

THE DESERT RAIDER

The Breadbasket
two months later



Sheik-fest

'Fox Hunting'
with the
Iraqi army



Training Iraqi
Security Forces



Col. Jon S. Lehr

Raider 6

Raiders,

It has truly been an exciting month since I last spoke to you. Dozens of high value individuals have been captured throughout the brigade's AO – many directly involved in the planning and execution of suicide attacks against our forces, the Iraqi Security Forces and the people of Diyala.

You have become so effective at capturing or killing the extremists' key leaders that many have moved completely out of Diyala in an attempt to put space between you and them. Keep it up! Keep the pressure on 'em. Make them dread closing their eyes for a few hours of sleep for fear of being awakened by you kicking their door in and dragging their sorry butts

off to the detainee holding area.

You are winning this war! Don't let anything anyone says or anything you see on TV make you think different. Your enemy fears you, the law-abiding people of this province are thankful for you and the Iraqi Security Forces hold you in the highest esteem. You are part of the greatest fighting force to ever step on a battlefield.

It's important to note that this has as much to do with your efficiency at finding and killing the enemy as it does with your professionalism, compassion and commitment to the mission and your fellow Soldiers.

Recently, a tribe of Sunni Iraqis decided to reconcile with Coalition forces and the Government of Iraq. Members of this particular group have directly engaged our forces with small arms and IEDs over the past year. The sheik who is leading the reconciliation effort of this tribe has lost five of his sons in direct contact with Coalition forces.

I don't tell you this to gloat – they got their licks in on us as well. I tell you because you never lost sight of why we're here – not to destroy Iraq but to save it. You all can respond to an attack with the utmost ferocity and finish the fight decisively. And in an

instant, you can put your hand out and reconcile with those who no longer wish to be your enemy.

You understand that taking vengeance against your enemy when he no longer has the will to fight WILL NOT win this war. What unit in the history of conflict could boast Soldiers with such a balance of ferociousness AND maturity? I would venture to say none.

Finally, I'd like to beat a dead horse – complacency, complacency, complacency. This "enemy" has the potential to kill half a dozen or more of our Soldiers between now and when we redeploy home – PROVE ME WRONG!

We must look after ourselves and our buddies. Don't let yourself or your fellow Soldier be seriously injured or killed because of complacency. Brutal enforcement of standards will save our Soldiers' lives.

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

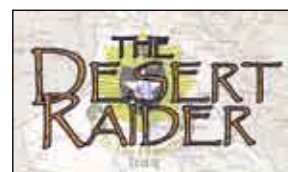
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THE DESERT RAIDER is prepared monthly by the 4-2 SBCT Public Affairs Office, which includes Soldiers of the 115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment. Any story or photo submissions should be forwarded to the editor at russell.bassett@4bct2id.army.mil.



On the Cover: Soldiers of Battery A, 2nd Battalion, 12th Field Artillery Regiment prepare to clear a building during Operation Fox Hunting in Abu Khamis, Iraq, Feb. 28.



Command Sgt. Maj. John W. Troxell

Raider 7

Greetings fellow Raiders!

We have completed a year of deployment and begin our 13th month of being away from home as I write this article. The good news is we have about 60 days left before we transition the battle space and redeploy. These last two months may not seem like a very long time, but we have to go through each day one at a time. What I mean is that we have to remain focused on the mission at hand and continue to stay sharp and execute situational awareness at all times.

Right now we have a good handle on our battle space, but as everyone knows, there has been an increase of violence in places like Baghdad and Basra. We have also seen a spike in violence in some of our areas as well and we have to keep focused on the enemy.

It is not only Al Qaeda that is a threat to us at this time, but militia groups are also becoming more and more of a threat.

Now we will continue to target the enemy and keep up our relentless tempo on eliminating the bad guys. However, this will not stop the enemy from looking for vulnerabilities in our force and exploiting those vulner-

abilities by attacking us. Therefore we have to stay suspiciously alert for anything that could be a threat. We cannot get too comfortable with the population and the security forces that we begin to let our guard down.

I travel throughout the battle space six days a week and have patrolled with every maneuver company in this brigade (to include our attached units) and for the most part I see units that are staying focused.

I do see some units that have gotten a little too close to the people in their area and have thereby left themselves vulnerable to a potential attack. We have to have a level of trust among our Iraqi security forces and the local populace, but we still have to be alert at all times.

It is the job of all leaders to fight our biggest enemy and that is complacency.

We do missions with frequent repetition and a lot of times the outcome is the same: nothing significant to report. However, we still have to maintain focus for the one time we don't is when the enemy will strike. This also applies to Soldiers whose duties are primarily on the FOB. The enemy does have eyes in our FOB and is collecting information on us and



our activities at all times.

It is the duty of all Soldiers to report any suspicious activity of any of our local workers on the FOB. Be alert and look for anything that does not seem right and more importantly report it to the chain of command.

It is truly an honor to serve everyday along side the great men and women of our brigade combat team and Col. Lehr and I look forward to seeing you all during our visits.

Keep focused and keep your buddies focused. You can relax when you are sitting in an Applebee's restaurant back in the Seattle/Tacoma area!

To the Objective!
Raider 7



Raiders go 'Fox Hunting' with the Iraqi army

IA-led operation clears one of last remaining AQI strongholds in Diyala province

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

The Iraqi army, with minimal help from Coalition forces, has cleared al-Qaeda in Iraq from one of its last remaining strongholds in Diyala province and is currently working to make sure the terrorists are unable to return.

Operation Fox Hunting began Feb. 27 with elements of the 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division providing support as the 5th Iraqi Army Division cleared the area between Baghdad and Baqouba on both sides of the Diyala River. The operation cleared numerous IEDs from two roads between Baghdad and Baqouba, Al-Sayahi (the Tourist Road) and another north-south road farther east. Both roads had been closed for more than a year due to heavy seeding of improvised explosives by AQI. The operation has also cleared the area west of the Diyala River from Aluthmaniyah to Sayd Awad.

As of March 5, IA explosive ordnance disposal, along with route clearance teams from the 38th Engineer Company, found and cleared more than 75 IEDs from the roads in the area. Three IA vehicles and two CF vehicles were hit by IEDs during the route clearance missions.



Spc. Andy Brown and Staff Sgt. Donny Warren of Battery A, 2nd Battalion, 12th Field Artillery Regiment look through their rifle scopes into the town of Abu Khamis, Iraq, Feb. 28 before joining the Iraqi army to clear the town of al-Qaeda in Iraq during Operation Fox Hunting. The troops found and destroyed four house-borne improvised explosive devices in the town.

"My kids would be without a dad right now if I hadn't been professional and kicked that door like I wanted to. It would have taken us all out."

**Pfc. Richard Vasquez
Soldier, Battery A, 2-12 FA**

In the first four days of Operation Fox Hunting, almost 50 IEDs were cleared including this house-born IED that was rigged to explode when a door was opened. A Soldier from Battery A, 2-12 FA spotted the trigger on the outside of the door before it could do damage to the four Soldiers clearing the house Feb. 28 in Abu Khamis, Iraq.



Soldiers of Battery A, 2-12 FA react to the sound of shots fired Feb. 29 during Operation Fox Hunting in Abu Khamis, Iraq, Feb. 29.

Insert: An Iraqi army soldier looks over a large weapons cache comprised of hundreds of munitions and many large weapons systems. A villager who wanted to “reconcile” led troops to the cache located east of Khan Bani Sa’ad, Diyala province, Iraq, Mar. 3. Photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Sean Mulligan

Four IA were killed and two wounded due to these attacks.

In addition to the route clearance missions, IA and CF Soldiers have cleared AQI from numerous towns in the area.

Approximately 25 towns were cleared during Fox Hunting, and five AQI operatives were killed during the operation.

In the early morning hours of Feb. 28, Battery A, 2nd Battalion 12th Field Artillery air-assaulted into the town of Abu Khamis to clear the village with the Iraqi army. The intelligence estimate of the town said an IED cell of 15-20 AQI fighters used the town as a base, and the Soldiers expected to have to fight their way through, but the town turned out to be a little different than expected.

“My first impression is that it was almost like a ghost town,” explained

Capt. James Sink, Battery A commander. “I had two platoons conducting (entry control point) operations for 18 hours around the town and they didn’t see a single person or single vehicle the whole time.”

Once the troops reached the town, they discovered that most of the men had already fled the village, leaving behind women, kids, a few older men, goats ... and booby-trapped houses.

The troops faced a very close call as one house was rigged to explode upon the opening of a room door. Pfc. Richard Vasquez was part of a four-man team clearing the home whose quick thinking likely saved their lives.

“I was about to breach the door. I was tired, and I was just going to kick the door in. I don’t know what told me, but I looked down . . . and I noticed (the trigger),” Vasquez said. “My team leader came up and said, ‘Let’s clear it,’

but I said, ‘No, I got a bad feeling.’”

After the trigger was disabled, the Soldiers found a 30-gallon drum full of homemade explosive located just inside the door.

“Afterwards I was thinking, man, I could be dead,” Vasquez said. “My kids would be without a dad right now if I hadn’t been professional and kicked that door like I wanted to. It would have taken us all out.”

One Iraqi army soldier was not as lucky and was killed when the house he was clearing exploded. In the town of Abu Khamis, the joint forces found and destroyed four HBIEDs.

In the nearby town of Mullah Id, Soldiers of Battery B, 2-12 FA, discovered an IED factory that included 17 mortars, 13 rockets, 200 pounds of explosives and a sniper rifle.

See FOX HUNTING, Page 14

Diyala's Breadbasket two months later: A success story

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

A lot can happen in a few months. Citizens of the northern Diyala River Valley area commonly referred to as the Breadbasket have seen a world of difference in just two months.

For several years, the Breadbasket – an area of roughly 100-square kilometers – had been an al-Qaeda in Iraq stronghold and safe haven. There was very little Iraqi army presence and virtually no Iraqi Police. AQI had enforced strict Sharia Law and were kidnapping and beheading those who did not comply with their explicit demands.

That all changed beginning Jan. 7 with the start of Operation Raider Harvest – the Diyala province portion of the theater-wide offensive Phantom Phoenix. Soldiers of the 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division cleared house-by-house, village-by-village throughout the Breadbasket.

Unlike past operations in which Soldiers left after the clearing phase, this time the troops were there to stay. The 3rd Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment has the tough job of not only clearing the Breadbasket of AQI but also of making sure the enemy does not return. But they don't have to do it alone.

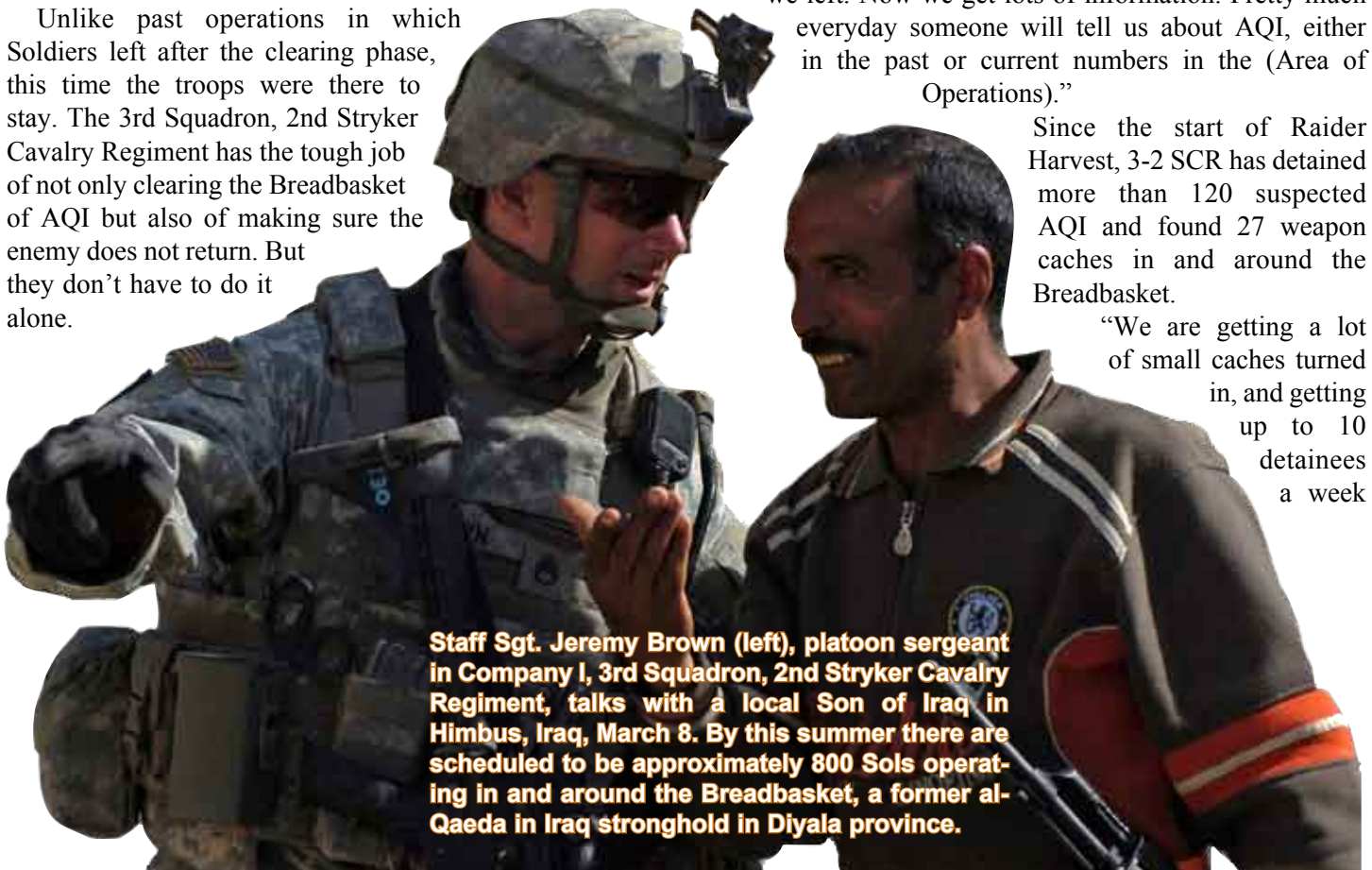
A battalion's worth of Iraqi army soldiers now operates in and around the Breadbasket, along with a company-size element of Iraqi Police. In addition, Sons of Iraq (formerly Concerned Local Citizens) programs are now operating in 10 different villages throughout the Breadbasket and surrounding area.

The difference is palpable. Shops are open for business, kids play in the street and families walk freely together down the main roads – a far cry from how it was when 3-2 first rolled in.

"The people seem to have a happier appearance," said Staff Sgt. Jeremy Brown, platoon sergeant in Co. I, 3-2 SCR, who daily patrols the Breadbasket. "They don't seem as apprehensive of the unknown, of what's around the next corner. They are actually talking to us now, as opposed to when we first got here, they were very tight-lipped. They weren't sure if we were going to stay. They were afraid to talk to us because they were afraid of repercussions when we left. Now we get lots of information. Pretty much everyday someone will tell us about AQI, either in the past or current numbers in the (Area of Operations)."

Since the start of Raider Harvest, 3-2 SCR has detained more than 120 suspected AQI and found 27 weapon caches in and around the Breadbasket.

"We are getting a lot of small caches turned in, and getting up to 10 detainees a week



Staff Sgt. Jeremy Brown (left), platoon sergeant in Company I, 3rd Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, talks with a local Son of Iraq in Himbus, Iraq, March 8. By this summer there are scheduled to be approximately 800 Sols operating in and around the Breadbasket, a former al-Qaeda in Iraq stronghold in Diyala province.

throughout the entire AO,” said Lt. Col. Rod Coffey, squadron commander. “And most of that is from the locals, particularly the Sons of Iraq who now feel empowered to report what they know.”

The local residents have clearly responded favorably to the increased security.

One man told the story of the pleasure he experienced talking with his friends around a fire until 2 a.m., something he couldn’t do when AQI was in charge and enforced a strict 5 p.m. curfew.

Sameer Sakar Mahmood, a leader and SoI in the town of Abu Musa, said his town is much safer now.

“The terrorists used to drive around in their vehicles and walk around here,” he said through a translator. “Now I can walk through the orchard by myself, and I am not scared.”

There are currently around 250 SoIs operating in and around the Breadbasket, and Coffey said that number will increase to 800 once all the programs are up and running.

In Himbus, one of the larger villages in the area and a former command post of AQI, the difference is very evident. Within 100 meters of the town center there is now an IA compound, an IP checkpoint and two CLC checkpoints.

The muktar, or mayor, of Himbus, Hamid Ameen Saleim, was optimistic when talking about the future of his town.

“The children are now happy,” Ameen said through a translator. “All the families here can relax and get back to work. The economy is picking up because people are getting back to work.”

Before Raider Harvest, the Breadbasket had been completely cut off from the government. The local residents had not received any of their regular food and kerosene rations, and the roads were too heavily planted with IEDs to travel out of the area to get needed supplies and medical attention.

During the first month of Raider Harvest, 3-2 SCR and the Iraqi Security Forces conducted dozens of humanitarian aid drops and medical engagements, but now the push is to get the Iraqi government to provide these services.

Ameen said they are now receiving food rations once a month.

“For years the government didn’t help us,” the Himbus muktar said. “They gave us no services, but CF destroying the terrorists made a big difference.”

Other signs of progress in the area include displaced families moving back into their homes.

All the families of the villages of Ghadat and Bazul had abandoned their houses due to the threat of violence by AQI but are now returning.

In addition, several villages that were formerly racked by sectarian violence are now reconciling, including Big and Little Barwana. The leadership of 3-2 SCR has helped mediate many of these “awakening” movements.



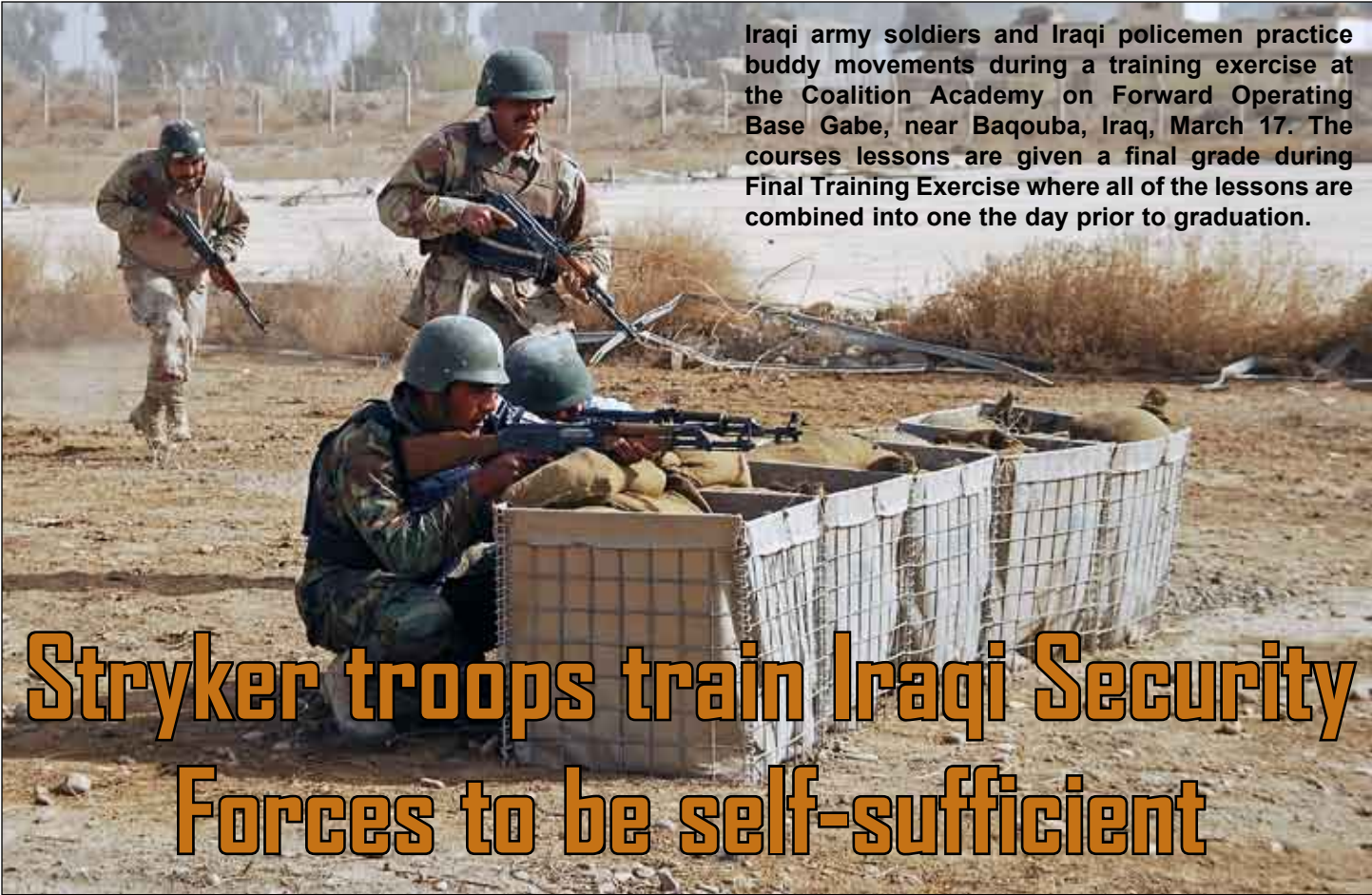
A Soldier from Company I, 3rd Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment gives a high five to an Iraqi child in Abu Musa, a village in the Breadbasket of Diyala, Iraq, March 8.



Iraqi army soldiers guard a checkpoint in Himbus, Iraq, March 8. Before Operation Raider Harvest cleared al-Qaeda from Himbus and the other villages of the Breadbasket, there was little to no IA presence in the area. There is now a battalion-size element working in and around the Breadbasket, as well as a company-size element of Iraqi Police.



Staff Sgt. Jeremy Brown (left), platoon sergeant in Company I, 3-2 SCR, and an interpreter meet with local leaders Daloo Sakar Mahmood and Sameer Sakar Mahmood in Abu Musa, Iraq, March 8. The two Iraqis are helping to start a Sons of Iraq program in the village.



Iraqi army soldiers and Iraqi policemen practice buddy movements during a training exercise at the Coalition Academy on Forward Operating Base Gabe, near Baqouba, Iraq, March 17. The courses lessons are given a final grade during Final Training Exercise where all of the lessons are combined into one the day prior to graduation.

Stryker troops train Iraqi Security Forces to be self-sufficient

Academy at FOB Gabe teaches Iraqi soldiers and policemen basic warrior skills

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

Now that the fifth year anniversary of the war in Iraq has come and gone, one of the big questions often asked is "Are Iraqi Security Forces capable of providing for Iraq's security?" Soldiers of the 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division from Fort Lewis, Wash., are currently working closely with their ISF counterparts in Diyala province to ensure they are.

One of the ways the Stryker troops work to ensure the ISF is self-sufficient is training Iraqi Soldiers and policemen

on basic skills during a 10-day, "basic-warrior-skills" course.

When students (or *jundhis* as they are called in Arabic) first enter the Coalition Academy located on Forward Operating Base Gabe, in Baqouba, Iraq, they are given roster numbers and assigned bunks to sleep on. They are then taught classes on warrior ethos, leadership duties and basic responsibilities. Classes continue with proper ways to hold weapons and how to obtain a proper sight picture when firing.

As the course continues, classes become less frequent, and the *jundhis* conduct practical exercises that train them on different tasks they will need to conduct counterinsurgency operations in Diyala. These exercises include reacting to indirect fire, squad movement, detainee operations, first aid, building entry, room clearing and weapons marksmanship.

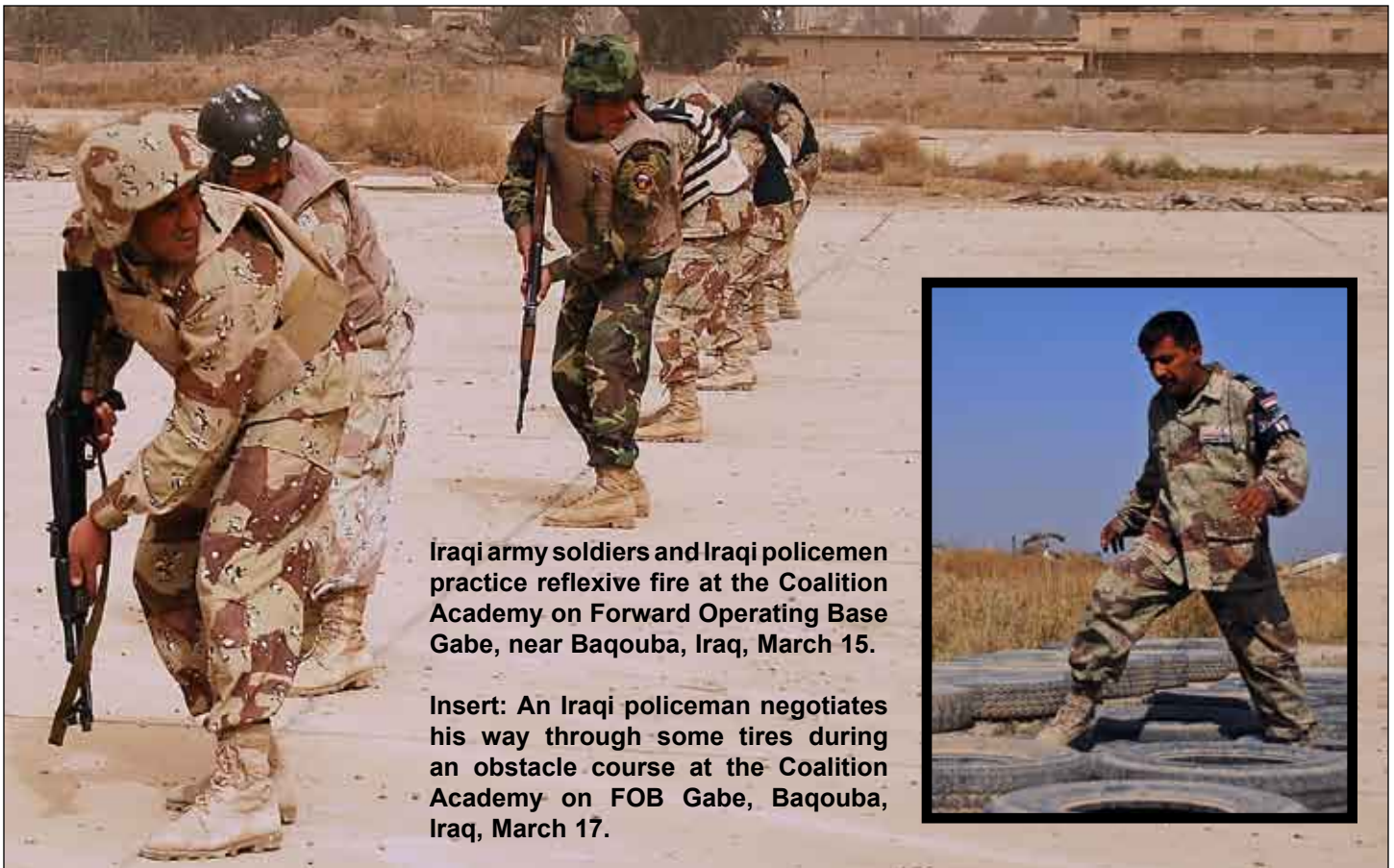
"We teach them skills like reflexive fire, battle drills, ways to react to

IEDs and snipers and moving through open areas," said Staff Sgt. Ronald Meader, an infantryman in Company A, 4th Battalion, 9 Infantry Regiment and trainer at the Coalition Academy. "Since the course is only 10 days, we really have to cram everything into that time period."

Near the end of the course, all the training is put together in a final practical exercise. This final test determines if the students will graduate the program or not.

"It is good training for the Iraqi army and the Iraqi Police," said 1st Lt. Hassan Flayah Hassan, a member of the Iraqi Police emergency squad and an assistant trainer at the Coalition Academy. "The Coalition forces train them on techniques to protect their country."

The Iraqi Soldiers and policemen are chosen from units in the Baqouba area who possess the leadership potential to teach what they have learned to other members of their units.



Iraqi army soldiers and Iraqi policemen practice reflexive fire at the Coalition Academy on Forward Operating Base Gabe, near Baqouba, Iraq, March 15.

Insert: An Iraqi policeman negotiates his way through some tires during an obstacle course at the Coalition Academy on FOB Gabe, Baqouba, Iraq, March 17.

"I hope I can pass what I learned here to other people in my unit and my team," said Hassan Hameed Salwan, the Academy's honor graduate.

The students attending the course are typically new to the Iraqi Security Forces and have not received a lot of formal training prior to the course.

"Some IA and IP are very young and don't have good training," Hassan said, "but when they come here it helps them, and it is very important for them."

Throughout the course, instructors are watching each student carefully to ensure the tasks are completed correctly and safely. The instructors also look at each student's leadership ability and willingness to participate in events, encouraging them along the way.

The course was held at Camp Taji until the 4-2 SBCT moved to Diyala in November, and the training center was relocated to FOB Gabe.

"At Taji we had better facilities and nice ranges," Meader said. "At FOB Gabe we had to build our own stuff ... you have to utilize what is around



Iraqi army soldiers and Iraqi policemen prepare to enter a house, using a smoke grenade for concealment, to respond to reports of "gunfire" during a training exercise at the Coalition Academy on FOB Gabe, Iraq, March 17.

you to give them the best training you can."

No matter where the class is held, both students and instructors get something from the class – students learn valuable skills to help them defend their country, and the instructors get the knowledge that something positive

was accomplished.

"You are dealing with a big barrier with a different language and culture, but you learn a lot about their culture, and they learn something about us," Meader said. "They realize we want to show them how to defend themselves and standup their country."

Cache discovery highlights counterinsurgency successes in Baqouba

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

Coalition forces discovered a sizable weapons cache in the Tahrir district of Baqouba, Diyala province, Iraq, March 15.

Soldiers of Battery C, 2nd Battalion, 12th Field Artillery, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division from Fort Lewis, Wash., discovered two rocket-propelled grenade launchers on the roof of a home during a routine patrol of the area. The house's rooftop was connected to another home where the Soldiers found a mortar tube, additional RPG rounds and numerous mortar rounds hidden in a barrel buried in the courtyard.

The cache included 23 mortar rounds, four RPG rounds, three RPG launchers, one mortar tube, one AK-47 rifle, and numerous AK-47 magazines and rounds. The munitions were destroyed in a controlled detonation at a nearby joint combat outpost.

The inhabitant of the first house was detained by the Soldiers.

Since the beginning of March, Coalition troops have discovered several significant caches in the Baqouba-area and detained several known IED and suicide-vest cell members, including two suspected female suicide bombers.

“Coalition forces in Baqouba continue to relentlessly pursue insurgent activity, continue to find caches and disrupt AQI cells, and will continue to detain all individuals



Courtesy photo



The weapons cache discovered at two adjoining homes March 15 in the Tahrir district of Baqouba, Diyala province, Iraq, included 23 mortar rounds, four RPG rounds, three RPG launchers, one mortar tube and an AK-47 rifle. A man was detained at the first home. This latest cache and capture highlights a recent string of success by CF to disrupt al-Qaeda in Iraq activity in Baqouba.

associated with illegal movement of weapons.” said Maj. John Burpo, 2-12 FA operations officer. “Local nationals and our recent detainees continue to provide intelligence on insurgent networks in greater numbers, and recent successes are indicative of AQIs weakening position in Baqouba.”

Attacks against CF, Iraqi Security Forces and civilians in Baqouba – the former capital of AQI’s Islamic State of Iraq – have decreased by more than 80 percent since June.

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Influential leaders from throughout Diyala meet to establish tribal support councils

*Story and photo by
Staff Sgt. Russell Bassett*

115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Influential leaders from throughout Diyala province gathered at a home in Sa'ad Muhammed, Iraq, March 20 to establish tribal support councils throughout the province.

More than 1,000 people attended the gathering at the home of Sheik Dura Fayyahd Al-Amiri, arguably the most influential sheik in Diyala, including representatives of the central government, the governor, deputy governors, members of the provincial council, Iraqi army and police commanders for the province, and sheiks from throughout Diyala.

Last month the central government approved the creation of tribal support councils throughout Iraq. The purpose of these councils is for the various tribes throughout the nation to have a voice in government to help with reconciliation and stability.

Dr. Fa-Al Niamah Alayawi from the central government's Implementation and Follow-on Committee for National Reconciliation outlined the role of tribal support councils at the meeting. He said the councils would work for reconciliation between tribes and religious sects, help displaced families return to their homes, advise the provincial government on reconstruction projects, help Sons of Iraq receive jobs in the Iraqi Security Forces and create social programs in their area.

The central government is giving each province 50 million dinar to get the councils up and running.

Reconciliation and security were the themes of the day at the meeting. One sheik, using a microphone, exclaimed to the crowd that they are not Sunni, and not Shia, but all Muslims and all



Col. Jon Lehr (third from left), commander of the 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division speaks with Gen. Ghanem Abas Ibrahim Hassan Al-Qaurish (second from left), Diyala provincial director of police, and sheiks from different areas in the province March 20 in Sa'ad Muhammed, Iraq. More than 1,000 people, including leaders from the central and provincial government, attended a meeting at an influential sheik's home to establish how the newly-formed tribal support councils will operate.

Iraqis.

"The goal behind this gathering is to bring together the people throughout the province to win them back from al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups so that we can work together to achieve security in the province," said Dura, who hosted the event in his large meeting room and front lawn. "My hope for the future for all of Iraq is that we the people can live together in peace."

Leaders of the 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, the Coalition force unit responsible for Diyala province, were on hand to understand how they could help the process.

"The purpose of these committees is for the tribes to work closely with the Iraqi government and Coalition forces

for better security," explained Lt. Col. John Steele, deputy commanding officer of 4-2 SBCT. "Part of this was to develop a mechanism to vet the Sons of Iraq for their inclusion in the Iraqi Security Forces so that these members are vetted through the tribal system as reliable."

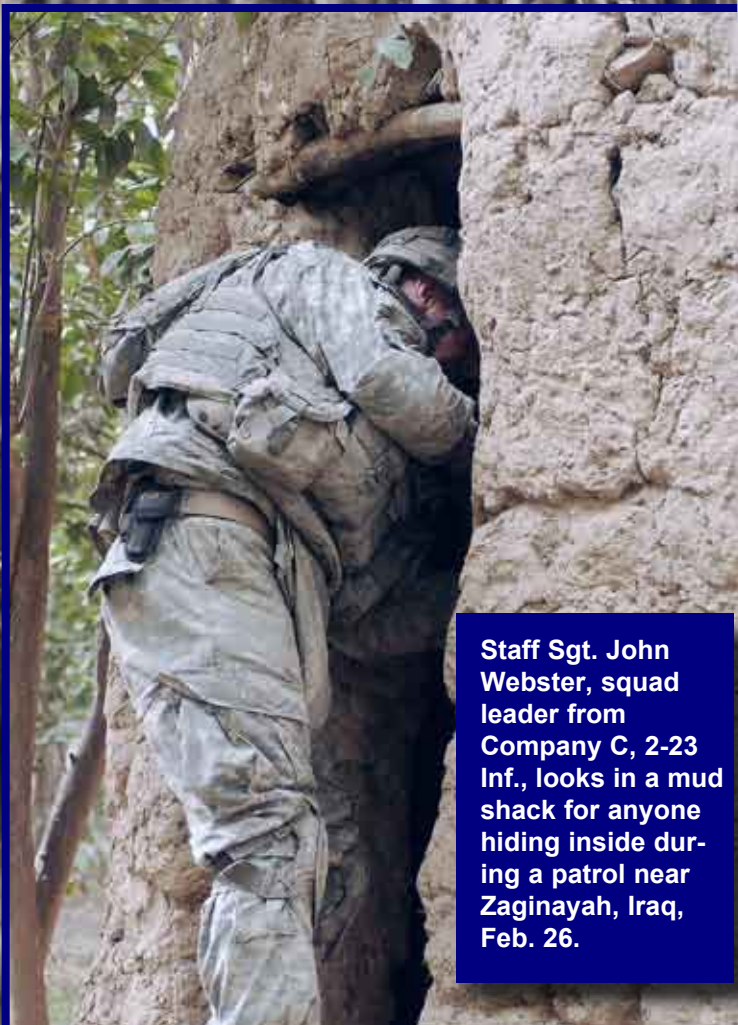
The sheiks decided they would establish 25 different councils throughout the province, one for each nahia, or urban area. They also agreed to meet again in Baqouba to iron out more details.

"Today was a massive leap forward in the understanding of this (tribal support council) process," Steele concluded. "It showed the unity of the people and their commitment to the betterment of Iraq."

On patrol with Crazyhorse Co.

Soldiers from Company C, 2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment patrol down a road near Zaginayah, Iraq, Feb. 26. The Crazyhorse Soldiers patrol the area regularly to ensure al-Qaeda in Iraq operatives from setting up a strong hold in the area.

Photos by Spc. Kirby Rider



Staff Sgt. John Webster, squad leader from Company C, 2-23 Inf., looks in a mud shack for anyone hiding inside during a patrol near Zaginayah, Iraq, Feb. 26.



Staff Sgt. Eric Alvarado of Company C, 2-23 Inf. walks down an unused canal looking for AQI hiding in a vineyard during a patrol near Zaginayah, Iraq, Feb. 26.



Soldiers from Company C., 2-23 Inf. provide security during a halt in a patrol near Zaginayah, Iraq, Feb. 26.



Staff Sgt. Eric Alvarado from Company C., 2-23 Inf. provides security during a patrol near Zaginayah, Iraq, Feb. 26.



FOX HUNTING, From Page 5

"There was IED making material all over the place," said Capt. Kevin James, Battery B commander. "We found stuff in several rooms and under palm fronds outside."

At the same time 2-12 FA was helping the IA clear The Tourist Road and surrounding villages, 2nd Squadron, 3rd Cavalry Regiment was helping the IA clear a parallel road father east.

"The area is an AQI support zone that facilitates the refit, resourcing and rearming of insurgents into Baghdad and Baqouba," said Lt. Col. Paul Calvert, 2-3 ACR commander. "Given the number of IEDs we have found, we've been taking our time, making sure each and every village is cleared."

Calvert said in a few of the villages they experienced what 2-12 FA experienced in Abu Khamis with most of the men having previously vacated.

"We have found some villages that we thought were AQI safe havens that were unoccupied and looked deserted," he said. "This is an obvious indicator that villagers have been giving safe haven to the insurgents. For the most part though, we are finding families in villages. Most appear to be regular farms people."

West of the Diyala river, 2nd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment helped the Iraqi army clear AQI from their strongholds there.

During Fox Hunting, IA and CF troops found and cleared 15 weapon caches, including two IED-making factories and one huge cache of mortars and rockets that was discovered March 3 east of Khan Bani Sa'ad. The joint forces were notified of the cache by a former AQI operative wishing to reconcile.

The clearing phases of Fox Hunting concluded March 6, and the operation has now moved into the holding and building phases, which include setting up Sons of Iraq programs and IA and Iraqi Police checkpoints.



Capt. Johnny Fry, 1st Platoon leader, inspects a building with his rifle scope as Sgt. Ramon Ramos, squad leader in Battery A, 2-12 FA, pulls security during Operation Fox Hunting in Abu Khamis, Iraq, Feb. 29.



Spc. Andy Brown, a Soldier in Battery A, 2-12 FA, runs from a house-borne IED as an air weapons team approaches to destroy it with a Hellfire missile.

In Abu Khamis, the "ghost town," this phase had some tough challenges.

"We are trying to work through the challenge of how we are going to create

SoI volunteers and ultimately new IPs with a complete lack of qualified men," Sink said. "One of things we are doing when we are engaging the local leaders is telling them to get the word out to please come back; if you have a clean record and are not a known terrorist to come back to protect your village and possibly even become an IP."

The local men were convinced to return, and there are now 60 SoIs operating in and around Abu Khamis.

Along with setting up a permanent security apparatus to keep AQI from coming back to the area, the joint forces, including the Iraqi Police, are conducting humanitarian aid drops and medical engagements in the area.

Many of the villages had not received food and kerosene rations for more than a year, and due to the roads in and out of the towns being blanketed with IEDs, were unable to travel to get needed supplies. The local residents lined up in the towns to receive the much needed flour, rice, oil, blankets and heaters.

This is the third large-scale, joint operation conducted in Diyala province since December. The first, Operation Raider Reaper in December, cleared AQI from its former stronghold north of Baqouba known as the Iron Triangle.



Spc. Andy Brown of Battery A, 2-12 FA moves tactically through a building in Abu Khamis, Iraq, Feb. 28.

The second, Operation Raider Harvest in January, cleared AQI from its former safe haven and stronghold in the northern Diyala River Valley known as “the Breadbasket.”

Fox Hunting is the first of these operations to be planned, led and largely executed by the IA. CF commanders in the field during Fox Hunting praised

their IA counterparts.

“The IA is doing an extremely good job,” Calvert said. “The IA Soldiers can integrate quickly with the people and can gain information from the people that we maybe couldn’t get. They do more than just come through and clear villages, they build relationships with the people.”

More than 70 km of roads were cleared of IEDs during Operation Fox Hunting. Follow on operations are scheduled to repair craters in the roads.

Since this summer, attacks against civilians, ISF and CF have decreased by almost 70 percent throughout Diyala province.

Pfc. Thaddaeus Hendershot, a Soldier in Battery A, 2-12 FA over-watches a road into the town of Abu Khamis, Iraq, at the start of Operation Fox Hunting Feb. 28.



Hatchet Forward Support Company

*By 1st Sgt. Pamela Small
FSC H, 202nd BSB*

We take a licking and keep on ticking. That's how we do it at FOB Warhorse and the surrounding JCOP areas in Baqouba.

We are proud to be in 202nd BSB, providing support in the 4-2 SBCT area of operations. It is truly a challenging but a rewarding job.

Hatchet FSC provides support to the 2nd Battalion, 12th Field Artillery. On a monthly basis we transport and consume over 24,000 bottles of water, over 50,000 gallons of bulk water, over 60,000 gallons of JP8 and over 312 days of supply Class I.

We transport over 350,000 lbs of wood and Hescos in addition to transporting T-walls and Jersey barriers that provide force protection to the IA and IP check points.

You never know what kind of adversities you will encounter while conducting Combat Logistics Patrols. You could be driving down dangerous routes (Vanessa, Detroit, Gold...) and an IED may explode or your vehicle could break down.

The possibilities are endless, yet you still move forward and stay focused on your mission. We hear all the time from our chain of command to stay vigilant and alert because it can save your life.

In addition to Class I, III, IV and IX, the maintenance platoon, better known as the Combat Repair Team (CRT) conducts services, unscheduled maintenance, QAQC, and dispatches vehicles on a daily basis. Although this may seem to be repetitive to the operators and mechanics, it is reas-



Courtesy photo

A Soldier from the Forward Support Company H Combat Repair Team works with Iraqi army soldiers on repairing an HMMWV 1151.

suring to the commanders who know their vehicles are being properly maintained, allowing them to focus on combat operations.

Our mission is just as dangerous as that of our brother and sister units, but as wrench turners, transporters, grill masters, and logisticians, it is up to us to accomplish the mission safely and to standard.

As we enter the FOBs and JCOPs, we know we are appreciated because we can see facial expressions of those we support. I would guess they are saying, "What are they bringing us today? Are there any goodies?"

Capt. Dotter and I are grateful for the Soldiers we have in our company because they each bring innovative ideas and character to this outstanding organization.

The numerous combat logistical patrols and other support taskings make our days, weeks and months go by faster, and we feel more productive knowing we are serving our unit, our country and each other.

3-2 SCR reunites with IA to go 'Fox Hunting' south of Kan'an

*By Capt. David French
HHT, 3-2 SCR*

Weeks after working with 1-3-1 IA during Operation Raider Harvest, 2nd Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment (Sabre Squadron) once again joined forces with their counterparts from al-Anbar province in a drive to clear and hold an AQI stronghold.

This time, however, the operation was planned and led by Iraqis. Called "Operation Fox Hunting," Sabre Squadron's Grim Troop took to the field to support IA clearing operations south of Kan'an.

"This kind of operation is a model for the next phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom," said Lt. Col. Paul Calvert, Sabre's commander. "As Iraqis continue to step up and fight for their own country, we will see more operations like 'Fox Hunting.'"

Fighting through a series of IED attacks, Grim Troop established two Joint Combat Outposts with 1-3-1 and lived in the field throughout the operation. Grim and 1-3-1 found more than three dozen IEDs, seven weapons caches (including a booby-trapped bunker), and detained dozens of suspected extremists. IA forces are already supplemented with new Sons of Iraq who will guard their own communities.

Grim Troop commander, Captain Robert Green, has been pleased with the progress.

"We've made great strides, and there's no question that 1-3-1 has done their job well," Green said. "AQI extremists can't stand against the IA, and so they've either run away or been captured. It's encouraging to see the IA take the lead. No one knows the country better than they do, and they are the ones who will ultimately bring lasting security and peace."

As Grim worked with the IA to rout AQI from the western portion of Sabre's Area of Operations, Fox Troop continued its own efforts in the north. Acting on tips that followed a successful engagement that killed six AQI extremists, including a top AQI leader in the region, Fox Troopers detained several additional suspected insurgents. At the same time Fox stood up new "Sons of Iraq" and conducted significant humanitarian missions.

Sabre's Lion Battery has carved out an Area of Operations in the southern portion of Diyala Province and recently presided over a ribbon-cutting for a new health clinic and conducted its own medical engagements and humanitarian aid drops.

Both Fox Troop and Lion Battery are pushing out to communities that have seen very little Coalition presence

during the five years of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"We're not just improving security in these villages," said Calvert. "We're also working to bring real economic development. Over the coming weeks and months, we hope to see measurable change in conditions. In fact, we are already seeing real change."

But change does not come without cost. In March, Sabre lost four troopers and an American interpreter. Capt. Torre Mallard, Sgt. Phillip Anderson, Sgt. Gregory Unruh, Spc. Donald Burkett and Albert Haroutounian gave all they could for their country and for their brothers in Sabre Squadron.

"There's no question that we're hitting the enemy in places where they hoped we wouldn't go, and they're certainly fighting back," remarked Calvert. "They're fighting back, but they can't stop us from completing our mission."

Baqouba Ambulance Company

*By Capt. Ken Scattergood
HSB, 2-12 FA*

In the last several months, medically trained Iraqi personnel have been lacking in and around Baqouba. Citizens in the area have had to rely heavily on Coalition forces to aid to their wounds and sicknesses.

For some, the distance to travel or frustrations with communication made service difficult to get. Though Coalition forces have done everything to aid the local citizens, their main objective has been to train and improve the local medical facilities to be able to provide the badly needed care to the population.

Recently, medical personnel from Able Company, 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment conducted a train-

ing day at their aid station for the Baqouba Ambulance Company. The purpose of the training was to assess and train the local ambulance company on basic patient care, improve their ability to work with the local population, and increase trust and confidence in their abilities as medically trained individuals.

The Baqouba Ambulance Company has had many issues in the past that have made their job difficult. Vehicles, generators, and medical equipment have been in disrepair or unserviceable. Basic medical supplies are hard to get as well as the funds to pay for them.

Coalition forces are working hand in hand with these civil servants of the community and the Iraqi government to correct these deficiencies. Coalition forces have come a long way in assisting the medical community now that Iraqi Police and Army forces have improved the security in the region. Though there are still dangerous parts of the city, most of Baqouba has seen a significant reduction in attacks on both Coalition and Iraqi forces.

As the security has improved, it is time for Coalition forces to turn their attention to the civil needs of the people. During the training event, participants were taught and practiced basic life saving techniques. They learned how to take simple vitals, how to apply a tourniquet, and how to properly package and transport a patient. The class went very well and the medical crews were very motivated to learn the material and eager to get hands on training. They were also glad to get some of the issues that they had to Coalition forces in a stress free environment.

Though this training was a simple gesture to better the Baqouba community, it was another step necessary to rebuild and establish basic services for the Iraqi people. With the knowledge the Baqouba Ambulance Company has gained, they will be able to lead the way in their community with medical service and support.



Soldiers build better living conditions in Iraq



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

Take an abandoned schoolhouse, add some beds, guard towers, recreation area and chow hall ... and what do you get? A combat outpost Soldiers operate to keep al-Qaeda in Iraq operatives from reentering a former terrorist stronghold near Zaginayah, Iraq.

Leaders from Company C, 2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment have made major improvements during the past three months for the morale and welfare of their Soldiers who live at the COP Zaginayah fulltime.

"In the early days we would rotate Soldiers to Warhorse so they could rest and refit. Since we have been pushing our operations stronger in the (Zaginayah) area, our Soldiers stay at the COP for much longer periods of time," said 1st Lt. Daniel Byrnside, fire support officer for Company C. "When that happened, we had to ensure that our Soldiers' morale was maintained."

The Soldiers of Company C, 2-23 Inf. and Airmen from the 725th Engineer Squadron from Balad, Iraq, worked for eight weeks straight to build a Moral, Welfare and Recreation facility that contains three TVs, a DVD player and two game consoles.

Along with watching DVDs, the COP recently installed a satellite to receive Armed Forces Network. The Soldiers also have access to five computers connected to the Internet and three phones to stay in contact with their families.

Before the additions were made to COP Zaginayah, Soldiers stationed there were only able to shower after returning to one of the FOBs in the area, sometimes not showering for up to a week and a half at a time.

"The showers and the working toilets are my favorite part of the COP," Byrnside said. "We have working showers just like on the FOB."

Along with the showers, a state of the art chow hall was also installed so the Soldiers did not have to buy their own food or rely solely on Meals Ready-to-Eat, pre-packaged meals ready for immediate consumption in the field.

"The biggest thing that I like is we are able to cook and provide for ourselves. The guys get a hot meal everyday," said 1st Sgt. Jonny Resseguie, the company's top noncommissioned officer. "They are good healthy meals, so the guys are able to keep a nutritional balance in their diet, and that

helps them out with performing their jobs well."

The Soldiers would not be able to do what they do without the Iraqi Police, which have a station next door to the COP and checkpoints along the roads surrounding the COP.

The Soldiers assist the IPs in various tasks including fire support and medical treatment when their checkpoints get attacked and providing them with materials to get the job done.

The IPs and Iraqi army soldiers ability to step up and take control of the areas they operate has helped lead to the recent success of operations in the Diyala River Valley.

COP Zaginayah is also credited with that success due to its location and amenities to help support the troops keeping the Breadbasket secured.

The northern DRV or Breadbasket is a region in Diyala province that was a former AQI hotspot until Operation Raider Harvest cleared the area in January.

"The success we have had in the DRV depends on our ability to support our company and the other forces in the area," Resseguie said.

The COP at Zaginayah helps us do just that, Resseguie concluded.



Soldiers of Company I, 3-2 SCR walk by a house that was used as a prison and torture chamber by al-Qaeda in Iraq in Himbus, Iraq, March 8. Coalition forces destroyed the house earlier this year during Operation Raider Harvest. Now within 100 meters of the rubble, there is an Iraqi army facility, an Iraqi Police checkpoint and two Sons of Iraq checkpoints.

BREADBASKET, From Page 7

As far as the Breadbasket has come in the last two months, it still has a ways to go. Kerosene rations have yet to be delivered, and irrigation for the crops remains an issue, as do many basic services.

“The hospitals were destroyed. We are without medicine,” explained Ameen. “We need the canals cleaned to get our agriculture up. The government has not helped us.”

Ameen went on to say that the residents of Himbus have had to pay twice the value for fuel on the black market because the government has yet to provide it, but he is optimistic that things will continue to improve.

“We hope to talk to the highest power from the province to get what we need,” he said.

3-2 SCR has several ongoing projects in the area to improve the situation including canal cleanups and working with the government in Muqdadiyah, the nearest urban center, to improve basic services and health care.

“We have seen a lot more stores and businesses opened,” Coffey said. “People have started to work in the rock quarries again, and the general atmosphere is very positive. We are starting to see that link between the towns and qadas and

Muqdadiyah be a lot more active. The water treatment plant in Little Barwana has been worked on, and it’s been worked on by the Iraqis, so its not just American money doing that. There is kerosene distribution in Muqdadiyah. The muktaras have to go to Muqdadiyah and demand that kerosene get delivered. They do not need American help anymore to make that stuff happen.”

And while violence has dropped considerably in the last two months throughout the Breadbasket, a recent attack was a grim reminder that this is still a war zone. On March 7, three 3-2 Soldiers were wounded when their vehicle hit an improvised explosive device. An IP checkpoint was also destroyed in the attack.

AQI have yet to be completely eradicated from the Breadbasket, but their days appear numbered, and they have certainly lost the support of the local populace.

“I will use all my power as a CLC to fight all the terrorists from this town,” concluded Mahmood, the SoI leader in Abu Musa.

Operation Raider Harvest officially concluded April 1, but there is currently no plan to remove 3-2 SCR from the Breadbasket.



Soldier Snap shots

To submit your own Soldier Snap Shots e-mail The Desert Raider editor at russell.bassett@4bct2id.army.mil. Include full name of the photographer, rank and contact information, as well as a description of the photo, to include full names of the people in it, and the date it was taken.

Soldiers of the 38th Engineer Company conduct a controlled detonation of a found improvised explosive device (background), dig up command wire (left), and search for an IED trigger man (below) during Operation Fox Hunting in Diyala province Feb. 28-29.

Photos by Sgt. 1st Class Wade Lawson



Easy Sudoku

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

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

by Chris Okasaki, Department of EE&CS, USMA

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

Medium Sudoku

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

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

by Chris Okasaki, Department of EE&CS, USMA

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

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

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

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

Hard Sudoku

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

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

by Chris Okasaki, Department of EE&CS, USMA

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

Every Soldier has a story, why isn't it being told?

By Spc. Matthew Mikolas
115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Ok, networks, I understand that you need to report on 'real news.' I'm sorry if the ongoing progress in Diyala is something that might move Lindsay Lohan's newest rehab attempt to the third story on the telecast.

Meanwhile, families from a small town called Durah, who moved out of their homes eleven months ago because of the terrorist threat, recently moved back in because of the improved security situation. But you don't see stories like that on the news. All you hear about in Iraq is the death toll, and the political battle to end the war over here. Here is a simulated newscast to show what I mean:

"Good evening. Thank you for tuning into NMN, the Narrow-Minded News, for the involuntarily uninformed

everywhere. I'm Plenty O'Toole. Leading off tonight, more Americans died in Baghdad today. In other news, Paris Hilton, reportedly drunk, flashed reporters while driving to her weekly Alcoholics Anonymous meeting. We now go to Hilton friend Britney Spears for a comment.

"I don't see why you guys make such a big deal about it. At least she's off the crack now; give a girl some credit."

"And finally, before the commercials, here's a breaking news story. A new development is just in on the Anna Nicole Smith death. New reports say she consumed 8 pills instead of the 7 originally reported."

What's sad is many of you may be nodding your heads in agreement, knowing that something similar to this newscast could actually happen. And it's not like the networks don't get reports on everything that's happen-

ing out here. Many of you have had me come out with you on missions, whether it's clearing villages, hosting Co-operative Medical Engagements, dropping off school supplies, or the tons of other things we do out here every day. And I promise you that every time I go on a mission, I distribute my video to every media outlet that has satellite capabilities, which is to say most of them.

Wouldn't it be nice for all the people back at home to know what it is we all do out here? All the good we're doing for the Iraqi people?

If the news would show all the great things our Soldiers are doing out here to improve Iraq, maybe we could change people's perception about the war and the U.S. Soldiers fighting in it.

Oh, I'm sorry; I guess the reasons for Anna Nicole Smith's death were much more important. My mistake.



SOUNDOFF!

What are you looking forward to about home?



"Seeing my wife and kids."

Sgt. 1st Class
Augustin Galicia

Battle NCO
2-12 FA



"Soderstock, my home-coming party. Everyone is invited."

Spc. Paul Sodergren

Sniper,
Co. A, 1-38th Inf.



"Spending time with my significant other and drinking beer."

Capt. Eric McMillan

Company Commander
HHC, 2-23 Inf.



"Being with my family and seeing my kids."

Staff Sgt. Ray Ong

HQ Plt. Sgt.
Co. F, 52nd Inf.

F A L L E N RAIDERS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SGT Corey Spates
Feb. 10, 2008
Trp. G, 2-3 ACR

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

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

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

CPL Chad Groepper
Feb. 17, 2008
HHC, 2-23 IN

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

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

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

CPL Luke Runyan
Feb. 17, 2008
HHC, 2-23 IN

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

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

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

CPL Jose Paniagua
March 7, 2008
Co. C, 4-9 IN

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

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

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

Capt. Torre Mallard
March 10, 2008
Troop F, 2-3 ACR

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

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

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

Sgt. Phillip Anderson
March 10, 2008
Troop F, 2-3 ACR

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

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

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

Spc. Donald Burkett
March 10, 2008
Troop F, 2-3 ACR

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

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

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

Sgt. Gregory Unruh
March 17, 2008
How. Bat., 2-3 ACR



The Final Shot



Above: Soldiers from Company A, 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment, enter a house during Operation Able Fortress in Chibernet, Iraq, March 5. The Soldiers cleared the village looking for weapons and suicide vests.

Left: Soldiers from Company A, 4-9 Inf. provide security for Soldiers crossing a canal in Chibernet, Iraq, March 5.

Soldiers from
Company A, 4-9 Inf.
prepare to clear a
house in Chibernet,
Iraq, March 5 dur-
ing Operation Able
Fortress.

Photos by Spc. Kirby Rider

