, seven booby-trapped houses and 36 weapons caches, many of which were found due to tips from locals. Four enemies were killed, four wounded, and more than 70 suspected AQI detained.

The successes were not without

their cost. Coalition Forces suffered 19 casualties during the first three days of the mission. Two Soldiers of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3-2 SCR were wounded when their Stryker vehicle hit an IED as well as a Soldier from the 38th Engineer Company on Jan. 8. On Jan. 9, six Soldiers and one Iraqi interpreter of HHC, 3-2 SCR were killed in action after a house-borne improvised explosive device detonated. Another nine were wounded as a result of the blast and were evacuated.

“We prepared for that,” said Coffey. “There are a number of things you do in making sure that you are mentally and physically tough, and although it hurts and you feel it, I would say the Soldiers are even more determined to achieve the mission and get these guys.”

After the clearing phase secured the Breadbasket, the holding and building phases began. Coalition Forces working side-by-side with Iraqi Army troops conducted humanitarian assistance missions to aid the people of the northern Diyala River Valley.

“Although decisive, the combat operations will likely not have as great of an effect as the next phases,” said Lt. Col. James Brown, executive officer of 4-2 SBCT. “The big part of it is that now the area will be tied to Muqdadiyah, its closest and largest urban center, and Muqdadiyah will be tied to the province, so the chain of communication between local villages

and the Iraqi government will be established. That chain was not there before, so the local people were ripe for AQI to fill that need for them. Now that the link has been established, the government will be able to provide what the people need, which will end AQI’s foothold in the area.”

Food drops conducted by IA and CF supplied the people of the Breadbasket with rice and flour, and IA and CF medical personnel also conducted medical aid mission to provide care for minor illnesses, cuts and scrapes, treating more than 600 Iraqis as of Jan. 21.

Other projects aimed at helping the Iraqis to help themselves are on-going

throughout Diyala province.

“Soon we will provide 400 people here with jobs clearing the canals of vegetation to improve water flow through the area,” said Capt. Jonathon Norquist, a civil affairs officer in 2-3 ACR. “We want to improve our relations with the Iraqis here and build trust.”

On Jan. 17, the Diyala Provincial Government organized a fuel drop for the citizens of Mansuriyah, after they went months without. Hundreds of Iraqis lined up, fuel cans in hand to receive their rations.

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Photos by Spc John Crosby

An M1A2 SEP V2 Abrams Tank from Troop G, 2nd Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment sits waiting its turn to march to its objective in support of Operation Raider Harvest near Mansuriyah al Jabal, Iraq, Jan. 9. 2-3 ACR is one of the first heavy cavalry units to employ this version of the Abrams tank, the newest in the U.S. Army’s arsenal.

Insert: 1st Sgt. James Adcock, Troop G, 2-3 ACR watches as a Soldier from his unit pulls security in Mansuriyah Iraq, Jan. 13 during Operation Raider Harvest. 2-3 ACR cleared the northern Diyala River Valley of AQI and provided blocking positions to the north of the Breadbasket so that AQI could not flee from the area.

Blackhawk Harvest

2-1 Cav. helps the IA clear key route between Baghdad and Baqubah

By Staff Sgt. Russell Bassett
115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Iraqi Army and Coalition Forces cleared a key route between Baghdad and Baqubah of improvised explosive devices during January in Iraq.

During Operation Blackhawk Harvest, Iraqi soldiers from 2nd Brigade, 5th IA Division, supported by 2nd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment cleared 30 IEDs on and around the road that Iraqis call Sabh Nissan.

The area of the road between Khan Bani Sa'ad and Baqubah had been so heavily planted with bombs that vehicles had to take other routes to get back and forth from Baghdad and Baqubah.

Lt. Col. Marshall Dougherty, 2-1 Cav. commander, was impressed by the performance of the Iraqi Army during the operation.

"This was a hugely successful brigade-level operation planned and led by the Iraqi Army," Dougherty said. "The IA commander laid out his plan and asked us to provide assets to support his effort such as helicopters, close air support and artillery."

In addition to the route-clearance mission, IA and CF cleared al-Qaida in Iraq from many of the route's surrounding villages and took the fight to AQI in Khan Bani Sa'ad.

During Blackhawk Harvest, an estimated 41 al-Qaida in Iraq operatives were killed. The exact number can not be confirmed because many of the enemy killed in action were due to bomb drops, and the bodies were cleared away before CF could evaluate the blast sites.

In addition IA and CF found and cleared 12 booby-trapped houses, 11 vehicle-borne IEDs, found six weapons caches and detained nine suspected AQI operatives.

On-going operations in the area include continuing to clear AQI, crater repair and standing up Concerned Local Citizens to provide for their own security.

"This is another example of the Iraqi Army increasing their capacity and taking the lead in making their country safer," Dougherty concluded.



Photo by Spc. John Crosby

A liberated prisoner from an al-Qaida in Iraq torture chamber is reunited with his family Jan. 20 at FOB Warhorse, Iraq, after 11 days of confinement and beatings.

2-1 Cav. liberates two from al-Qaida torture chamber

By Spc. John Crosby
115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Coalition Forces liberated two Iraqi males with signs of torture from an al-Qaida prison/torture chamber near Arab Jabar, south of Baqubah, Diyala province, Iraq, in the early morning hours of Jan. 20.

Soldiers of 2nd Battalion, 1st Cavalry Regiment discovered the building, which was closed off by a heavy, deadbolt-locked door. The Soldiers were clearing the area of AQI in support of Blackhawk Harvest, which is part of Operation Raider Harvest, the Diyala province portion of Phantom Phoenix – a country-wide offensive to rid Iraq of insurgents.

See LIBERATED, Next Page

Viking Harvest

2-12 FA helps ISF, CLCs take lead in AQI clearing operation

By Staff Sgt. Russell Bassett
115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Iraqi Army soldiers killed one enemy combatant and detained 53 suspects during a joint operation with Iraqi Police, Concerned Local Citizens and Coalition Forces in the villages of Buhritz Al-Abarra and Imam Ways, just south of Baqubah, Iraq, Jan. 14-16.

The operation, dubbed Viking Harvest II by CF, also resulted in the clearing of more than 30 improvised explosive devices, the reduction of five booby-trapped houses, and the discovery of two weapon caches.

Three CLCs were killed and seven Iraqi Police were wounded when a booby-trapped house they were clearing exploded Jan. 14.

The Iraqi Security Forces and CLCs took the lead in

the operation, with Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 12th Field Artillery providing support through blocking positions around the towns.

"This operation demonstrated the ISF's ability to fight and execute large operations on their own," said Maj. Harry Wakefield, 2-12 FA executive officer. "The success of this joint effort will degrade AQI and extremist operations throughout the immediate and surrounding areas and make the area safer for all."

Now that AQI has been cleared from the area, many local Iraqis are returning to the villages, according to Capt. Brent Hoops, acting commander of Battery B, 2-12 FA, who noted that 375 displaced persons have returned to their homes.

ISF and CF are currently in the process of standing up more CLCs, creating checkpoints and establishing a permanent IA checkpoint to ensure insurgents do not return.

LIBERATED, From Page 6

"We could hear voices inside the room," said Spc. Christopher Nollenberg, a cavalry scout with 2-1 Cav., who was one of the first to enter the chamber. "They called out for help and told us they were prisoners."

Inside the building were two adult male prisoners. Both were contracted by Coalition Forces as electricians to install power lines. They had bruises on their backs and legs. Soldiers found braided wire cords, cables and a strap hooked to the ceiling used to hold the prisoners while they were beaten.

The liberated prisoners were transported to Forward Operating Base Warhorse for medical treatment, meals and questioning.

The two males were kidnapped by al-Qaida gunmen while driving to visit family in Baqubah on Jan. 9. They were bound and blindfolded and taken to the prison chamber. They were rou-

tinely beaten and questioned during their first three days of captivity. AQI operatives asked the men for names of Concerned Local Citizens in their towns, and also asked them who in the area supports the CLCs and who wants to join CLCs.

Rifles were pointed at their heads and knives held to their throats. They were threatened daily and told they would be killed. One male was beaten over the head with a pistol. Both men were bound and struck repeatedly with cables. They were fed rice with dates and one cup of dirty water a day, according to the liberated prisoners.

There were 14 prisoners detained in the al-Qaida chamber at one time. The other 12 prisoners were either killed or released, according to the liberated prisoners.

"These people (AQI) don't deserve to live," said one victim. "I will remember for the rest of my life the day that Coalition Forces gave me a second

chance to live."

The victims were released from FOB Warhorse and reunited with their families the same day they were liberated.



Courtesy photo

Hooks and straps such as the one pictured were discovered in an al-Qaida prison/torture chamber by Troop C, 2-1 Cav. near Arab Jabar, Iraq, Jan. 20.



Combat engineers help take back the Breadbasket

Sgt. James Bruce, a combat engineer in 1st Platoon, 38th Engineer Company pulls security while members of his unit pass in IED detecting vehicles during a route clearance operation in support of Operation Raider Harvest in the northern Diyala River Valley, Diyala province, Iraq, Jan. 10.

Story and photos by Spc. John Crosby
115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

On Jan. 10, in one of the most dangerous places in Iraq, the combat engineers of 1st Platoon, 38th Engineer Company formed a circle, putting their arms around each other with their hands in the middle. They proudly exclaimed their platoon motto as they raised their hands in unison. They then slowly bowed their heads in prayer, asking for guidance before embarking into the Diyala province area known as the "Breadbasket."

Since May, the men of the 38th Engineer Company have put their lives on the line on an almost daily basis, searching for improvised explosive devices along some of the most dangerous roads in the world. The day's mission, however, is especially dangerous, as the engineers must clear routes into the northern Diyala River Valley, an area al-Qaida in Iraq has called home for several years.

Operation Raider Harvest began Jan. 7 with more than 4,000 troops from the 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division sweeping into the Breadbasket to kill or capture enemy insurgents in the area.



Soldiers of 1st Platoon, 38th Engineer Company put their hands together moments before disembarking Forward Operating Base Normandy to conduct a route clearance operation in support of Operation Raider Harvest Jan. 10.



Staff Sgt. Chad Jones (left), a combat engineer, 1st Platoon, 38th Engineer Company and 38th Engineer Company Commander Capt. Adam Harless scan their sectors during a route clearance mission in support of Operation Raider Harvest in the northern Diyala River Valley, Iraq, Jan. 10.

During the clearing phase of Raider Harvest, more than 20 IEDs were found and cleared. One of the 38th Engineer vehicles was hit by an IED, but no one inside was seriously injured.

“We maintain the combat power,” said 38th Engineer Company Commander Capt. Adam Harless. “If we’re able to get (the maneuver units) to their objectives with their combat power maintained, it gives them more options. It is our responsibility to give them options on the battlefield.”

The 38th Engineers cleared the way for the M1A2 Tanks and Bradleys of 2nd Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, from Fort Hood, Texas, to move through the streets into their respective positions for Operation Raider Harvest.

“Our mission was to expand our blocking positions from the Northern Diyala River Valley, to the western side of the Diyala River Valley,” said Maj. Cameron Cantlon, squadron oper-

ations officer for 2-3 ACR. “The 38th Engineers allowed our unit to do its job without having to clear routes as part of establishing a block or attacking to establish positions. It gives us a freedom of movement to do what’s necessary in our mission to keep our Soldiers safe without having to slow down or stop along routes to check out a possible IED or known IED locations.”

Following the clearing phase of the operation, Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces are working together to give needed supplies and security to the local people.

The 38th Engineers are key in these phases as well.

“By getting a good initial clearance of the routes,” Harless said, “we’re setting the stage for the build and hold phases, getting humanitarian assistance into these areas that haven’t seen much assistance from either the Iraqi Government or Coalition Forces. Also,

it allows us to increase the infrastructure by getting the teams to come out to assess the water, power and construction on the roads.”

“We cleared the routes so the people will get some (Iraqi Police) and (Iraqi Army) support down there in that area that hasn’t had any American presence in about two years,” said Staff Sgt. Chad Jones of Denver City, Texas, squad leader in the 38th Engineer Company. “It went well. The people were real receptive. They greeted us with smiles and waves. They looked like they wanted our help. From my point of view, it looked like they were glad we were there.”

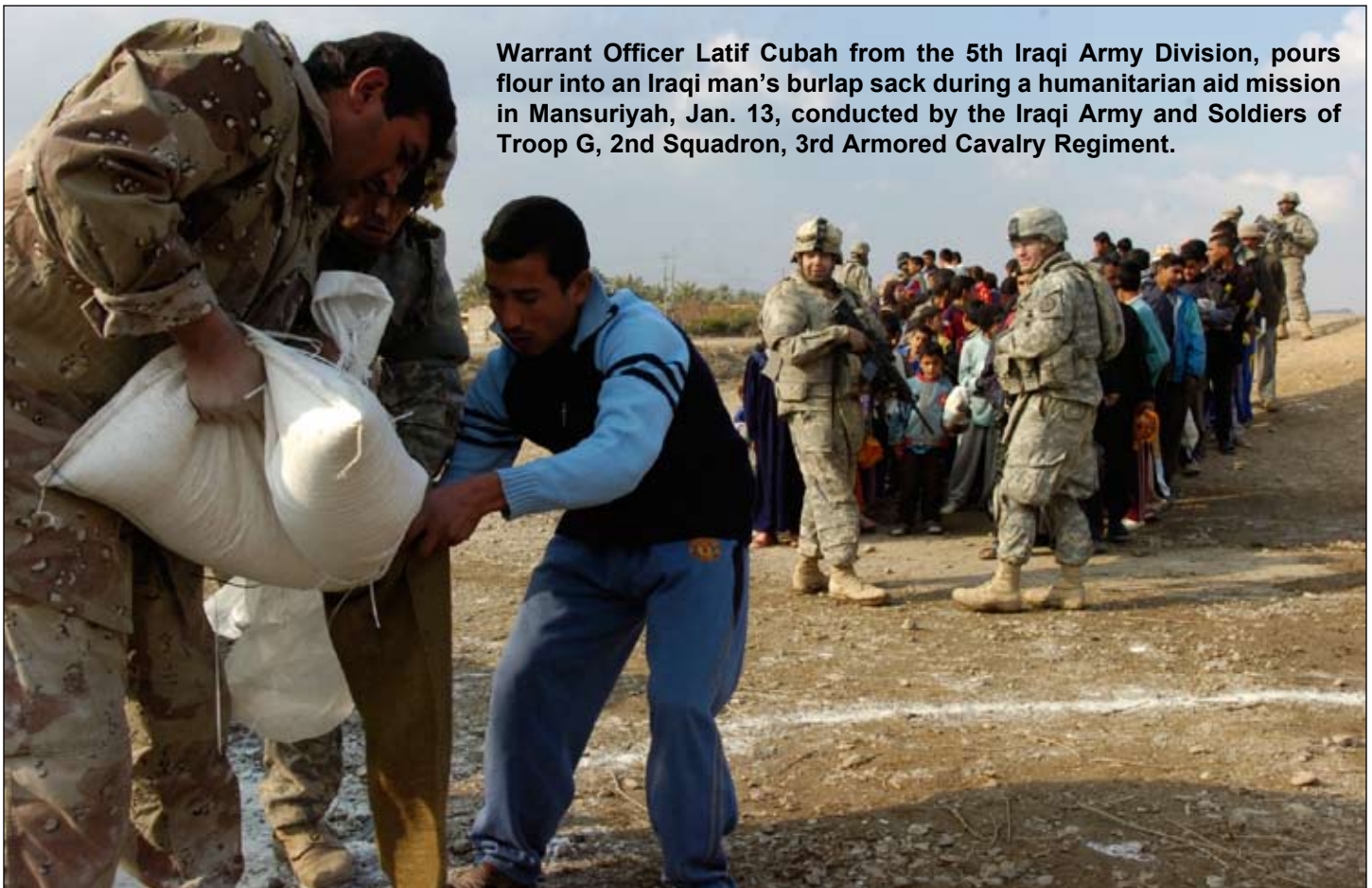
The 38th Engineer Soldiers completed another mission unharmed, but there is a sobering probability that they will be hit again before their tour is complete.

“I think my Soldiers are some of the bravest people out there for going out everyday looking for IEDs,” Harless said. “They know they are going to get hit sometimes. We’re not going to find all of them, but everyday they get up and they go out.”

“We have Soldiers that have already been awarded multiple purple hearts this deployment,” Harless concluded, “and we still have about six months left. I have Soldiers that have been struck nine or 10 times by IEDs, and as they’re medically cleared, they continue to go back out. It’s pretty amazing to say the least.”



A Husky vehicle of 1st Platoon, 38th Engineer Company crosses a bridge in search of mines and roadside bombs during a route clearance mission in support of Operation Raider Harvest in the northern Diyala River Valley, Diyala province, Iraq, Jan. 10.



Warrant Officer Latif Cubah from the 5th Iraqi Army Division, pours flour into an Iraqi man's burlap sack during a humanitarian aid mission in Mansuriyah, Jan. 13, conducted by the Iraqi Army and Soldiers of Troop G, 2nd Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment.

Raider Harvest transitions focus from enemy to the people

Story and photos by Spc. John Crosby
115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Operation Raider Harvest, a large scale operation in the northern Diyala River Valley involving more than 4,000 troops from 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division from Fort Lewis, Wash., has shifted focus from a clearing operation to a rebuilding operation.

The streets are showing changes. Hundreds of Iraqis took to the streets of Mansuriyah, Iraq, Jan. 13, some to observe their new Iraqi Army and Coalition Forces neighbors, others to collect bags full of rice and flour during a humanitarian aid drop conducted by Soldiers of Troop G, 2nd Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment.

"We are working to establish projects to improve life support and improve the infrastructure," said Capt. Robert Green, Grim Troop Commander, 2-3 ACR.

Green's troop and Iraqi Army soldiers handed out scoops full of flour and rice to the people of Mansuriyah. Twenty-five 50-kilogram bags of flour, and 25 50-kilogram bags of rice were distributed to dozens of men, women and children lined up behind Grim Troop's entry control point.

"We're trying to show a gesture of good will," said Grim Troop 1st Sgt. James Adcock. "We've transitioned from blocking positions and defending against the IED threat and just keeping an eye on the area. We're still watching the routes and monitoring traffic, but we are trying to get things back to normal here."

This is exactly why missions such as this HA drop needed to be conducted, according to Adcock.

"We are passing out this rice and flour in hopes of gaining some trust," Adcock said. "We are showing these people

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Iraqi media visit former AQI stronghold

Story, photos by Staff Sgt. Russell Bassett
115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Members of the Iraqi press visited the area of the northern Diyala River Valley known as the “Breadbasket” for the first time in recent memory Jan. 21. The area had been a stronghold and safe haven for al-Qaida in Iraq for several years. However, earlier this month Coalition and Iraqi Forces cleared AQI from the Breadbasket making it safe enough for Iraqi media to see it for themselves.

Several of the major Iraqi TV networks made the trip, including al-Jazera English, al-Iraqia, al-Sumareyai, and al-Salam.

The media witnessed the Iraqi Army provide humanitarian aid to the people of Abu Mousa, conduct a medical engagement with the citizens of Himbus, and hand out kerosene to the people of Taiha.

Iraqi soldiers from the 5th Iraqi Army Brigade and U.S. Soldiers from 3rd Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment provided security for the media.

“I have been reading about Diyala lately, but I haven’t really had a chance to see it, and you got a real sense that there is much improvement,” said Huda Had al-Hamed, a reporter with al-Jazera International. “The Iraqi Army was very proud to be here and to be able to do this. They were extremely professional. There is a way out of the madness and violence in Iraq. I think the way is long and complicated, but when you see days like this, you realize that there is a way out.”

A cameraman with al-Jazera International films a humanitarian aid drop in Abu Mousa, Diyala province, Iraq, Jan. 21.



Iraqi news reporters have the camera turned on them Jan. 21 in Himbus, Diyala province, Iraq, Jan. 21.



Al-Iraqia reporter Mohamed Wadea Jabir interviews an Iraqi Army soldier Jan. 21 in Himbus, Iraq, Jan. 21. Six different media agencies traveled to an area that use to be closed to them due to al-Qaida in Iraq’s hold over the population.



A news crew from al-Jazera English interviews Salman Abdallah Wees as his three-year-old son sits on his shoulder in Himbus, Diyala province, Iraq, Jan. 21.

HARVEST



Above: Iraqi Army soldiers celebrate the success of Operation Harvest Heroes Jan. 21 in Thaiha, Iraq.

Top Left: An Iraqi Army soldier pulls security in Thaiha, Diyala province, Iraq, Jan. 21. IA is currently working with Coalition Forces to secure the area of the northern Diyala River Valley known as the Breadbasket, a former al-Qaida in Iraq stronghold.

Left: An Iraqi Army soldier pulls security in Himbus, Diyala province, Iraq, Jan. 21 during Operation Harvest Heroes.



HEROES



Top right: Iraqi Army soldiers register citizens of Himbus, Diyala province, Iraq, Jan. 21, for medical treatment. The IA Soldiers also handed out “Diyala Today” pamphlets, encouraging the local population to report suspicious activity.

Right: Gen. Salim Kareem, commander of the 5th Iraqi Army Division, gives a fleece jacket to an Iraqi boy in Abu Mousa, Diyala province, Iraq, Jan. 21. The town was a former al-Qaida in Iraq stronghold, but Coalition and Iraqi troops cleared the area of AQI earlier this month and are now focusing on meeting the people’s needs.



Photos by Staff Sgt. Russell Bassett

Vikings battle suicide cells in Baqubah

By Capt. Kenneth Scattergood
2-12 FA

Over the last several months, an al-Qaida suicide cell has been operating in and around the Iraqi town of Baqubah. They have conducted many vicious attacks against civilians, Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces to include a suicide attack against the Government Center in Diyala.

They have also targeted many Iraqi checkpoints throughout Diyala, and in many cases, have killed and seriously injured innocent Iraqi people. Coalition forces have seen their share of attacks as well. Several Coalition Soldiers have been injured by suicide attackers while attempting to provide security and protection for local citizens.

Recently, units from Company A, 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment and Battery C, 2nd Battalion, 12th Field Artillery Regiment have begun fighting back to return the streets and towns of Diyala province back to the Iraqi people and eliminate the al-Qaida suicide attacks.

Multiple precision intelligence-driven raids against specific targeted individuals have been conducted, resulting in numerous al-Qaida members taken off the streets to include two Raider Brigade No. 1 high valued individuals.

The work is tedious and missions can be intense. The al-Qaida suicide cell has many hiding locations scattered throughout the region, but thanks to the tips of concerned citizens many of these individuals have been caught. Iraqi people working together with

Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces truly are making a difference in their



Courtesy Photo

Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 12th Field Artillery prepare to clear a home in Baqubah, Iraq.

community.

"This suicide cell has links to other cells throughout the northern part of the country and taking out this cell in Baqubah will disrupt al-Qaida-backed suicide operations in Diyala and other parts of the country," said 2-12 FA Intelligence Officer Capt. Andrew Padden.

These operations are clearly working, as more of the suicide cell is captured or forced to leave the region.

This has not deterred Coalition and Iraqi Forces from continuing their mission to eliminate the entire cell.

"We'll continue to conduct these operations as long as the al-Qaida threat remains in Baqubah," Padden said.

Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces are

determined to continue their fight in order to provide better stability and rule of law.

This will ultimately help all Iraqi people, as a more stable region can only mean a stronger economy, jobs and working opportunities for Iraqis, new schools and medical clinics, and a better future for all who live in Diyala province.



Courtesy Photo

Photo of a suicide vest captured in Diyala province.

Improper use of Public Affairs

By Staff Sgt. Russell Bassett
115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Before I begin my gripe, I want you to know that I am a firm believer in wearing the proper uniform. The bottom line is that wearing prescribed protective equipment can save your life.

That being said, I am very tired of leaders using Public Affairs to drive this point home to their Soldiers.

In my nine years in the military, I have had many, many great photos be rejected simply because the Soldiers were not in the proper uniform. I have also had senior leaders chew me out royalty for running pictures of Soldiers not in the proper uniform. I have also been on assignment many times where Soldiers did not want me around because they would have to worry about what their command would say when they saw the pictures.

I have many, many examples of this, but I will share the one that best illustrates the point.

When I was at Fort Eustis, Va., as the Public Affairs NCOIC for the installation, I covered the Army's new transportation boat, the HSV-X1, making its first dock at Fort Eustis.

My story and photos were picked up by many media

organizations and were also used in many command information publications.

A few weeks after the story ran, I received a phone call from a command sergeant major of a large command yelling at me for my pictures.

Apparently, the Soldiers who were docking the boat did not have gloves on. The sergeant major said I should have told them to put on their gloves before I took the picture or not taken any pictures at all.

I just had to shake my head in chagrin and reply, "Roger, sergeant major, this will not happen again," but what I was really thinking was, *How in the world am I going to get Soldiers on a boat to put gloves on when I am on shore more than 75 meters away? And how could I not run the pictures that best illustrated the story, regardless of uniform?"*

Public Affairs is suppose to document the truth. As journalists, we are not suppose to change anything. We are flies on the wall, so to speak. As photographers we can't tell a Soldier to stop whatever they are doing to get in the proper uniform and still ensure we get the shot we need.

As Soldiers we should be wearing all our protective gear, and as leaders we should be ensuring that our Soldiers are in the proper uniform. I just wish people wouldn't use PAO to make that point.



SOUND OFF!

Who do you want to win the Super Bowl?



"The Giants, because I hate the Patriots. Especially Tom Brady."

Sgt. Scott Hanson

Radio Operator
HSB, 2-12 FA



"I want the Giants to win because they are the under-dogs."

Capt. Timothy Gillett

Executive Officer
Troop A. 2-1 Cav.



"The Patriots because I am a patriot."

Pfc. Anice Murray

Office Administration
401st Civil Affairs



"The Giants because I am a NFC fan."

Staff Sgt. Jose Moreno
Trinidad

NCOIC
Topography Team





Photo by Spc. John Crosby

Assistant Deputy to Diyala Government Council Sheik Zary Al-Fayaz (left) discusses the needs of individual qa'das of the northern Diyala River Valley during a meeting of the Diyala provincial government and district officials of Muqdadiyah and surrounding areas. Provincial Governor Ra'ad Rasheed Hameed Al Mullah (right) was also present. Operation Raider Harvest has provided extra security in the area making this meeting possible.

RAIDER HARVEST, From Page 5

This was one of the first steps in local district governments connecting the provincial government to address the needs of the people.

"Coalition Forces, Iraqi Security Forces and Muqdadiyah Iraqi Police all helped achieve our goals in taking back the Breadbasket," said Muqdadiyah Mayor Najem Abdulah Ahmed through an interpreter. "After clearing the area controlled by terrorists, we provide services, food and kerosene for villages that have been isolated."

An Iraqi Police station has been opened and is currently operating in the Breadbasket.

"As we transition into the next phase, you will essentially see a planting of the Iraqi flag in the northern DRV," Brown said. "You will see Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police, which up until this point had not patrolled in this area, and here shortly you will see the linkage between the provincial leaders and the local leaders."

Combat outposts in the Breadbasket are under construction, providing more security in the area. CLC groups are organizing and the Iraqi government is assuming responsibility for the area.

"We will set up some joint security stations and combat outposts," Coffey said. "It's getting the local government functioning again in these areas which creates a lot more cohesion between the people, the local police, the Iraqi

Army and Coalition Forces. Part of that is raising Concerned Local Citizens groups because that dynamic of preventing al-Qaida from re-infiltrating your neighborhood is an important civic exercise.

"We've gone a long way in identifying local leaders we think will be important to the future and who are cooperative to us, and some people we should perhaps keep an eye on," Coffey continued. "I think as everyday goes by the people in the Breadbasket are more assured that the security forces are going to stay. They are going to become more cooperative in giving up AQI that are still in their midst. The local Iraqi government is going to get in there more and more. The civil government needs to get in there and reassert its control and its normal functioning services in there."



Photo by Spc. John Crosby

Lt. Col. Mark Landes, commander of 2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, speaks with Muqdadiyah Mayor Najem Abdulah Ahmed at the Muqdadiyah Government Center, Iraq, Jan. 15. One major objective of Operation Raider Harvest is to ensure that the people of the Breadbasket are tied into the Muqdadiyah and provincial government.



Courtesy photo

Soldiers of Company I, 3rd Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment examine a complex cache site and underground bunker system discovered inside a dense palm grove Jan. 12 near Esalwid, Iraq, during Operation Raider Harvest.



A Soldier of Troop G, 2nd Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment conducts crowd control as hundreds of Iraqis stand in line for kerosene rations in Mansuriyah, Iraq, Jan. 17. Due to fuel shortages in Mansuriyah, the Diyala provincial government made arrangements for the people of the town to receive the much needed kerosene.

TRANSITION, From Page 10

we're here to help."

Gaining trust with the Iraqi people was a common goal between Grim Troop and the Iraqi Army.

"I'm very happy helping these people and children, it is a wonderful day," said Iraq Army Warrant Officer Latif Cubah through an interpreter. "I am proud to help the people of this village, because for a long time they haven't had any government support. We hope to gain these peoples' trust, and pray to Allah for a brighter future."

More missions aimed at helping the Iraqis are in the works for the people of the northern Diyala River Valley. More HA drops, as well as a medical engagements will help

bridge the gap between locals and their government.

"As a part of the brigade operation to remove AQI and support local governance, Grim Troop is distributing humanitarian assistance, and will conduct a cooperative medical engagement in the area in the next few days. We will treat acute problems like cuts and burns, colds and sinus problems," said Grim Troop Medic Cpl. Bill Allen. "After the clearing operation we are just trying to reach out to these people here and let them know were here for them."

But as Operation Raider Harvest moves on one day at a time so does bringing the normal way of life back for the Iraqis of Mansuriyah.

"We will pass out this food today and see where it takes us tomorrow," Adcock said. "I wish we could do more."

An Iraqi Army soldier mans an entry control point on a bridge in Mansuriyah, Iraq, during a Coalition Forces and IA joint humanitarian aid mission Jan. 13 in support of Operation Raider Harvest.





Helping Iraqis

An Iraqi Police S.W.A.T. team breaks through an artificial wall hiding mortars, rockets and rocket propelled grenades, in Muqdadiyah, Iraq, Jan. 4.



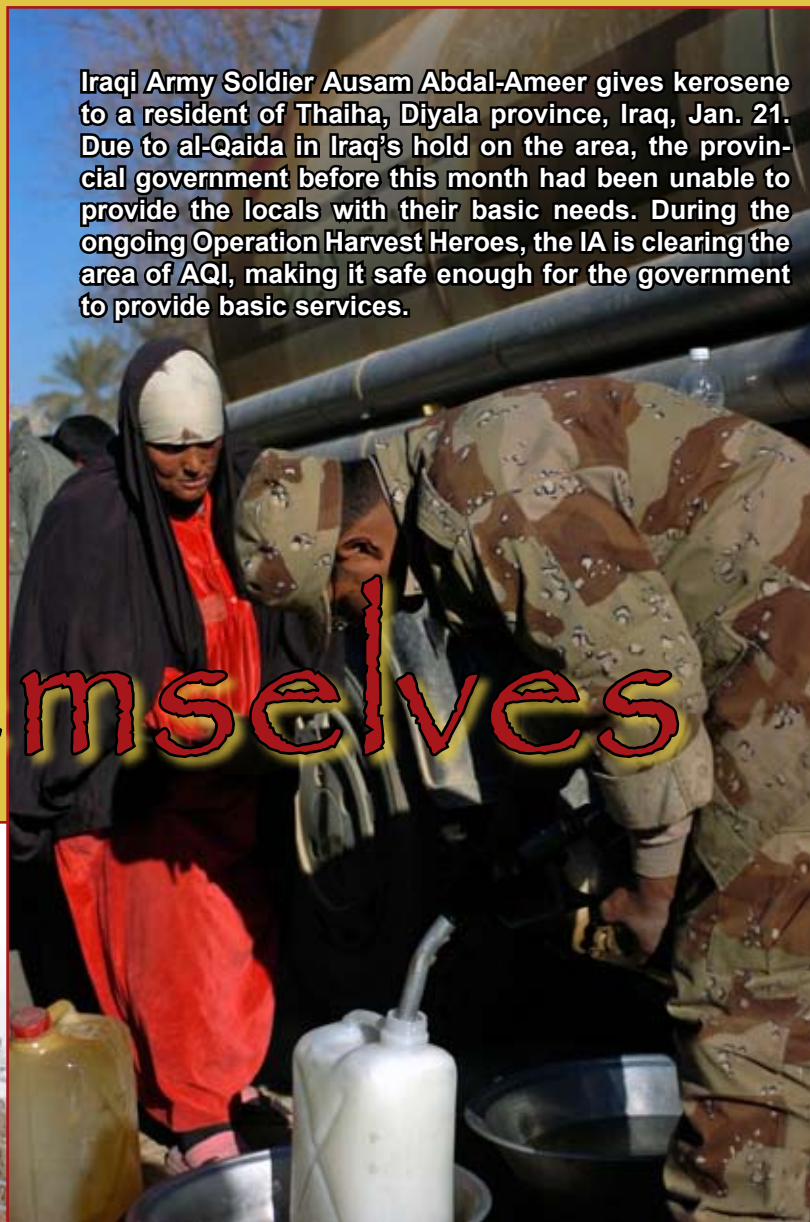
An Iraqi Army doctor hands out prescription medication to an Iraqi man during a Combined Medical Engagement with Coalition Forces near Baqubah, Iraq, Jan. 22.

Photos by Spc. John Crosby and Staff Sgt. Russell Bassett





Iraqi Army soldiers pose for a photograph with Iraq children Jan. 22 in Himbus, Iraq.



Iraqi Army Soldier Ausam Abdal-Ameer gives kerosene to a resident of Thaiha, Diyala province, Iraq, Jan. 21. Due to al-Qaida in Iraq's hold on the area, the provincial government before this month had been unable to provide the locals with their basic needs. During the ongoing Operation Harvest Heroes, the IA is clearing the area of AQI, making it safe enough for the government to provide basic services.

help themselves



A Soldier of 1st Platoon, 38th Engineer Company talks with an Iraqi army soldier during a route clearance mission in support of Operation Raider Harvest in the northern Diyala River Valley, Diyala province, Iraq, Jan. 10.



Muqadiyah Mayor Najem Abdullah Ahmed addresses the Muqadiyah qa'da and Diyala provincial government during a meeting between district officials at Forward Operating Base Normandy, Iraq, Jan. 14. Operations Raider Harvest and Harvest Heroes has provided extra security in the area making this meeting possible.

Easy Sudoku

	9	5			4	3		7
	3			7			8	5
8								2
			7				3	9
	7		8		1		4	
4	2				5			
1								4
3	6			9			5	
7		4	6			8	9	

by Chris Okasaki, Department of EE&CS, USMA

Rules: Fill in the empty cells with the digits 1–9 so that no

digit appears twice in the same row, column, or 3-by-3 box.

Medium Sudoku

		2						
1	4					3	6	
6		9					1	
	9				4	5		
		4	2		5	7		
		8	3				4	
	5					9		3
	6	1					8	5
						1		

by Chris Okasaki, Department of EE&CS, USMA

Rules: Fill in the empty cells with the digits 1–9 so that no

digit appears twice in the same row, column, or 3-by-3 box.

Hard Sudoku

		9						
5			9		8			6
	7		3					
			1	9		2	6	
				6				
	5	6		3	7			
					5		4	
6			2		3			8
						1		

by Chris Okasaki, Department of EE&CS, USMA

Rules: Fill in the empty cells with the digits 1–9 so that no

digit appears twice in the same row, column, or 3-by-3 box.



Interested in a long term relationship with 2nd ID?

Check out the 2ID Association's webpage for more information

<http://www.2ida.org>

Sudoku Answers

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	1
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	1	2
4	5	6	7	8	9	1	2	3
5	6	7	8	9	1	2	3	4
6	7	8	9	1	2	3	4	5
7	8	9	1	2	3	4	5	6
8	9	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	1
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	1	2
4	5	6	7	8	9	1	2	3
5	6	7	8	9	1	2	3	4
6	7	8	9	1	2	3	4	5
7	8	9	1	2	3	4	5	6
8	9	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	1
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	1	2
4	5	6	7	8	9	1	2	3
5	6	7	8	9	1	2	3	4
6	7	8	9	1	2	3	4	5
7	8	9	1	2	3	4	5	6
8	9	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8



SIGNS OF PROGRESS



Spc. Francis Trunk, infantryman in Company A, 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment, greets an Iraqi child during the reopening of the Al Terbia Elementary School in Baqubah, Iraq, Dec. 31. The school, which was damaged during the summer's fighting, received major renovations, including fixing the septic system, windows, exterior and plumbing. The school also received new desks and a play-ground.



Above: Capt. Roland Minez, civil affairs officer for 1-38th Inf. plays with Iraqi children during the reopening of the Al Terbia Elementary School Dec. 31 in Baqubah, Iraq. The Al-Terbia opening was one of several school openings in Baqubah in the last two months.



Iraqi school children cheer the reopening of their school in a newly renovated classroom Dec. 31 in Baqubah, Iraq.

Photos by Staff Sgt. Russell Bassett



A U.S. and an Iraqi Soldier provide security at the reopening of the Al Terbia Elementary School Dec. 31 in Baqubah, Iraq.

Operation Gratitude gives new Jeep to 2-23 Soldier

*Story and photos by Pfc. Kirby Rider
115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment*

Operation Gratitude, an organization that sends care packages to deployed service members, surprised an unknowing Soldier with a 2008 Jeep Liberty at Forward Operating Base Warhorse, Iraq, Jan. 22. The free car was in celebration of meeting their goal of 300,000 packages sent to Soldiers.

Spc. Michael Gallagher from Company A, 2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division from Fort Lewis, Wash. was the recipient of Operation Gratitude's special care package.

"When my commander ordered me to show up to this ceremony, I thought it was just another care package and

they were making a big deal about it because it was the 300,000th one," Gallagher said. "When I opened up the envelope (containing the keys) it completely blew my mind."

The care package contained other various gifts from U.S. citizens and companies that generously support the operation, including letters from local schools and four cigars from Calif. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger.

The Jeep was donated by a local dealership in California, who according to Blashek, said it was an honor to do something special for both a great organization and for the Soldiers in Iraq.

"I would like to thank (Operation Gratitude) so much for supporting the troops and for the opportunity to show that people actually care," Gallagher said.



Spc. Michael Gallagher, a vehicle commander from Company A, 2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, opens a care package given to him by Operation Gratitude on Forward Operating Base Warhorse, Iraq, Jan. 22.



Gallagher gets a hug from Carolyn Blashek, president and founder of Operation Gratitude, after receiving a 2008 Jeep Liberty during Operation Gratitude's 300,000th package award celebration on Forward Operating Base Warhorse, Iraq, Jan. 22.

PFC Anthony Sausto
May 10, 2007
Co. A, 1-38 IN

CPL Brandon Craig
July 19, 2007
HHC, 4-2 SBCT

PFC Marius Ferrero
Nov. 18, 2007
Co. B, 1-38 IN

PFC Aaron Gautier
May 17, 2007
Co. B, 2-23 IN

SPC Rhett Butler
July 20, 2007
Trp. B, 2-1 CAV

CPL Christopher Nelson
Nov. 18, 2007
Co. B, 1-38 IN

CPL Jonathan Hamm
May 17, 2007
Co. B, 2-23 IN

PFC Shawn Hensel
Aug. 14, 2007
Co. B, 2-23 IN

CPL Jason Lee
Nov. 18, 2007
Co. B, 1-38 IN

PFC Robert Worthington
May 22, 2007
Co. B, 4-9 IN

PFC Willard Powell
Aug. 16, 2007
Co. C, 4-9 IN

SGT Blair Emery
Nov. 30, 2007
571 MP Co. 97 MP BN

SSG Kristopher Higdon
May 22, 2007
Co. B, 4-9 IN

SFC Daniel Scheibner
Aug. 29, 2007
Btry. C, 2-12 FA

1LT Jeremy Ray
Dec. 20, 2007
How. Bat., 1-3 ACR

SSG David Kuehl
May 22, 2007
Co. C, 4-9 IN

SFC David Cooper Jr.
Sept. 5, 2007
Co. B, 2-23 IN

MAJ Andrew Olmsted
Jan. 1, 2008
1-1-5 MiTT, 2-3 ACR

SPC Mathew LaForest
May 25, 2007
Co. C, 4-9 IN

SPC Joseph Landry III
Sept. 18, 2007
Co. A, 2-23 IN

CPT Thomas Casey
Jan. 1, 2008
1-1-5 MiTT, 2-3 ACR

PFC Junior Cedeno Sanchez
May 28, 2007
Co. B, 1-38 IN

SPC Nicholas Olson
Sept. 18, 2007
Co. A, 2-23 IN

PFC Jason Lemke
Jan. 5, 2008
Co. A, 2-23 IN

SSG Thomas McFall
May 28, 2007
Co. B, 1-38 IN

SPC Donald Valentine III
Sept. 18, 2007
Co. A, 2-23 IN

SGT Christopher Sanders
Jan. 09, 2008
HHC, 3-2 SCR

SPC William Crouch
June 2, 2007
Trp. A, 2-1 CAV

SPC Graham McMahon
Sept. 19, 2007
Co. B, 4-9 IN

SSG Jonathan Dozier
Jan. 09, 2008
HHC, 3-2 SCR

SGT Cory Endlich
June 9, 2007
Trp. B, 2-1 CAV

CPL Luigi Marciante Jr.
Sept. 20, 2007
Co. A, 2-23 IN

SSG Sean Gaul
Jan. 09, 2008
HHC, 3-2 SCR

SGT Danny Soto
June 16, 2007
Btry. C, 2-12 FA

CPL David Watson
Sept. 22, 2007
HHC, 2-23 IN

SGT Zachary McBride
Jan. 09, 2008
HHC, 3-2 SCR

SPC Zachary Grass
June 16, 2007
Btry. C, 2-12 FA

SGT Christopher Kruse
Nov. 13, 2007
HHC, 2-23 IN

SFC Matthew Pionke
Jan. 09, 2008
HHC, 3-2 SCR

SGT Joel Dahl
June 23, 2007
HHC, 2-23 IN

CPL Peter Schmidt
Nov. 13, 2007
Co. C, 2-23 IN

CPL Todd Davis
Jan. 09, 2008
HHC, 3-2 SCR

CPL Victor Garcia
July 1, 2007
Co. B, 1-38 IN

SGT Kenneth Booker
Nov. 14, 2007
Co. C, 2-23 IN



THE MONEY SHOT

U.S. Army Sgt. Nathan Thompson, Blackhawk helicopter crew chief from Company B, 3rd Battalion, 1st Combat Aviation Brigade, scans his sector for enemy activity during a flight from Forward Operation Base Warhorse to FOB Normandy, Iraq, Jan 18 in support of Operation Raider Harvest



Photos and photo illustration by Staff Sgt. Russell Bassett



Left: U.S. Army Sgt. Dustin White, helicopter crew chief from Company B, 3rd Battalion, 1st Combat Aviation Brigade, takes a picture of an accompanying aircraft on a flight between Forward Operation Base Warhorse and FOB Normandy, Iraq, Jan 18 in support of Operation Raider Harvest, which is the Diyala province portion of the overall offensive Operation Phantom Phoenix.

Right: Two Blackhawk helicopters fly over Iraq Jan. 18 during Operation Raider Harvest. Aviation units played a critical role in Operation Raider Harvest, by getting Soldiers in and out of the fight quickly, providing additional weapons power, and adding to commander's view of the battlefield.

