

Vanguard Point



November - December
2007

Thunder in
the desert:
Blackhearts
take on Khidr
al-Qaeda



Christmas in Iraq - MP working dogs - UAVs - Scouts out!

Vanguard BCT rings in the holidays

Christmas Cheer ————— Page 6

Scouts hunt enemy mortar team in Shaka IV

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Troopers push against al-Qaeda remnants

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UAVs provide eye in the sky for Kalsu units

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Do you have a letter to the editor, photo or story to send in? Send it to tami.hillis@4bct3id.army.mil.

Please include your full name and rank. If you send a photo, include what's going on in the photo, full names of people, rank, units and date.

*Pfc. Matthew Mitchell, a gunner with HHC, 3-7th Infantry, pulls security during a patrol in Jurf as Sahkr, Nov. 20. See story on Page 21.
(Photo by Spc. Amanda McBride)*



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On the cover:

Pfc. Leal Potter, a mortarman with HHC, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry, launches a 120 mm round at a target in the desert west of Iskandariyah during Operation Dragoon, Dec. 15, 2007. See story on Page 12. (Photo by Sgt. Ben Brody)





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Looking forward to the future

Although the Vanguard Task Force has not been operating on our current deployment here in Iraq long, we already have much to be proud of as we look back at our short history so far here in the Babil Province.

As I look through the pages of this, the latest issue of the Vanguard Point (and our first issue since we began our current deployment) I find myself reflecting on all that has happened in such a short amount of time.

I think of all the amazing feats our incredible Soldiers have accomplished and I also think of how much each has given in support of their dedication to the mission.

First and foremost, I think of those we have lost and their loved ones at home, including Sgt. Samuel Kelsey of Company E., 3-7 Infantry, who was killed in action while fighting with his fellow Soldiers to establish the new patrol base in Khidr for which he was named.

We will forever keep Sgt. Kelsey's memory in our hearts and we will honor his sacrifice each day by staying focused as we continue our mission here to assist the Iraqi Security Forces, community leaders and everyday citizens to establish a secure environment in which to live, flourish and provide for their families.

While we have cause to honor and reflect as we look back, we also have cause to feel proud, to feel satisfaction in what we have accomplished and to even smile and laugh as we remember our more relaxed times and the activities we have shared with our friends here, our Vanguard Family, especially over the holidays.

Operation Marne Roundup, which put the Vanguard Task Force at the forefront of the Marne Division's effort to clear an al-Qaeda stronghold and establish a new patrol base, was a tremendous success to which every Vanguard Soldier contributed.

In clearing the area of al-Qaeda along with our Iraqi Army partners, we not only dealt a swift blow to our enemies, we helped the

Iraqis to take back one of their own communities so that they can rebuild and begin establishing a new and better life in the Khidr area.

Since we completed that mission and began establishing Patrol Base Kelsey, families have returned to homes that were left empty and a community has begun to rise up in a place that not long ago, was an enclave for terrorists.

This mission was successful due to the tremendous efforts and teamwork of Soldiers from each of the units in the Vanguard Task Force.

Even through all the hard work we have done, and the amazing strides we have made to make AO Vanguard safer and more prosperous, we also have not forgotten to take time out for ourselves, to enjoy one another's

company, and also to take some time to enjoy the holidays as much as possible.

Whether it was a Christmas tree lighting ceremony, recording holiday video messages for our loved ones, attending religious services or even participating in a fun-run on

Christmas Day, Vanguard Soldiers marked the holidays together, and even though we all missed our Families and loved ones, we made the best of the holidays together and remembered to be grateful for what we have.

As we enter a new year and continue our mission, we face many challenges, but together we will persevere and continue to make greater strides together. Stay focused on the mission and look out for one another.



Col. Thomas James

"First and foremost, I think of those we have lost and their loved ones at home"

-Col. Thomas James

Vanguard!

Rock of the Marne!

Vanguard 7 pleased with start

Vanguard Team, as we approach the successful completion of our first 100 days of combat operations, I would like to extend my gratitude and appreciation to all our great Soldiers, Airmen and leaders for continuing to Soldier on!

Through your hard work, professionalism and compassion, you have brought hope, security and stability to the Iraqi populace in our sector of MND-C.

Historically considered as the most dangerous and challenging period of any deployment, we have weathered the first few months of cold, rain and yes, mud; all in all your performance has been nothing short of exemplary!

I commend you and salute you for exceeding our Leadership's expectations, for meeting our commander's intent and for continuing to remain at the tip of the spear by your example, actions and sincerity.

As I conduct my battlefield circulation throughout the Vanguard Operational Environment, I continue to be impressed with the caliber of Soldiers who we have in today's fight.

Soldiers performing their everyday missions including maintaining security, ensuring force protection and aggressively patrolling in order to identify, capture or kill the enemy.

Uniquely, in addition, we have hundreds of multi-talented warriors displaying their skills by building, restoring, painting, re-wiring and establishing life support and morale building activities in their respective Patrol Bases, Joint Security Sites and Company Outposts.

Everywhere I go, I get the same impression and attitude from every Vanguard Soldier; a competent, motivated professional, intent on getting the job done!

As we progress into the second 100 day period of combat I ask everyone, but in particular our leaders, to continue to remain vigilant, deliberate and cautious.

As I patrol throughout our OE, it is becoming

evidently clear that this period will be especially challenging and risky for our leaders, more so than our Soldiers.

Think about the degree of experience and attitude that our Soldiers have now that they have been on the ground for three months.

They are becoming comfortable with their surroundings, their routes and their local national contacts.

Soldiers have closer relationships with their Iraqi Army counterparts, as well as their interpreters?

Have we become so situation ally relaxed in our Patrol Bases, and JSS's that we allow Soldiers to move around without weapons, not fully account for sensitive items, or being somewhat derelict in performing their PCCs and PCIs, while neglecting loadplans in their vehicles?

I ask everyone in the Brigade to step back and reflect on the standards we upheld when we first arrived in country 100 days ago, and compare them to present measures!

We must not allow ourselves to lose the initiative; we must maintain our degree of security and force protection, as well as safety, before we lose a Soldier negligently!

I need all our leaders to

step up to the plate and get it done, now!

The Vanguard Brigade has always prided itself in the high-level of discipline and standards our Soldiers exemplify daily, while constantly overwatched by our great commissioned and noncommissioned officers!

Our challenge for this next period will be to maintain and sustain our awareness by remembering that there is still an enemy out there; an enemy who is now as familiar with us as we are with him!

Finally, to our tremendous home front, at Forts Stewart and Campbell, this mission is not accomplished without your love, your support and your sacrifice; for many their second or third time!

Please continue to have the faith that we will win, and we will all come home! Continue the great work, Vanguard Out Front!



Command Sgt. Maj. Louis Torres

"We must not allow ourselves to lose the initiative ... before we lose a Soldier negligently!"

-Command Sgt. Maj. Louis Torres

Xmas in Vanguard Country

Story by Spc. Amanda McBride

FOB KALSU, Iraq - The holiday sprit was alive and thriving with the Soldiers in the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, on FOB Kalsu Dec. 25.

Although this day marked the 4th BCT's first Christmas in Iraq, Vanguard Soldiers celebrated the holiday the entire day.

The day kicked off with Soldiers throughout the brigade participating in a 10K Jingle Bell Run. The run awarded males' and females' first, second and third place winners with medals for the fastest time in both categories.

Col. Thomas James, 4th BCT commander, and Command Sgt. Maj. Louis Torres, 4th BCT command sergeant major, traveled to Patrol Base Kelsey, PB Jurf as Sakhr, Joint Security Station Iskan, PB Copper, and JSS 18 to wish the troops there a Merry Christmas and thank them for their service.

For both lunch and dinner, Soldiers were offered Christmas meals to celebrate the holiday. Prime rib was a big part of the menu, even at tiny outposts like JSS 18.

Staff Sgt. Virgil Johnson and Spc. Shawn Nanney, both of Company G, 703rd Brigade Support Battalion, 4th BCT, heaped stuffing and prime rib onto Soldiers' cardboard trays at JSS 18, only a stone's throw from a main highway out of Iskandariyah.

During the meals at the Kalsu dining facility, Soldiers playing Santa and his little helpers greeted the Soldiers and passed out candy canes.



Spc. Lucas Hernandez, of 26th FSB, 2nd BCT, greets Soldiers entering the FOB Kalsu dining facility with holiday cheer on Christmas Eve. (Photo by Sgt. Ben Brody)

(Right) Spc. Michael Bogner, with Co. G, 703rd BSB, 4th BCT, comes in first place at Kalsu's 10K Jingle Bell Run. Bogner finished in 39 minutes, 42 seconds. (Photo by Spc. Amanda McBride)



Col. Thomas James, the 4th BCT commander, burning a Christmas candle. (Photo by Sgt. Ben Brody)



(Left) Spc. Shawn Nanney, a cook with Co. G, 703rd BSB, 4th BCT, serves up prime rib, mashed potatoes and stuffing for Christmas lunch at Joint Security Station 18, near Iskandariyah. (Photo by Sgt. Ben Brody)



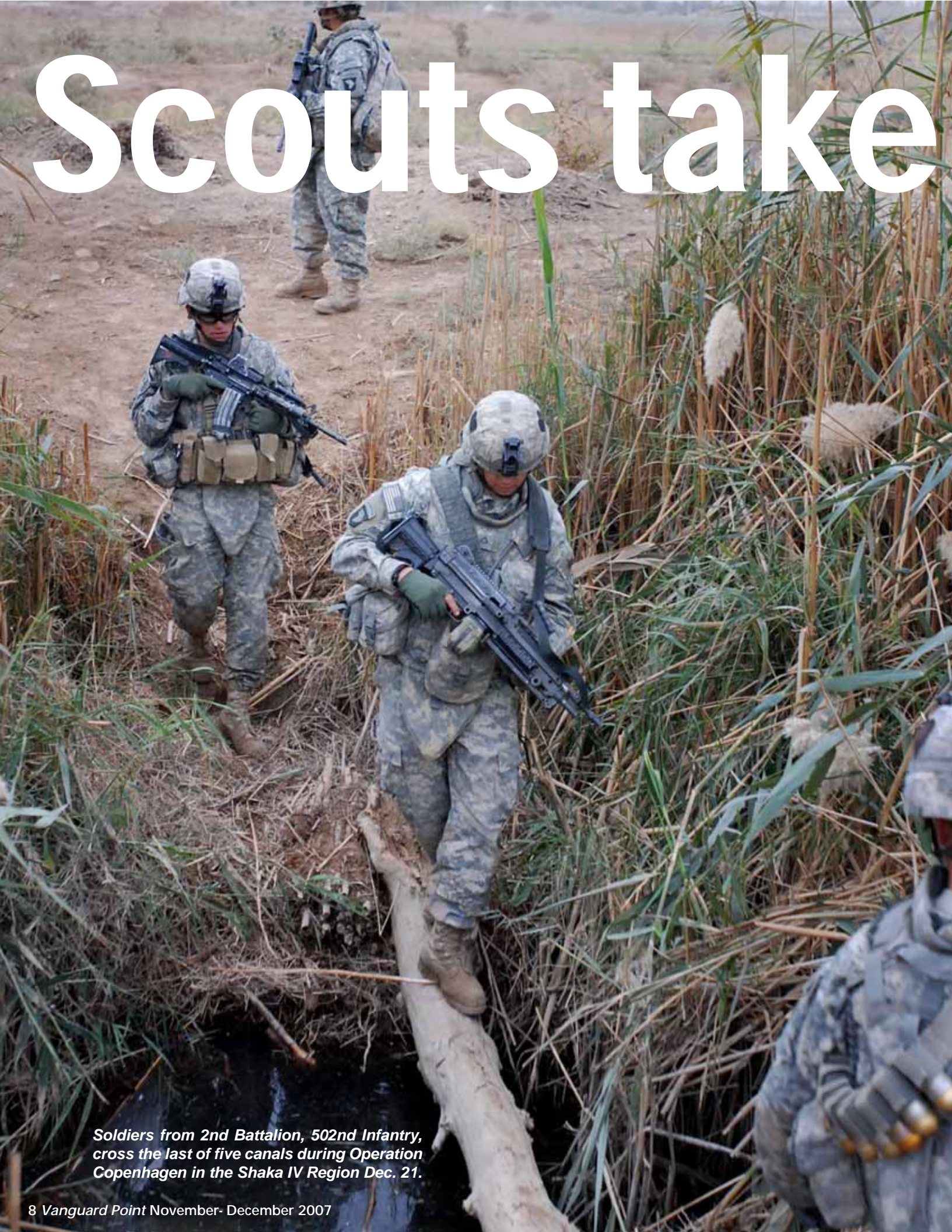
BCT commander, wishes a Merry trash at Patrol Base Jurf as Sakhr.



Chaplain (Maj.) Albert Downing, 4th BCT's chaplain, holds a brief Christmas service for 2-502nd Inf. Soldiers at Patrol Base Copper. (Photo by Sgt. Ben Brody)



On Christmas Day at Patrol Base Copper, 1st Sgt. Mark Beriault of Co. B, 2-502nd Inf., scans his perimeter with a .50-caliber machine gun. (Photo by Sgt. Ben Brody)



Scouts take

Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry, cross the last of five canals during Operation Copenhagen in the Shaka IV Region Dec. 21.

the hill

Story and photos
by Spc. Amanda
McBride

Widowmaker troops hunt insurgent mortar team

FOB KALSU, Iraq - Soldiers from Companies C and D, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry, conducted a daytime foot patrol during Operation Copenhagen in the Shaka IV Region Dec. 21.

The scouts, attached to 4th Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, aimed to determine if anti-Iraqi forces were using a hill in the area to hide weapons and launch mortars at Coalition Forces and local citizens.

"Our primary mission was to conduct a foot patrol to a hilltop that has been known to be used by AIF as a place for shooting indirect fire," said Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Thornhill, the scout platoon sergeant, with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2-502nd Inf.

"Our job was to go out there and determine where exactly they are shooting the mortar from and locate any possible weapon caches that might be in the vicinity of the hilltop," Thornhill said.

The Soldiers from the 2-502nd Inf. have

been tracking the AIF in the area with daily presence.

"We use radar to detect when mortars are being fired and that radar is what pinpointed the point of origin," Thornhill said. "Because of that data we're able to plan our operation."

The Scouts maneuvered through the rugged terrain by using the farmers' fields and canals to get to the hilltop.

"We tried to avoid the road as much as possible to prevent their use of (improvised explosive devices)," Thornhill said. "If we were on the roads, we tried to stay down on the low areas near the canals."

During the patrol, the Soldiers also cleared houses to provide cover and to check for any recent enemy activity.

"While on patrol, we were able to locate an al-Qaeda safe house used for training," said

Continued on next page



Scouts, from Co. C, pull security before searching a nearby hilltop for weapons caches Dec 21.



Pvt. Andrew Runyun, Co. C, blows off a lock on an abandoned car with a shotgun Dec. 21.

"We tried to avoid the road to prevent their

From previous page

1st Lt. Dan Stephens, Scouts platoon leader, HHC, 2-502nd Inf.

Though the patrol did not find any caches, the companies were glad to find out that information.

"By not finding any weapon caches in and around the hilltop, we were able to determine that the enemy is using other means to bring ammunition to the hilltop to use it for indirect fire," Thornhill said.

Pfc. Christopher Rowlands, with HHC, 2-502nd Inf. said he believed the mission was a success because the company was able to find where the AIF were using mortars and to put a

stop to more weapons being moved onto the hilltop.

"Our patrols are working because when we first came here and first started conducting patrols, the citizens were kind of trapped between us and the AIF," Thornhill said. "But having been here for a few months it's allowed the local citizen to feel a little safer."

The 2-502nd Inf. is based out of Fort Campbell, Ky., and has been in Iraq since the end of October.





Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Thornhill, platoon sergeant with HHC, 2-502nd Inf., walks his team along a canal to avoid possible bombs on the nearby road.

use of IEDs"





Soldiers from 725th EOD Co., out of Fort Drum, N.Y., search a cemetery west of Iskandariyah for weapons caches during Operation Dragoon, Dec. 18. Before the Soldiers came through, Sons of Iraq, marked off several cache sites and two car bombs with orange tape.

Taking back Khidr

Story and photos by Sgt. Ben Brody

ISKANDARIYAH, Iraq - In a major drive to root out al-Qaeda forces west of Iskandariyah, Soldiers wrested the Khidr area from insurgent control during Operation Dragoon, which took place from Dec. 15 to 21.

Working in conjunction with Sons of Iraq, Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry, who are attached to 4th Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, cleared roads of improvised explosive devices and discovered numerous weapons caches in a rural cemetery.

In the early morning of Dec. 15, Soldiers

from 2-502nd Inf. and supporting units drove several convoys through Iskandariyah out into the desert west of the city to set up a temporary patrol base at Objective Atlanta.

On the edge of town, Iraqi Soldiers peered warily into the desolated west as the great convoy rumbled past.

The road west is heavily scarred, even by Iraq's standards. What at first appears to be sprawling briars resolves into heaps of twisted scrap iron as far as the eye can see. Skeletons of once-grand buildings rise from a sea of rub-

ble. Trucks lie scattered and burned.

The vehicles circled around Objective Atlanta, an unremarkable spot in the desert in view of the sprawling Al Qaeda weapons depot where 380 tons of conventional munitions were looted shortly after the 2003 invasion.

Mortarmen from Company C and Headquarters and Headquarters Company immediately set up their 120 mm gun and calibrated the sights by firing six rounds into the trackless wastes.

"The first thing we do is get the gun registered, so we're able to respond quickly to calls for fire," said Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Dorsey, senior fire support NCO for 2-502nd Inf.

Dorsey, from Kokomo, Ind., watched the rounds fall through range-finding binoculars that help him gauge the firers' accuracy.

The next day, while clearing buildings around the weapons depot, one of the humvees struck a small IED that shredded a tire and the radiator and left the passengers' ears ringing, but did little other damage.

"We followed this path that led up to

Continued on next page

Mortarmen with 2-502nd Inf., launch a 120 mm round at a target in the desert west of Iskandariyah Dec. 15.



The road west is heavily scarred, even by Iraq's standards



Soldiers pass an IED (above) marked and disabled by Sol patrols.

Sgt. Robert Fischer (left), a senior line medic, and Maj. Colin Edgerton, battalion surgeon, question Pfc. David Patterson minutes after his vehicle was struck by an IED west of Iskandariyah, Iraq Dec. 16. The questions are designed to detect signs of mild traumatic brain injury, which is caused by the intense pressure created in explosions. All three Soldiers are assigned to 2-502nd Infantry.

the building - suddenly there was a loud boom and the truck was filled with black smoke," said Pfc. David Patterson, who was in the vehicle when it was hit. "I was a little dazed for a minute there."

"The next thing I heard was the platoon sergeant asking if everyone was ok," said Patterson, who is from Chicago.

One of the other humvees towed the damaged vehicle back into Atlanta, where the battalion trauma team checked out the Soldiers.

"There is a battery of questions that we ask anyone who's been near an explosion, because of the risk of mild traumatic brain injury," said Sgt. Robert Fischer, the senior line medic for Co. C, 2-502nd Inf. "We ask them if they lost consciousness, if they're confused, if they have any pain - things like that. There's a more comprehensive memory test that we can do at the aid station back at FOB Kalsu."

Fischer, from Watertown, Wisc., documented the incident for each of the five Soldiers' medical records as the battalion surgeon, Maj. Colin Edgerton, examined them further.

"These guys are all going to do great - there are no signs of concussive injury to worry about, like ruptured eardrums," said Edgerton, who is from Gloucester,

Mass.

The afternoon of Dec. 17, Soldiers pushed west toward the Euphrates River, but the lead vehicle in the patrol struck an IED that injured all five occupants, two with shrapnel wounds. A MEDEVAC helicopter quickly ferried the five to the Combat Support Hospital in Baghdad.

The patrol stayed with the destroyed humvee through the night, and set up a security perimeter in a wide part of the dirt road. A wrecker towed the humvee away in the night, while gunners shivered in their turrets, peering out into the cold dark listening to the insane laughter of a hundred hungry jackals. Whizzing overhead, U.S. artillery shells crashed steadily on targets to the west.

In the morning, a group of about 50 Sols, heavily armed and wearing Army-issued reflective belts, approached to begin the mission.

Sols are groups of former Sunni insurgents recruited by tribal leaders and salaried by U.S. forces to fight against the foreign-led al-Qaeda network.

Capt. Raub Nash, the Co. C commander and Lt. Col. Michael Getchell, the 2-502nd Inf. commander, met with the Sol leadership and hammered out a plan for the day. The Sols agreed to clear the



Soldiers from 725th EOD Co. work to identify dozens of old aviation bombs they dug out of the desert west of Iskandariyah Dec. 18. The bombs had been picked clean of explosives years ago.

The platoon leader of an explosive ordnance disposal escort team, 1st Lt. Gavin Murphy reports the day's haul to battalion headquarters: four IEDs found, three jugs of homemade explosive, a car rigged with a bomb, and a myriad of artillery and mortar rounds. Many of the items were reported to the EOD team by concerned local citizens near Khidr, Dec. 18.



western route of IEDs and search an old cemetery to the north for weapons caches.

In all, the SoIs dug four IEDs out of the road, all of them similar to the one that destroyed the humvee the day before. In the cemetery they found a small assortment of artillery rounds and raw explosives, as well as two car bombs.

One black sedan simply had detonation cord running from the trunk, a dead giveaway that something was amiss, but the other was equipped with the ultimate anti-theft device - a pressure sensor hidden behind the tire and wired to three five-gallon jugs of homemade explosive.

The SoIs disabled the pressure plate, hotwired the pickup truck and drove it.

Soldiers from 725th Explosive Ordnance Disposal Co., from Fort Drum, N.Y., set charges on the sedan and confirmed their suspicions that the trunk carried a bomb. An explosion much more powerful than the

EOD team's C-4 bricks rocked the courtyard where the car was found, sending splinters of the trunk high in the air.

The other munitions were piled up and destroyed in the same fashion.

To help bring some security to this area near the Euphrates River, known as the Fish Farms Region, Soldiers from 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry, 4th BCT, 3rd Inf. Div., began construction on a new patrol base in Khidr.

Khidr is a small village that has been nearly deserted for more than a year. Withered dates lie in heaps under the palms, evidence that no one has been around to harvest them since August.

The patrol base is intended to serve as a launching point for security operations, with the goal of eventually recruiting local Iraqi Police Force capable of securing Khidr and the fish farms without U.S. assistance.

**Gunners peered into the dark, listening
to the insane laughter of a hundred hungry jackals.**

A Shadow 200 RQ-7B unmanned aerial vehicle lands after completing a flight to support the troops outside FOB Kalsu Dec. 19.



an EYE in the SKY

UAVs keep Soldiers safer on the battlefield

Story and photos by Spc. Amanda McBride

FOB KALSU, Iraq - When people think of aircraft flown in Iraq, many imagine fighter jets, Chinooks and Black Hawks. Many seem to forget about another smaller, but equally important aircraft in use today.

Shadow 200 RQ-7B unmanned aerial vehicles are flown over the skies of the 4th Brigade Combat Team, area of operations to provide safety for the Soldier on the ground.

Flown by the UAV Soldiers of the 4th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 3rd Infantry Division, the Shadow is a small and lightweight aircraft, coming in at a little over 11 feet, with a gasoline engine that can run for about four hours.

"Our mission while in Iraq is to provide the best detailed real-time footage to the troops on the ground," said Sgt. Christopher Herrmann, standardization operator, with Company A, 4-3 BSTB. "So as to help them in their mission; whether it's a cordon, raid or patrol on the streets of Baghdad."

Since the brigade has been in Iraq, the UAV Soldiers have accumulated more than 700 hours in flight time, Herrmann said.

The UAVs on Kalsu, commonly used for route reconnaissance, raid overwatch and searches, launch continuously to support the ground units outside of the base.

Herrmann, from Hinesville, Ga., said the UAV personnel are the eyes for the troops when they cannot see something.

"We use the UAVs for anything the battle captain wishes to look at on the ground," Herrmann said.

Although some may think it is easy to fly, the biggest mistake made while flying the Shadows is not knowing its limitations, Herrmann said.

"Anyone can fly these, but it takes someone who understands the system and is knowledgeable to fly these to their fullest capabilities," Herrmann said.

After every flight that a Shadow goes on, the Soldiers inspect it so it will be ready for its next flight.

"After it comes in, we conduct a PMD, a preventive maintenance daily," said Spc. Christine Ahhing, with the 4-3 BSTB.

"We make sure nothing is torn, broken or not functional."

Flying the UAVs is important because there is no threat to human life, Herrmann said.

"We give (the Soldiers on the ground) a better understanding of what's in where they are," Herrmann said. "We give them eyes where theirs cannot see."



Spc. Christine Ahhing, with Co. A, 4-3 BSTB, works on a Shadow at FOB Kalsu Dec. 21.

"Anyone can fly these, but it takes someone who understands the system and is knowledgeable to fly (the Shadows) to their fullest capabilities."

-Sgt. Christopher Herrmann



Sgt. Cliff Nji, with Co. A, 4-3 BSTB, conducts a preventive maintenance daily Dec. 21 after a Shadow 200 RQ-7B unmanned aerial vehicle landed. PMD is performed after every flight to check if the aircraft was damaged during its flight and to prepare it for its next mission.

Use the five C's to secure an IED site.

- Confirm** : the device
- Clear** : the area
- Call** : EOD
- Cordon** : the perimeter
- Control** : site access



IEDs KILL



Sgt. Steven Ramil, a military police Soldier attached to 4th Brigade Combat Team, talks to Marco, a military working dog, during Operation Copenhagen in Shaka IV, Dec. 21.

LOYALTY

Story and photos by Spc. Amanda McBride

Working dogs, MPs watch out for one another

FOB KALSU, Iraq - With their strong sense of smell and their immeasurable loyalty, the highly trained military working dogs in the 4th Brigade Combat Team, are proving to be essential in the fight against terrorism.

Considered as just another Soldier, MWDs first entered the United States Armed services in March of 1942. Today, the dogs are still providing support to the troops on the battlefield.

To search something that would take an entire company two hours, a single dog could do in less time, said Staff Sgt.

Charles Graves, a dog handler assigned with 241st Military Police Detachment, based at Fort Meade, Md.

"By using the dogs, you are leaving your shooters to other aspects of the mission, rather than having them going out to start a search capacity," Graves said.

Knowing the commands taught by the dog handler, the MWDs search for improvised explosive devices, weapons caches and other devices meant to harm Coalition Forces and local citizens.

"They're a good deterrent for

any terrorist activity," Graves said. "They see the dogs out and know that (the dogs) will see items humans won't necessarily find on the first search or even with an in-depth search."

While deployed in support of the war against terrorism, the dogs serve a year-long tour.

"Right now, we are the only service doing 12 months with the dogs," said Sgt. Steven Ramil, a dog handler attached to 4th BCT.

When not on missions, the dogs continue training daily to improve on the skills they already have.

"The dogs go through obedience, detection and protection training," Graves said. "Patrol dogs also go through aggression training."

Graves said that even though the dogs are trained to search and find items that could hurt fellow Soldiers, they are also a big morale booster.

"When we go out on some missions where the guys have been out in the field for three weeks with no hot water or hot chow, they will just brighten up when they see the dogs," Graves said.

While deployed, the MWDs solely depend upon their handler to take care of them.

"The handler is responsible for everything dealing with the dog," Graves said. "The dog is like your child; you feed him, clean up after him and take care of him."

The handler and dog teams go out on missions knowing that both have each other's backs, said Graves.

"There is a never-ending loyalty with these dogs," Graves said. "They would save my life and I would save theirs."

"The dogs are a big morale booster" -Staff Sgt. Charles Graves



Odi, a military working dog stationed at FOB Kalsu, finds a demonstration hand grenade during training Dec. 25. Odi is an English labrador retriever.



Sgt. Nicholas Ramirez, assigned to HHC, 4th BCT, runs away from Marco during a simulated search Dec. 25. Marco, a Belgian malinois, latched onto Ramirez's bite-proof armor and wrestled him to the ground.

Open up and say "ahhh..."

Dental clinic keeps Soldiers' smiles bright

Story and photo
by Spc. Amanda McBride

FOB KALSU, Iraq - At the center of FOB Kalsu's sprawl of tents and buildings, one lonely chair awaits the Soldier with a toothache.

A closer look at the 4th Brigade Combat Team dental clinic, reveals that although deployed, the clinic has most capabilities available back in the United States.

Although other FOBs in Iraq may have bigger clinics, the clinic on Kalsu offers the same kind of care.

"For the most part, we repair broken fillings, offer fillings and have X-ray capabilities," said Capt. Michelle Sarno, 4th BCT dental surgeon.

Sarno, from San Diego, said the dental clinic usually sees people with only really bad toothaches that cause them pain or people who have had previous procedures done.

"It's harder for Soldiers to take care of themselves being out here," Sarno said.

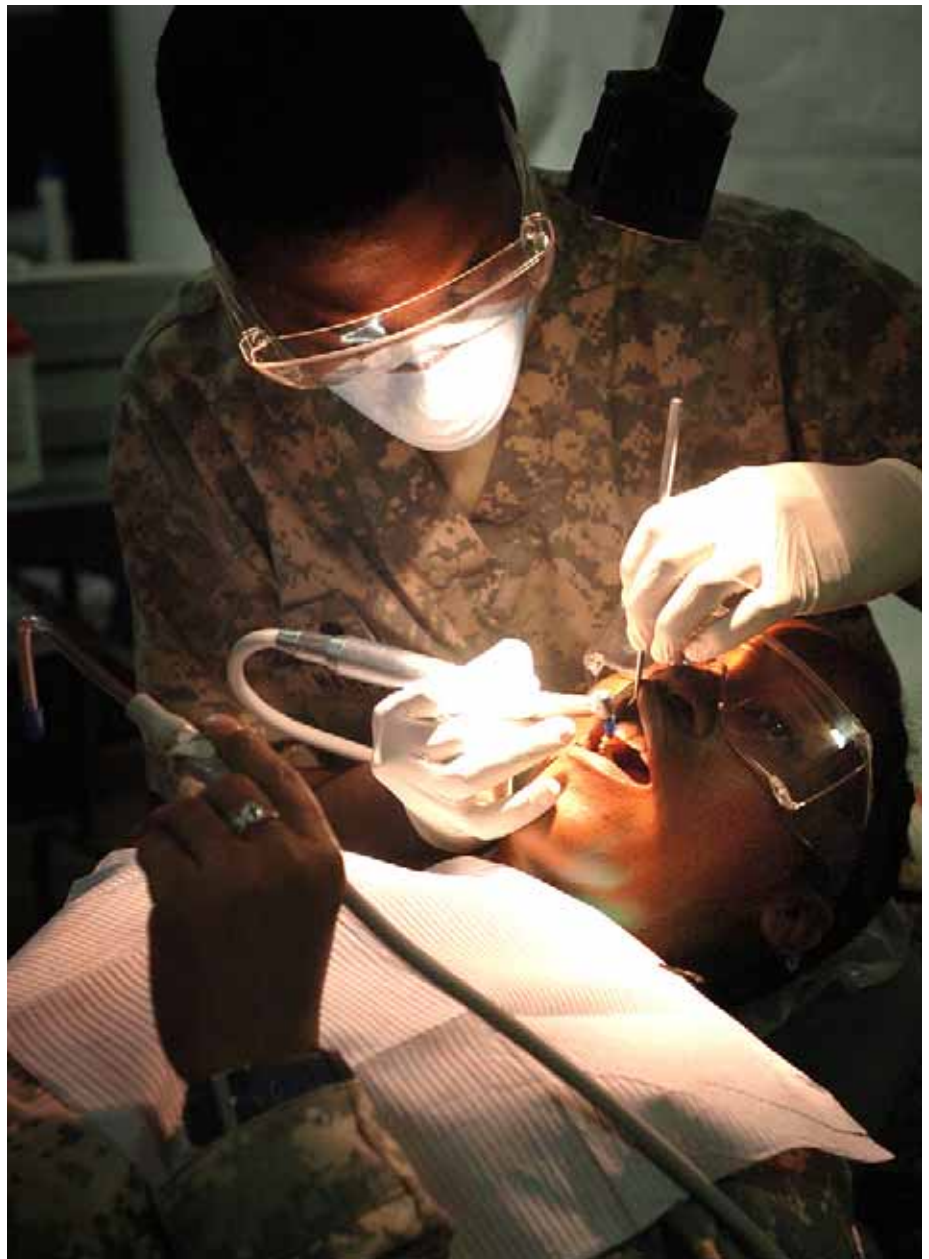
After being open for more than a month, the dental clinic has seen about 150 patients; averaging around five to eight patients a day.

"We treat Soldiers and civilian contractors," Sarno said. "We also occasionally treat Iraqi detainees when dental care is needed."

The clinic offers many different procedures but still has a few setbacks due to being in a combat zone.

"Only having one procedure chair does limit the number of patients we can see on one day," Sarno said. "But, like every group before us, we hope to improve the clinic."

For many Soldiers, this clinic is the only place to get any dental care while deployed.



Spc. Cynthia Hawkins, assigned to 461st Postal Company, receives a periodontal cleaning from Spc. Bernard Harper Jr., assigned to Co. C, 703rd BSB, 4th BCT, at the Kalsu Dental Clinic Dec. 13. Harper, from Brunswick, Ga., said that periodontal cleanings below the gums help prevent bone decay.

Spc. Cynthia Hawkins, assigned to the 461st Postal Company, 15th Personnel Service Battalion, said the service at the clinic made her comfortable about getting her cleaning.

"I got the feeling that they were very patient when I had my procedure, Hawkins said. "They took their time and didn't rush."

Throughout the deployment there will always be a Soldier who needs dental work.

Sarno said if Soldiers were to brush their teeth at least twice a day and floss their teeth at least once a day they would prevent many of the common dental hygiene problems.

"Our mission while here is to treat dental injuries and to get Soldiers back to their jobs," Sarno said.



On patrol in Jurf

A Soldier from 3-7th Inf. patrols a market in Jurf as Sakhr, bustling with activity since the fall of local al-Qaeda.

Story and photo by Spc. Amanda McBride

If you would have looked down the streets six months ago, you would not have seen much on the roads of Jurf as Sakhr.

Looking down its streets Nov. 20, all the changes that the city has been going through the last few months are evident.

The people of Jurf as Sakhr held a festival to welcome the transition from the 1st Battalion, 501st Airborne Infantry, to 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry, 4th Brigade Combat Team.

The festival allowed the people of Jurf as Sakhr and the new leadership to dine together and discuss how the city will continue to grow.

"Today's events showed the newfound security of the city," said Capt. Henry Moltz, com-

mander of Co. A, 1-501st Inf.

Throughout the first part of 1-501st Inf.'s tour of the area, the roads throughout the city were violent and dangerous for Soldiers, Iraqi Police and the Iraqi Army.

"Last year we averaged one attack per day; al Qaeda and other extremists ruled the area," Moltz said.

Prior to the festival, the new leadership walked through the town to see the transformation that the city has gone undergone since 1-501st Inf.

During their tour, the 3-7th Inf. leadership saw the new school and the new shops in the city, said Moltz.

Throughout the festival in the new marketplace, the city was given a monument to the Iraqi men and women who sacrificed their life for the security of their city.

The city was also presented an ambulance for its clinic, so that the clinic will be better

able to care for the people.

Previously, Sunnis were the only ones ruling over the city. Now both Sunnis and Shiites are coming together to discuss how the city will grow.

"During today's event, one-third of those who showed up were Shiite," said Moltz. "This is significant because it's showing that Shiites are being recognized in a Sunni community."

Despite the fact that the area was full of insurgents and violence, the concerned citizens came together for a way to end the violence.

"The people were looking for a way out of the violence," said Moltz. "The population has pushed the insurgents out."

"Today's mood is positive; it's filled with hope," said Moltz. "It gives hope that the next unit will be just as successful for the local government and for the long term for Iraq."

Vanguard takes over Iskandariyah

Story and photos

by Spc. Amanda McBride

FOB KALSU, Iraq - The 4th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, from Fort Richardson, Alaska, officially handed over operations of the Forward Operating Base Kalsu, and its surrounding areas to the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division in a transfer of authority ceremony held at the 4th BCT courtyard Dec. 1.

The paratroopers from the 4th BCT (Abn.), 25th Inf. Div. were deployed here in October 2006 and participated in combat operations in Anbar, Baghdad, South Baghdad, Babil, Najaf, Karbala, Diwaniyah and along the Saudi Arabian border.

During the

TOA, Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch, commanding general of Task Force Marne and Multi National Division - Center, showed appreciation to the dedication that the Spartan Brigade for what they did during their tour in Iraq.

"Today we celebrate one of the most magnificent brigade combat teams in the United States Army," Lynch said. "The 4th Brigade of the 25th Division led from the front and achieved measurable success over the last 15 months."

"As I go back to the battlefield, I look in AO (area of operation) Spartan; its amazing to me the progress," Lynch said. "You can walk through the streets of Jurf as Sakhr wearing a patrol cap and see 48 shops open; you can go to JSS Iskan in Hasawa and see the magnificent progress being made."

The TOA marked the official start of the Vanguard Brigade mission in Iraq. It is also the start of the brigade's second deployment in the support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"We are honored to join Task Force Marne, the Iraqi Security Forces and the Iraqi people in their efforts to secure their homeland," said Col. Thomas James, 4th BCT, brigade commander.

Prior to the TOA, the Soldiers in the Vanguard Brigade had the opportunity to transition with the Spartan Brigade to ensure the transition between brigades went smoothly.

The ceremony was marked by the traditional uncasing of the colors by Soldiers from the Vanguard and Spartan Brigades.



Col. Thomas James, 4th BCT commander, and Command Sgt. Maj. Louis Torres, 4th BCT command sergeant major, uncasing the unit colors during the Transfer of Authority ceremony Dec. 1 on FOB Kalsu. This ceremony marks the brigade's second deployment to Iraq.

Cavalry trooper awarded Purple Heart at Stewart

Story and photo

by Sgt. 1st Class Tami Hillis

While surrounded by Family and friends, a 3rd Infantry Division Soldier was presented the Purple Heart, the oldest American decoration in present use, during a ceremony in Moon Theater Dec. 11 at Fort Stewart, Ga.

Spc. Christopher Hayes, a cavalry scout with Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 6th Squadron, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, was recognized as a hero for injuries he suffered Nov. 16. He was on an explosive ordinance disposal and security mission in Iraq when an improvised explosive device struck his vehicle.

"There is nothing more important than honoring a hero and that is what Specialist Chris Hayes is; a hero, as well as his brave, lovely wife, Johanna," said Col. Todd Buchs, Fort Stewart and Hunter Army Airfield garrison commander. "And, this was not the first time Chris was asked by the Army to stand up and salute and then be deployed to go in harms way. He also deployed to Iraq back in 2003."

Hayes and his unit arrived in country Nov. 11 and they were going through a relief in place with the outgoing unit, 1st Squadron, 40th Cavalry Regiment, 4th BCT (ABN), 25th ID. Hayes' unit was on the ground for about a week when a convoy he was in was attacked.

"He's the gunner on an up-armored humvee and was the lead vehicle in the convoy," Buchs said. "An IED, an improvised explosive device, went off and the force of the IED slammed Chris into the .50-caliber machine gun."

The four-year veteran suffered numerous injuries from the attack, including a broken arm; however, no lives were lost in the incident.

"Like I told my Family, it's bound to happen to somebody in Iraq," Hayes said. "Someone's got to take the bullet for the team, and I was that one to take



Spc. Christopher Hayes, a cavalry scout with HHT, 6th Squadron, 8th Cavalry, 4th Brigade Combat Team, Col. Todd Buchs, Fort Stewart and Hunter Army Airfield garrison commander, and Johanna Hayes pose for a picture during a ceremony in Moon Theater Dec. 11 at Fort Stewart, Ga. Hayes was presented with a Purple Heart and Combat Action Badge for injuries he suffered when an improvised explosive device struck his vehicle in Iraq Nov. 16, 2007.

it."

Buchs commended the medics on the scene for what they did for Hayes and what they do everyday for Soldiers in Iraq.

"What they (the medics) do on the ground saves lives everyday," Buchs said. "Our medics are very well trained and they were able to treat Chris immediately and they had him out of the incident scene in less than 30 minutes. That is just phenomenal."

Although just a month ago Hayes' mission was being a cavalry scout, his mission now is recovering.

"I told Chris his mission is to heal," Buchs said. "He's given to our nation. He's given to

our Army. So it's now his time to rehabilitate and get fit for whatever comes in the future for him and Johanna."

In addition to the Purple Heart, Hayes received the Combat Action Badge, which is awarded to Soldiers performing duties in an area where hostile fire pay or imminent danger pay is authorized, who is personally pres-

ent and actively engaging or engaged by the enemy, and performing satisfactorily in accordance with the rules of engagement.

"Someone's got to take the bullet for the team, and I was that one to take it."

-Spc. Christopher Hayes

Practicing knife safety

Anthony Woodard
4th BCT Safety Advisor

Soldiers have been using knives as tools for many years. Today's design and materials are more complex than ever before and continue to evolve. Reduced to its basic elements, a knife has one or more blades that are protected by a handle or sheath when not being used.

Knives are among the safest of tools if used properly and respected. The first rule of knife safety is always to cut away from your body or from another person. There is always the possibility of an accident or the blade sticking or slipping.

Knife accidents also happen when the object being cut is not firmly secured. Always cut on a firm surface and even hold the object in a vise

if you can. Do not hold an object so another person can cut it unless you are both facing away from the potential arc of the blade or blade tip.



Remember that knives are typically made for cutting. Chopping or hammering with a knife can also cause pieces of the object to fly in all directions; maybe even into your eye or the eye of a companion.

Knives are no screwdrivers or pry bars. A blade that is stressed by twisting can slip or snap, possibly injuring the user. Use the right tool for the job.

When a blade sticks, the natural instinct is to apply more force or pressure. That's when slips occur and the

user gets cut.

Keep your knife clean and sharp. Use it safely and responsibly. It will be a valuable, even life saving tool for many years.

Doc's Corner

Simple tips to fight the 'Kalsu Crud'

Capt. Jacob Turnquist
4th BCT surgeon

Upper respiratory infections, or URIs, continue to make their way across our formation.

URIs are caused by one of hundreds of possible viruses.

Symptoms include cough, runny nose, congestion, sore throat, fever, chills, headache, fatigue and muscle aches.

Like most viruses, the infection usually lasts seven to 10 days with symptoms persisting for up to two weeks.

There are no "magic pills" to cure these infections. We can only try to decrease symptoms while our body's immune system works. Staying hydrated and rested are both major parts of feeling well.

Most cold medicines are obtained over-the-counter.

Since they are often combined, taking more than one cold medicine may lead to an overdose of individual components.

Tylenol and Motrin can be used to treat fever and its accompanying chills, fatigue and headache.

Decongestants, like Sudafed, may help decrease congestion, runny nose and sore throat caused by "post-nasal drip."

Antihistamines may help cough, but they can also cause drowsiness.

Antibiotics do not kill viruses and should not be used. They

often have side effects like nausea and diarrhea. They may cause an allergic reaction which can be life-threatening.

When should you seek help?

-Fever (temperature >100 degrees) lasting more than five straight days

-Symptoms worsening after five days or persisting longer than 14 days

-Severe throat pain impairing hydration

-Shortness of breath

-Sinus pain and tenderness

-Any other concerns

that have you worried

As always, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure: wash your hands and cover your cough and sneeze.



Conduct a spiritual risk assessment

Chap. (Maj.) Albert Downing
4th BCT chaplain

Have you ever been in a situation or place and you asked yourself, "What am I doing here?"

I would venture to say the majority of us, if not all of us, have pondered that question. A question causes you to reflect upon a decision that was made.

We reflect upon that question when we are confronted with some difficult challenges and when we are not sure about what we should do.

I remember very vividly this question when I was a brand new enlisted soldier at Fort Jackson, S.C.

We got off the "cattle" trailers and began running to report to our new home. We saw a drill sergeant standing on the steps, yelling and screaming words that I was unaccustomed with.

I remember saying to myself, "I'm glad he's not my drill sergeant!" Well, needless to say - he was!

Afterward, he had us standing at attention, then at parade rest, while he walked and talked to us (rather at us.) He then proceeded to tell us to get down in the front leaning rest position.

From that point, it was up, down, up, down for us as he walked between the rows, telling us about all the things he would make us do next.

Finally, he stopped in front of me and knelt down and said to me (loudly), "Fall! Fall with your ugly self!"

I remember saying to myself, "Lord please, don't let me fall."

We had been in that position for what seemed like an eternity before he let us get back up on our feet. I looked around and said to myself, "I'm leaving this place. I'm going home."

Finally, I asked myself, "What am I doing here?"

Despite these thoughts, I didn't run away that day and I eventually graduated from basic training and completed my three years in the Army for my first enlistment.

There was another time when I was confronted with this same kind of questioning of my decisions and the

same types of doubts.

I was assigned to Fort Drum, N.Y. During my first winter, we received so much snow that it was amazing, even for that part of the country.

It snowed consecutively for 19 days. One day, as I was shoveling snow, I said, "Lord, I'm from North Carolina and I have never seen so much snow! In North Carolina when it starts to snow, we close down everything. But, here, they don't close down anything and we have to run in this stuff! Lord, why do you have me here?"

So, the questions and self-doubts will arise, whether with an assignment, with a unit or even in marriage.

It will cause you to reflect and think about the decision you have made. It will cause you to wonder what is next and you will ask yourself, "What do I do?"

In I Kings 19: 9, 13 Elijah had to answer to

the Lord, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" He had raised the widow's son at Zarephat and declared that it would not rain until He gave word and had called down fire from heaven. But, now Elijah's on the run and is hiding in a cave. The Lord speaks to him and asks him the question, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

You may be wondering that same thing as you are here so many miles from home, from Family and friends. You are here away from everything that is familiar to you.

So, now you are confused, frustrated and like Elijah, you want to run, hide or give up.

So, during those moments of frustration, you may ask someone or maybe ask yourself, "What am I doing here?"

The answer may come in a quiet, still voice or whisper; "I have ordered your steps here to draw you closer to me."

Once you have realized that, you can and do the work He has called you to, just as Elijah did.



Trial delayed due to LSU-Ohio St. game

NEW ORLEANS - Justice can wait until after the LSU game. A state judge near the home of the Tigers has agreed to postpone a trial scheduled to start on the same day LSU plays Ohio State in the BCS national championship game.

Stephen Babcock, an attorney defending Imperial Casualty Insurance Co. in a lawsuit over a car crash, requested the delay because he has tickets to the Jan. 7 game at the Superdome in New Orleans. He and other LSU fans have rented out the second floor of a Bourbon Street bar for a pre-game tailgate party.

In his written request for a new trial date, Babcock refers to Ohio State as "Slowhio" ("due to their perceived lack of speed on both sides of the ball") and notes that Allstate, sponsors of the Sugar Bowl, are not a party in the insurance case.

"All counsel to this matter unequivocally agree that the presence of LSU in the aforementioned contest of pigskin skill unquestionably constitutes good grounds therefor," Babcock wrote. "In fact we have been unable through much imagination and hypothetical scenarios to think of a better reason."

Babcock, whose law office is in Baton Rouge, said lawyers for the plaintiff in the case also have tickets to the game.

"We might disagree on the merits of the case, but everyone was in agreement on this, for sure," he said during an interview Friday.

That includes West Baton Rouge Parish District Judge Alvin Batiste, who agreed Thursday to postpone the trial but didn't immediately set a new date.

Babcock said he doesn't know if Batiste is an LSU fan, "but most people around here are."

Louisiana already has a legal precedent for football trumping a trial date. In January, a judge agreed to postpone a trial due to a conflict with last season's NFC championship game between the New Orleans Saints and Chicago Bears.

Woman allegedly stabs husband over gift

ROCK SPRINGS, Wyo. - A woman stabbed her husband with a kitchen knife following an argument that began when she accused him of opening a Christmas present early, authorities said Friday.

Misty Johnson, 34, was arrested and charged with aggravated assault and battery, a felony, and misdemeanor domestic battery.

Her husband, Shawn Fay Johnson, 34, was treated at a hospital for a wound to the chest, police said.

Misty Johnson made an initial court appearance Thursday in which she requested a court-appointed attorney, authorities said. She was released after posting bail, which was set at \$7,500.

There was no telephone listing for her in Rock Springs.

Authorities said Shawn Johnson called 911 just before 1 a.m. Wednesday to report that his wife had stabbed him.

He told police that his wife started arguing with him over his opening a Christmas present, according to court records.

As the argument escalated, Misty Johnson accused her husband of having an affair, authorities said.

Police found a marriage

license in the couple's apartment stating they were married in late September.

Police Detective David Thompson said he didn't know what the present was, or if it was intended for the husband.

Man pays for new truck with loose change

FRANKFORT, Ind. - Paul Brant considers himself a penny pincher, but his savings in quarters and dollar coins really paid off.

Brant, 70, used more than \$25,000 in change to help buy a new Dodge Ram half-ton pickup truck Friday - 13 years after buying another truck with spare change.

"(The old truck) didn't have four-wheel drive, and living in the country, I figured I better get a new one to help get me through the snow," he said.

Brant said he was raised to be thrifty. His father always paid in cash and saved up loose change to take vacations.

Brant has been storing his change for years, and estimated he had about \$26,000 in coins for Friday's purchase.

In 1994, he bought a Dodge pickup and a Dodge Neon using about \$36,000 in quarters.

"As long as you don't put your hands back in the till, it really adds up," he said.

Brant stored his change in coffee cans, water jugs and piggy banks over the years, and was escorted by sheriff's deputies as he brought the rolled coins to the dealership.

A Mike Raisor Chrysler Dodge and Jeep employee who sold Brant the truck said the dealership called in an armored car to count and handle the coins.

"No bank wants to take them," Keith Gephart said.

Should we go back for those, Sarge?

BELGRADE - Boxes of hand grenades tumbled out of a Serb Army truck Thursday when the driver pulled up to pay his highway toll, officials in southern Serbia said.

The toll-gate was sealed off and the bomb squad called in to recover 18 cases of grenades, part of a bigger shipment on its way for safe destruction at a military facility.

The mayor of nearby Batocina, Radisa Milosevic, said military police were quickly on the scene, assuring backed-up motorists the grenades could not detonate because they were defused for transport.

Feuding Korean clans end 400-year fight over graves

PAJU, South Korea - After nearly 400 years, a few killings and scorned pleas from a king, two powerful clans have settled one of the longest-standing feuds in Korean history, over ancestral burial grounds.

The clash between the Yoon family and the Shim family started in 1614 when the two began burying their ancestors in large burial mounds next to each other, with both claiming rights to the land.

It will finally be sorted out in March 2008 under a settlement deal reached a few days ago. The Yoon family will give about 8,300 square metres (89,340 sq ft) of land to the Shim family, which will use it as a new burial ground for 19 of its ancient clan members.

"It was probably the first and will be the last family feud that lasted this long," said Yoon Peil, secretary-general for the Yoon Family Foundation.

A Shim family representative said: "It took a year of talks to

reach this significant event".

The settlement deal from the two sides, who increased their power in ancient times by having their daughters marry into the royal family, was aided by a married couple made up of a member of the Shim clan and a member of the Yoon clan, the local daily Hankyoreh reported.

Ancestor worship has played a significant role in Korean culture for centuries and families search for sites harmonious with nature in the belief it will lead to benefits for their family for generations.

The disputed grave site near the border with North Korea and about 40 km (25 miles) north of Seoul is the resting spot for famed members of the two clans.

The graves of the best known members of each clan are just a few metres (yards) apart and separated by a high wall.

The feud began when a prime minister from the Shim family destroyed part of a burial mound of a respected general from the Yoon family and buried several family members there.

About 150 years later, Yoon family members damaged part of the Shim burial mounds in return.

One king asked them to reconcile, but instead they fought more, with clan members dying in clashes. To this day, many descendants of the clans forbid marriage to members of the other.

Clan leaders decided in 2005 that enough was enough and reached out to each other to settle the feud.

"The descendents of two families have happily agreed," Yoon said.

Chinese police dog may teach pandas to fight

SHANGHAI - Scientists in China may use a police dog to

teach pandas to fight after the first artificially bred panda released into the wild was apparently killed after a battle with other animals, local media reported on Saturday.

The Wolong giant panda breeding centre plans to have four pandas raised in captivity live with a specially trained police dog or other animals, the Chengdu Daily quoted reserve officials as saying. The officials could not be reached for comment.

The pandas would learn how to protect themselves by observing the dog, increasing their chances of survival when they were eventually released into the mountainous wilds of the far western province of Sichuan.

The world's first artificially bred panda to be released, a 5-year-old male named Xiang Xiang, was found dead in the snow early this year after less than 12 months out of captivity.

Scientists believe he fell from a high place after getting into a fight with wild pandas or other animals over food or territory.

China is now preparing to release a second batch of up to four artificially bred pandas.

Many or all would be females, which may be less prone to becoming involved in fights.

Breeding pandas through artificial insemination and introducing them to the wild is an important part of China's efforts to save the species, which is now estimated to number between 1,000 and 2,000 in the wild.

Pandas chosen for release undergo years of training. Adult pandas need to spend up to 16 hours a day foraging and eating bamboo and almost all the remaining time resting or sleeping, making them vulnerable in harsh environments.

To Our Fallen Warriors

Soldier's Creed

I am an American Soldier.

**I am a Warrior and a member of a team. I serve the people
of the United States and live the Army Values.**

I will always place the mission first.

I will never accept defeat.

I will never quit.

I will never leave a fallen comrade.

**I am disciplined, physically and mentally tough,
trained and proficient in my warrior tasks and drills.**

I always maintain my arms, my equipment and myself.

I am an expert and I am a professional.

**I stand ready to deploy,
engage, and destroy the enemies
of the United States of America in close combat.**

I am a guardian of freedom and the American way of life.

I am an American Soldier.



Sgt. Samuel Kelsey

3-7 Infantry

Killed in Action

Dec. 13, 2007