



The Striker Torch

The Official Newsletter of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division

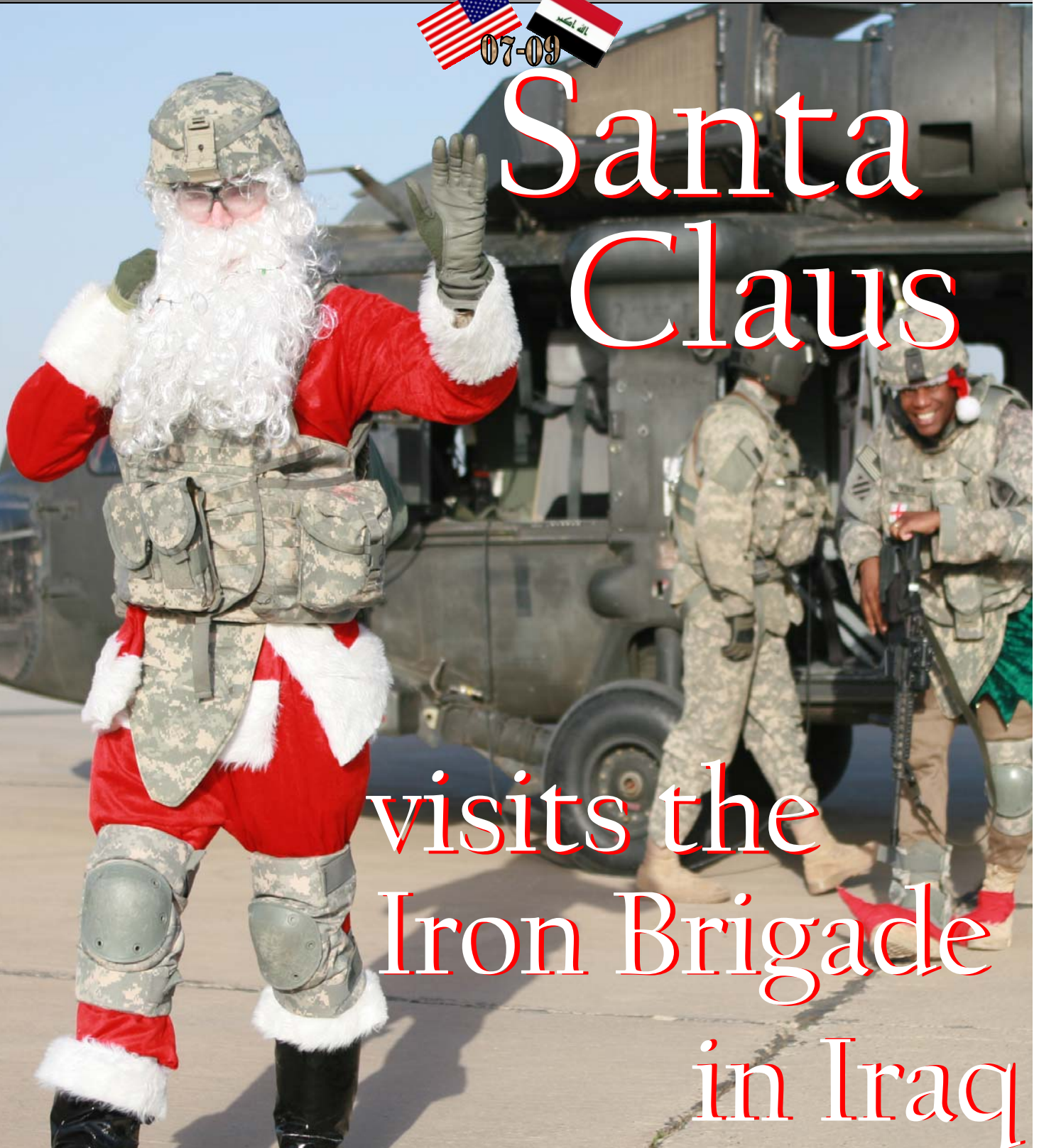
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Santa Claus

visits the
Iron Brigade
in Iraq





Happy Holidays to the Iron Brigade Family

This Holiday Season many of our young Soldiers will be away from their families for the first time. This is a special time of year when families gather to share in the celebrations of the season. Our Army family is unique -- among us, we share a special bond, a common understanding of the inherent sacrifices and hardships of being an Army family.

I plan on visiting our Soldiers with our very own Santa Claus and elf to spread Holiday spirit and demonstrate to our Soldiers that we are one Iron Brigade Family. We are additionally blessed to be able to celebrate our special heritage -- the legacy of hope that our Soldiers represent to our Nation and the Nation of Iraq. Soldiers know that they will spend holidays away from their loved ones. It is part of our heritage. However, knowing this doesn't make it any easier to be away from loved ones and share in the holiday. Even in Iraq, we will celebrate with our brothers and sisters in arms like so many Soldiers have in the past.

In 1776, on a bitter-cold Christmas night, General George Washington and his Continental Army crossed the Delaware River to execute a bold plan against the British forces. Driving sleet and snow made the freezing temperatures all the more unbearable. Despite those harsh conditions, the Soldiers did not complain -- some of them had no shoes; some wrapped rags around their feet to help keep them warm; still others remained barefoot. As one of General Washington's staff officers recorded, the Soldiers were "ready to suffer any hardship and die rather than give up their liberty." In the most difficult conditions, against the greatest odds, the Soldiers performed magnificently, and their victory in the Battle of Trenton the day after Christmas renewed the hopes of

freedom in the American Revolution.

Undiminished still today is that same spirit of determination, perseverance, selfless service and courage that moved the Soldiers of the Continental Army on Christmas night in 1776. We share in the enduring legacy of those who first fought and died to win our freedom -- we stand on the shoulders of the brave men and women who have preceded us.

We know that we do not Soldier alone. With each of our Soldiers on point in the Mada'in and Mahmudiyah Qada is the spirit of a tremendous Iron Brigade family -- a family whose courage, sacrifice, and steadfastness are inspiring to us all. All of our efforts, all of our successes, all of our magnificent moments as a Brigade Combat Team will continue to be delivered by our Soldiers. I am grateful for their commitment, their loyalty, and their devotion.

I could not be more proud of all of you and of the magnificent work you do each and every day to preserve the gifts of hope and of freedom that we cherish, not only for Americans but for the citizens of Iraq. May each and every member of the Iron Brigade Family have a safe, fulfilling, and joyful Holiday Season and a prosperous New Year. God bless each of you and your families, God bless The Iron Brigade, The United States Army, and God bless our great Nation.



STRIKE HARD!

COL Pat White
Commander, 2BCT
"Striker 6"



STRIKER 7

On Point

By SGM James Zadra
2nd BCT Operations Sergeant Major



Holiday Wishes

I want to wish each Soldier and Family Member in the Iron Brigade a safe and Happy Holidays. I understand how difficult it is for the families back home to celebrate the holidays without your loved one. It is just as difficult for the Soldiers here in Iraq who are separated from their friends, families and loved ones to enjoy the Holiday Season.

We must keep in mind that as Soldiers we do this in the service of our great nation and it does not always coincide with our family planning or the important events in our lives. But as military families we will, as always, come together and become stronger during trying times.

Each officer and non-commissioned officer has done his utmost to ensure that your Soldier had a resemblance of holiday spirit here in Iraq. We even had a visit from Santa Clause and one of his elves visit each Iron Brigade FOB, COP and Patrol Base spreading the holiday cheer on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

Many of our young Soldiers are spending their first Christmas away from their families. During this time leaders at all levels need to ensure that each and every Soldier is in con-

tact with their families. We owe it to the families that support us each and every day to ensure they have contact with the Soldiers they support.

Leaders should also be speaking to their Soldiers and watching for any signs of stress that may be intensified during this season. Ensuring each Soldier's personal well-being is fully supported without slowing the mission, is a task that will be a challenge but each leader should make every effort to make it happen.

This will not only make our Soldiers Holiday Season just a little brighter but also ensure that personal issues do not affect mission readiness. During my recent tour of the battlefield, I have seen excellent preparation for the season at the FOBs and COPs.

On behalf of CSM Eyer and the entire Iron Brigade command group, I want to wish the Soldiers and Family Members the best for the Holidays.

STRIKE HARD!

SGM James Zadra



Iraqi Army Soldiers

Join our platoons

By 2LT

Bradford Dooley



TF 1-6 IN

For the last couple of years and throughout this deployment, the Iraqi Army's participation in our operations has become greater and greater. Beyond major events and missions, our Iraqi counterparts are working along side us on everyday patrols all the way down to squad level. Now, with the new Strategic Framework Agreement (SFA), the Iraqi Army (IA) will be part of almost every single patrol we perform, moving them closer and closer to the point of not just being the participants but the ones leading, with ourselves as the participants in their patrols.

Throughout the mission in Sadr City, our platoon continues to work with several different IA groups. One specific group our platoon works with is led by company commander CPT Talab and his second in command LT Fadal.

Whether it's patrolling our sector, questioning local nationals or just a regular sit-down, we meet with these men and their soldiers every time the platoon leaves the wire.

They are always willing to come on patrols with us with several fire teams or even to bring us on their own patrols to support their efforts.

Over the past few months, the continued activities with these men have created a strong relationship between the Platoon and the IA Company. On several occasions we have met early before a patrol for dinner, alternating who buys, and just sitting and talking about things outside of the conflict.

The relationship peaked in early November when two of our NCOs were preparing for their re-enlistment. When a soldier re-enlists, he or she gets the opportunity to be sworn in anywhere he or she may want. In this case, the two Soldiers turned down the opportunity to have a trip to the Green Zone to be sworn in with a large crowd but decided to stay in Sadr City and be sworn in by the Platoon Leader at the IA station with the IA platoon watching. "When the opportunity came for me

to reenlist, I thought, why would I want to do it in a place where no one deals with the same problems? I would just rather have this done alongside the guys I have been working with during this deployment," said SGT Edward Dixon when he came up with the idea to have the ceremony at the IA station. "It's an opportunity for the IA soldiers to see how important it is to us serving our country," said SGT Dixon.

When we called CPT Talab and explained the situation he was more than happy to accommodate the situation, even telling the Platoon it was OK to have an American flag in the background before we even asked.

Then on the night of the event, we bought food on the local economy for our soldiers and all the IA soldiers at the station. The ceremony took place in the upstairs office with the US soldiers, selected by SGT Dixon and SGT Barry Francis Fry, as well as all the IA soldiers under CPT Talab's Command.

With an American Flag in the background and two IA Officers standing on each side of the Flag we swore in both SGT Dixon and SGT Fry. Following the ceremony, everyone sat down to eat and conversed about normal everyday life, enjoying just the company of each other, and talking no business. "This shows us and everyone else that we are more than soldiers but brothers in our occupation," said LT Fadal. "This was the best way I could think of to show my respect to the IA soldiers, having them present at my reenlistment," said SGT Fry. To further show appreciation to the IA soldiers, we presented two soccer balls with all of our Soldiers' signatures and had two extra soccer balls for all the IA soldiers to sign and return for us to keep.

This event became the opportunity to show the IA soldiers and officers that we treated our relationship with them as something more important than a required activity, showing that our mutual experiences in this conflict have made them a part of our Platoon.



By SSG
Neil Nunez

Task Force Gator's "Other" Platoons



TF 2-6 IN

Like any mechanized infantry battalion at war, Task Force Gator is composed of many elements; mechanized rifle companies, light cavalry troops, combat service support units, and various staff sections.

Some of these units, however, perform vital functions in the task force and do not always garner the visibility or recognition attributed to others. These "other" platoons, the Command Security Detachment and the Mortar platoon, have some of the most demanding and important jobs in Task Force Gator. Without the significant contributions of these platoons, the day to day operations of Task Force Gator would grind to a halt.

TF 2-6 IN's Mortar Platoon, led by 1LT Searles and SFC Sanders has dual responsibilities. They perform their doctrinal mission of responsive 120mm mortar fire by manning a "hot gun" for the past 9 months positioned on Combat Outpost

Carver. They also assumed the role of the dedicated Explosive Ordinance Disposal (EOD) Team escort. Throughout our 9 months in Iraq the mortar platoon has fired over 25 fire missions to include HE and illumination terrain denial fires and registration. Their leadership was put to the test when called upon to execute out of zone, split section support as part of Operation Look South, a MND-C operation. Attached to the 2-504th PIR, 82d Airborne Division, the unit performed well and received nothing but commendatory remarks from the Task Force 2-504 PIR. During that same period, this same platoon responded to over 15 IED incidents in zone ranging from simple post blast analysis to the actual defusing of an IED for exploitation.

Both of these missions are 24 hour / 7 day a week requirements. The leadership of the platoon must deftly manage the training, maintenance, and manning for both missions to ensure mission success.

"When we first got to Iraq, we didn't think we'd be doing both of these missions. We knew how to fire mortars, but are now proud of the work we do with EOD," SFC Sanders, the mortar platoon sergeant. "We work hard every day to maintain both of these vital skills for the betterment of the Task Force."

The mortar platoon provides Task Force Gator incredible flexibility.



"The mortars do an incredible job providing a responsive force around the clock. It is a tough assignment, but they are true professionals," said LTC Michael Shrout.

The TF Gator Command Security Detachment (CSD), nicknamed the "Lizard Platoon" has the important job of keeping the Task Force Gator leadership safe at all times during key leader engagements and securing the tactical command post (TAC) during combat operations. This platoon does not exist on any MTOE and is composed of Soldiers of a variety of Military Occupational Specialties. The platoon was formed from volunteers and began training as a coherent organization in October of 2007. The Lizards completed their own set of qualification tables in preparation for deployment at Grafenwoehr just like all the other combat platoons. In addition,



the Lizards completed a realistic training exercise on complex vehicle and personnel recovery in preparation for deployment. The Lizard Platoon takes their job very seriously and knows that what they do significantly enables the task force mission.

The Lizards have faithfully and unfailingly performed their duty. No principal leader or VIP under their charge has ever been harmed. The platoon conducted operations in every part of TF Gator's zone and many places outside. They participated in all significant raids or actions and performed superbly. Although composed of disparate personnel, all of the Lizards take pride in all they do. The platoon enjoys the highest re-enlistment rate in the Task Force and have become a close knit, coherent force. SPC Lynn, gunner, sums up his experience in the Lizards by saying, "Being a part of the Lizard Platoon brings me great pride, satisfaction, and honor. I am entrusted with the responsibility for the personal security of all the Gator command group officers and Sergeants Majors. I take my job seriously and love every minute of it."

Both these platoons are doing important jobs in Iraq that most people don't hear about but it's not about the publicity or thanks, it's about securing and protecting fellow Gators and Iraqi's. GATORS!!!



Building a Police Emergency

By 1LT
Wesley Brown



TF 1-35 AR

Response Force

December 5th 2008 marked another milestone in the transition and professionalization of Iraqi Security Forces as 3-3-1 National Police and B/1-6 IN conducted a combined operation to clear two separate objectives in the town of Arafiyah. SFC Christopher Albanese, Platoon Sergeant for 3rd Platoon B/1-6 IN, was impressed with the performance and tactical competency of their partnered unit. "We conduct daily patrols with this unit but we have yet to execute a combined operation as involving and complex as this. It is fulfilling to see our daily training and patrols with the National Police culminate in a successful large scale operation," said Albanese.

The mission involved over 18 military vehicles and nearly 100 military personnel to secure and search an industrial compound and a palm grove filled with

SGT Bradley Southard from 3rd PLT, B/1-6 IN pulls security (Photo by SPC Chase Kincaid)



3rd PLT, B/1-6 IN and 3rd BN 3-1 NP conduct Combined Operations during Warrior Tsunami in Arafiyah (Photo by SPC Chase Kincaid)

dense vegetation in an attempt to identify cache sites. SGT Bradley Southard from 3rd Platoon B/1-6 IN also noted improvement within the Iraqi Security Forces.

"The National Police were well received on this mission by the local nationals in the area. They are improving their credibility with every patrol and this will lead to greater trust within the community, more actionable intelligence, and more successful operations," said Southard.

Following the conclusion of the mission, National Police and Coalition Forces gathered at COP Cashe South to review their operation and to begin discussing future missions as both groups work to ensure security and stability prior to the upcoming provincial elections.



Sons of Iraq Pay Day



TF 4-27 FA

By 1LT

David Pope

As control of Iraq transitions from Coalition Forces to the Government of Iraq, operations have evolved to focus on the training and development of the Iraqi Security Forces. Part of this development process involves teaching the Iraqi Army the importance of interacting with the communities they serve. The intent is to build trust and confidence in the Government of Iraq among the Iraqi people and show them the government can and will provide for their basic needs and security.

The "Dealers" of B, 2-6 IN, and their Iraqi Army counterparts, 1st Battalion, 55th Iraqi Army Brigade, have concentrated on developing a good rapport with the local city councils within their Operational Environment.

This involves listening to local politician's concerns, taking an active role in coaching the City Council, working towards amicable solutions, and generally circulating among the Iraqi people to develop a good working relationship. Coalition Forces learned the quickest way to build trust and cooperation among Iraqis is to assist with basic infrastructure and education improvements. One such endeavor the Iraqi Army partner unit, with assistance from the Dealers, recently undertook was distributing

school supplies to the children of the Ali Bin Abd Talib Elementary School in Minari, Iraq.

The Iraqi Army coordinated with the Minari City Council to provide the children with backpacks, flashlights, and beanie caps. The City Council was grateful for the show of support from the Iraqi Army, and coordinated with the faculty of Ali Bin Abd Talib Elementary School to ensure the children would be available to receive the gifts.

The children and Iraqi soldiers interacted well with each other and the students were eager to line up and receive their supplies. The Iraqi soldiers orchestrated the entire event, organized the children, separated the goods, and generally enjoyed themselves during the distribution process. After the children received their gifts, the Iraqi soldiers, Dealer Soldiers, and School Faculty met with parents to discuss school issues.

Overall the school project was a great success and the Iraqi Army soldiers have set the stage for future, similar ventures. Missions like this assist the Iraqis to repair their own country, as well as gets the Iraqi Army out amongst the people to make a good name for them and the Iraqi Government.



Santa is on his way



40 EN

By CPT

Malia Kekuewa

To Task Force Ram

Santa has definitely kept the 40th Engineer Battalion, Task Force Ram in mind this year, with a little assistance from his helpers.

Over the course of Operation Iraqi Freedom 07-09, Task Force Ram has received over 500 care packages for Soldiers from various organizations.

This massive undertaking of care packages has been coordinated solely by the Task Force Ram Chaplain, Chaplain CPT Keith Andrews, in an effort to keep the morale high within the ranks of the task force. Included in these boxes is everything from gum and candy to books and games. Most of these gifts are the small priority mail boxes that get redirected into the hands of individual Soldiers.

As many Soldiers are away from their families and friends this holiday season, one organization stood out among the rest, to make sure each Soldier in the task force received a wrapped gift for Christmas.

"A Soldier's Wish List" provided Task Force Ram with over 48 boxes of wrapped presents, totaling over 800 gifts.

As Chaplain Andrews received these boxes, he ensured all units in the task force received enough presents for each Soldier in each company to have their own. On Christmas day, each company will host a Christmas party, where they will pass out presents from "A Soldier's Wish List".

Over 125 volunteers from this

organization worked countless hours in preparation for the holiday season, sending over 6,902 pounds of gifts and baked goods to 12 different units within the Armed Forces that are currently serving in Iraq, Afghanistan and Kosovo. Some of the gifts had items such as DVDs, handheld computer games, board games, card games, clothing items and CDs. Also included in the shipment were several boxes of baked goods, which will help to support each company's Christmas party.

With the large number of boxes and wrapped gifts available, even Soldiers that are geographically separated from their parent unit located on different COPs and on FOB Hammer, will also be receiving these gifts. The Task Force Ram Command Team will also be visiting these Soldiers over the holidays, to pass out battalion Christmas cards and season's greetings.

With the vast amount of support and help from "A Soldier's Wish List", they have made it a little easier for the Soldiers of Task Force Ram to enjoy Christmas this year and overcome the melancholy that some Soldiers feel when spending the holidays in a combat zone.

One thing has definitely been apparent throughout the entire rotation: supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom wouldn't be the same without great organizations and volunteers that go to great lengths support their Troops.



The Life you Save

By SPC
Michael Woywood



47 FSB

The room is dark. The sounds of the wounded and dying echo throughout the building. Soldiers in full combat gear shout instructions and questions at each other while attempting to treat bleeding wounds. Is it a SIGACT out in sector, or a scene from a Hollywood war epic?

It's actually just test day for the students of the 47th Forward Support Battalion Combat Life Saver (CLS) program.

The CLS program in the 47th FSB is a fast-paced, high-intensity, four day course (trimmed from five days due to mission requirements) designed to fully train and educate Soldiers from all Military Occupational Specialty classifications in battlefield medical care.

The course is taught by experienced 68W medics of all ranks from the 47th FSB, and has trained over 500 Soldiers in the 2nd Brigade Combat Team since mid 2007. Soldiers from various units, such as the 40th Engineer Battalion and the 502nd Military Intelligence Company, attend side by side with Modern Pioneers and receive instruction in topics ranging from care under fire to decompressing a tension pneumothorax.

The first day of the class includes an introduction from the instructors and an overview of battlefield care, known as Tactical Combat Casualty Care (TC3). From there, the Soldiers spend three days learning casualty evaluation, airway management, treating open chest wounds and tension pneumothorax, intravenous therapy, controlling bleeding, as well as a variety of evacuation skills. Soldiers attending the on November 24th, were also treated to a combat stress class by SGT Melinda Paul, Mental Health NCOIC, in which they learned how to handle casualties on the battlefield whose wounds run deeper than flesh and bone.

The instruction culminates on the fourth day. Students take a written exam in

the morning, but the real challenge begins after lunch. In the afternoon, students are tested using a simulated combat environment and living, breathing, sometimes screaming casualties.

The casualties are normally medics from the 47th FSB, complete with rubberized injuries, called moulage, and improvised blood. The students are expected to treat a variety of simulated injuries under the watchful eye of the instructors. For their part, the instructors attempt to make this as difficult as possible, mostly by using harsh words and loud voices during treatment. The training model for these medical training lanes is the same model used in the Combat Medic Advanced Skills Trainer (CMAST), which the instructors themselves had to certify on prior to deployment.

After each class is complete, the students and instructors conduct an after action review to determine what can be adjusted or implemented to make the class better. A consistent comment from students in recent classes is that the training is challenging and realistic – and that the use of experienced medics as instructors helps bring the importance of the class to the front of students' minds.

If you were to walk into the 47th FSB CLS class on any day of the training, you would likely hear a passionate and dedicated medic augmenting the material with a personal story. Most of the instructors have previous deployment experience and some have experience in the realm of civilian emergency medical services. Each of the instructors has this in common: they each believe that CLS training is of the utmost importance in any deployed unit.

"You have to take the training seriously, as an instructor," said PFC James Nikkels. "Medics go down too. The life you save may be your own."



Joint Targeting

By CPT
Jon Boyle



1-63CAB

For years, the idea of “advising” the Iraqi Army was strictly limited to training infantrymen, tankers, and police officers. This mentality, however, has more recently evolved through several aspects of military operations. For the 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 63rd Armor Regiment, operating out of the Mahmudiyah Qada, this means training Iraqi Army brigade and battalion staffs. The most recent training mechanism established by 1-63 CAB, has been the execution of joint targeting meetings.

“We could sit in a room all day, hypothesizing about where pockets of enemy cells are residing,” said 1LT Henry Brewster, from Kittery Point, Maine, 1-63 CAB Assistant Intelligence Officer. “The IA and the IP, they live here, their families are here, they know and understand the area better than we could ever hope to,” said Brewster.

For this reason, and many others, 1-63 CAB, the 23rd and 25th IA Brigades from the 17th IA Division, the Mahmudiyah District Iraqi Police, and the Mahmudiyah Ministry of National Security Office have teamed up once a week to discuss security operations within the Qada.

“It is not that we want to force our targeting system on the Iraqis,” said 1LT Eric Suddarth, 1-63 CAB’s Targeting Officer from Westfield, Indiana. “We use these meetings as a way to share information. The Iraqis will always have better understanding of their country. However, by sharing information, it allows us to more effectively help the Iraqis by providing resources to problem sets that they might not have in their inventory yet,” said Suddarth.

Most recently, the Mahmudiyah Qada was host to several Islamic holiday rituals. Specifically, the pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia during the Hajj passed right through Mahmudiyah. Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police were charged with providing a safe channel for Muslims conducting one of the most sacred acts of the Islamic religion.

Through careful planning, the 23rd and 25th Iraqi Army Brigades were able to utilize many coalition assets resulting in zero attacks on pilgrims throughout the duration of the religious movement. Within the Hajj, the Qada was also able to enjoy a safe and secure Eid Al Adha, where Muslims celebrate the willingness of Ibrahim to sacrifice his son Ishmael.

“We have not been able to celebrate like this, with this many family and friends, in years,” said COL Akram Saddam, the 23rd IA Brigade Commander.

Over the next several months, 1-63 CAB will continue to work with their ISF partners to ensure that many significant national events take place without violence. Ashura, Arba’een, and the provincial elections are a few of the things the collective group will work on together. Of the future events, LT Brewster said, “If we can continue to facilitate discussion between the IA, IP, and Ministry of National Security, we have achieved success.”

While it was necessary at one point to train infantry ground soldiers, the situation in Iraq has clearly dictated that the host nation security forces need a competent staff. 1-63 CAB is doing all they can to ensure that takes place.



Soldiers provide overhead view of mission



By PFC
Evan Loyd

SPC Jason McDuffee, from Sierra Vista, Ariz., a UAV maintenance engineer, performs a preflight check on a UAV Dec. 3. McDuffee serves with the 502nd Military Intelligence Company, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division. (U.S. Army photo by PFC Evan Loyd)

Unmanned aerial vehicles have become a staple in Operation Iraqi Freedom – and keeping them airborne is key to success.

The Soldiers of the 502nd Military Intelligence Company, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, are tasked with maintaining, launching and recovering UAVs throughout the 2nd BCT's operational environment.

Based at Forward Operating Base Kalsu, which is located south of Baghdad, their mission is to ensure the brigade's UAVs are fully maintained and mission capable.

They are also the launch team: the initial pilots in support of Iron Brigade missions.

"We launch the UAVs here at FOB Kalsu and fly them out away from the base," said SPC Jonny Walling, from Spokane, Wash., a UAV operator with the 502nd MI Co. "Pilots at a ground control station in Camp Striker then take over the controls and use them for their assigned unit mission."

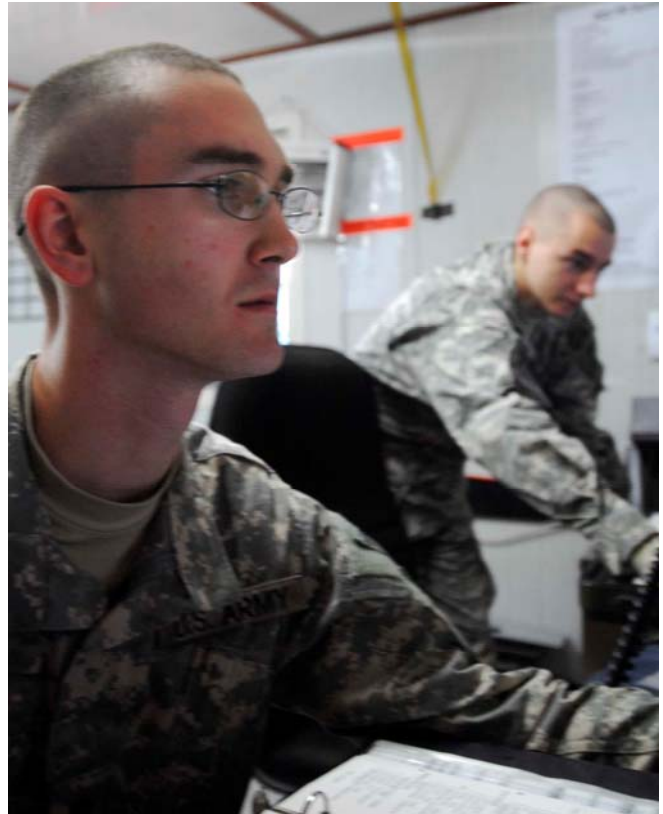
The UAVs are the eyes in the sky for a brigade that covers a lot of ground. The 2nd BCT operates in an area roughly twice the

size of Baghdad city proper.

"We support all the land units of the 2nd BCT by providing near real-time video of an overhead point of view for all operations," said SFC Steven Marin, a platoon sergeant who hails from Titusville, Penn. "It allows the unit commanders extra situational awareness for any mission."

The information provided by UAVs allows company, battalion and the Iron Brigades' top commander the ability to check and verify situations out in sector that would otherwise requires hours for a patrol to search for.

"We bring another level to the commanders overall situational awareness, allowing them a chance to check things that would take a lot longer for troops on the ground to find out: from seeing if a high-value insurgent is at his house to if smugglers are trying to cross a river or canal at night," said SPC Sam Bishop, a UAV operator, who is from Garden City, Mich.,. "If we see something suspicious, we report it. I personally found an IED during Iron Pursuit, and I'm proud that I'm doing a job that can save lives of the troops on the ground."



SPC Sam Bishop, from Garden City, Mich., and SPC Jonny Walling, from Spokane, Wash., both UAV operators, perform checks on the camera and flight controls of a UAV Dec. 3. Both Soldiers are assigned to the 502nd Military Intelligence Company. (U.S. Army photo by PFC Evan Loyd)



SFC Steven Marin, from Titusville, Penn., a platoon sergeant, goes over a future flight request with SPC Kaleigh Werra, from Milwaukee, Wis., a UAV mission commander, Dec. 3. Both Soldiers serve with the 502nd Military Intelligence Company. (U.S. Army photo by PFC Evan Loyd)

To date, the unit's UAVs have recorded more than 2,500 flight hours and more than 400 launches and recoveries. To accomplish this, the unit's UAV maintenance technicians have performed numerous repairs and adjustments to the equipment throughout the eight months they have been deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"I help to maintain all of our UAVs in working order," said SPC Jason McDuff-

fee, from Sierra Vista, Ariz., a UAV maintenance engineer. "We're here to put the birds in the air."

The Soldiers of the 502nd MI Co. continue to work day and night to support missions in the 2nd BCT's area of operations through the use of UAVs. Because of their efforts, ground troops of the Iron Brigade are able to get eyes on a target quickly and safely.

SGT John Neff, from Pompano Beach, Fla., the senior UAV maintenance engineer, assists SPC Jason McDuffee, from Sierra Vista, Ariz., a maintenance engineer of the UAVs, perform preflight maintenance on a UAV. Both Soldiers are assigned to the 502nd Military Intelligence Company. (U.S. Army photo by PFC Evan Loyd)





By SSG
Scott Wolfe

Siblings PFC Marlene Banuelos and SSG Normando Gallardo, both of whom are natives of El Paso, Texas, raise their right hands as each swears to serve for another six years in the U.S. Army. Banuelos serves with Headquarters, Headquarters Company and Gallardo serves with Company A, 40th Electronic Signal Brigade, in Balad. Administering the oath is COL Pat White, a native of Apple Valley, Calif., who is the commander of the 2nd BCT, 1st Armd. Div. (U.S. Army photo by SSG Scott Wolfe)

It's not unusual for Soldiers to reenlist while deployed to Iraq. In fact, with all the incentives, it is common place. For two Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers however, reenlisting together during a special reenlistment ceremony Dec. 7 at Camp Striker, Iraq, proved to truly be an Army “Family” adventure.

Such was the case for SSG Normando Gallardo, who, along with his sister, PFC Marlene Banuelos, made the commitment to stay with their Army Family for six more years during a ceremony at the headquarters of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division.

And overseeing the Family gathering was none other than COL Pat White, the Iron Brigade's commander, who is a native of Apple Valley, Calif.

Gallardo and Banuelos, both of whom are natives of El Paso, Texas, are serving together in Iraq, albeit at different bases. Gallardo serves with Company A, 40th Electronic Signal Brigade, which is based in Balad. Banuelos serves with the 2nd BCT, 1st Armd. Div., at Camp Striker.

It was perhaps fitting for the siblings to reenlist together, since the two have been influential to each other. Banuelos said she had initially intended on joining the Navy.



However, things didn't work out as initially planned and she changed her mind and decided to join her brother in the Army. In fact, he was at the wheel when she went to speak with the Army recruiter about enlisting. Almost two years later, he was there again when she raised her right hand and committed herself to staying with the team.

"It was her own decision," he said, speaking of the day he took her to the recruiter. "She couldn't go Navy, so I told her I could take her down to the Army Recruiter."

Gallardo, a cable system installer, has reenlisted for the sixth and what he says will be his final time in his career. With 15 years in

the army, he has his sister beat by a few years both in service and age.

"I'm 22, he's 35. There are 13 years between us," said the younger sister with just a hint of tease in her voice.

Banuelos, who signed her second enlistment contract, serves as a gunner with the command security detail team for the brigade's command sergeant major.

Gallardo said his younger sister had the final word on when the two would commit to their new service obligations.

"I had to call her up to ask when she wanted to do this," he quipped.

PFC Marlene Banuelos and her older brother, SSG Normando Gallardo, hold up their Oath of Enlistment certificates after reenlisting in the U.S. Army for another six years. Both are from El Paso, Texas. Banuelos serves with Headquarters, Headquarters Company, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, and Gallardo serves with Company A, 40th Electronic Signal Brigade, in Balad. (U.S. Army photo by SSG Scott Wolfe)



Soldier eulogized as the epitome of Army Values

*Written by LTC
Wayne Marotto*

*Photos by PFC
Evan Loyd*





A traditional Soldiers memorial erected at the Camp Striker Chapel, Victory Base Complex pays tribute to SSG Brandon Augustus on Dec. 17. Augustus was a member of Company C, 47th Forward Support Battalion, who died Dec. 11 while on Rest and Relaxation leave in Baumholder, Germany.(U.S. Army photo by PFC Evan Loyd)

SSG Brandon Augustus was memorialized by friends and fellow Soldiers during a ceremony at the Camp Striker Chapel on the Victory Base Complex Dec. 17.

Augustus, a combat medic with Company C, 47th Forward Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, Multi-National Division-Baghdad, died Dec. 11 in Baumholder, Germany while on Rest and Relaxation leave.

"I remember SSG Augustus after his being named the NCO of the quarter, flushed

with pride and with a big smile on his face. It was a good day, a very good day," said LTC Michel Russell, commander of 47th FSB.

Augustus was born in 1979 and joined the Army in June 1997. After graduating from Basic Combat Training, at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., he attended Advanced Individual Training at Fort Sam Houston, Texas and was awarded the military occupation specialty of combat medic.

Augustus was then assigned to United States Army Europe, where he served with



A traditional Soldiers memorial erected at the Camp Striker Chapel, Victory Base Complex pays tribute to SSG Brandon Augustus on Dec. 17. Augustus was a member of Company C, 47th Forward Support Battalion, who died Dec. 11 while on Rest and Relaxation leave in Baumholder, Germany. (U.S. Army photo by PFC Evan Loyd)

the Babenhausen Health Clinic, Wuerzburg Combat Support Hospital and finally Company C, 47th Forward Support Battalion, 2nd BCT, 1st Armd., Smith Barracks, Baumholder.

"He was a successful, squared away Soldier," said 1LT Gerard Galindo, acting commander of Company C. "I will always remember his smile."

Soldiers who memorialized Augustus remembered him as the epitome of what a Soldier should be, referring to his photograph adorned on the Army values poster in the headquarters of the 47th FSB.

"He was recognized as a true example of a leader living the Army values," said CPT Charles Lahmon, chaplain. "He lived for others and not himself and did what was right even when no one was looking."

Augustus was also remembered for bringing laughter to Company C and for being a family man.

"He was a great husband, father and friend," said SSG Chad Wilson a fellow medic. "I will never forget about you."

SPC Michael Woywood, a medic who was supervised by Augustus, described him as not the kind of man who talked about himself.

"One of SSG Augustus replies to any assigned mission was 'I got it'. I am going to miss SSG Augustus. We will all miss you. Now, we've got it," said Woywood.



*SSG Brandon Augustus
1979 – 2008*

Soldiers find

By 1LT

Matthew Houston

Comfort in Family

For many deployed Soldiers, the unit begins to feel like Family after serving and fighting alongside each other day after day. But for two Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 63rd Combined Arms Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, Multi-National Division- Baghdad currently deployed to Iraq, they already are.

SPC Rufo Lujan-Espinosa and PFC Andre Toves, both of whom are natives of the Territory of Guam, are cousins and serve together at Forward Operating Base Mahmudiyah, Iraq.

Both grew up in small towns only five miles apart on the southern part of the island of Guam. The two fondly reminisce about growing up together.

"I taught this guy everything he needed to know, fishing, body-boarding, snorkeling, anything a kid back on the island could want," said Lujan-Espinosa, age 22. "We're here in Iraq together, but now we both learn from each other."

While the pair spent much of their youth together, Toves moved to the state of Washington when he was nine years old.

"We were separated for years, but it was like we were never apart," said Toves, age 19. At the age of 17, Lujan-Espinosa left Guam to join the Air Force where he served a two-year enlistment. He then enlisted in the Army as a supply specialist.

Following his cousins lead, Toves enlisted in the U.S. Army as an infantryman. "I was so glad to hear that Andre was going to be stationed with me at Ft. Riley [Kansas]," said Lujan-Espinosa. "It was a family reunion a long time coming."

While they were in Kansas for only two months together prior to their unit deploying,



PFC Andre Toves and his cousin SPC Rufo Lujan-Espinosa, pal around at Forward Operating Base Mahmudiyah, Iraq on Dec. 17. Both are Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 63rd Combined Arms Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, Multi-National Division- Baghdad. Toves and Lujan-Espinosa grew up on the island of Guam and now serve together in Iraq. (U.S. Army photo by 1LT Matthew Houston)

the pair made great use of their time.

"We were always hanging out together back in the states... you'd be amazed how much ice cream this kid can eat," laughed Lujan-Espinosa. The duo spent much of their weekends together, going out and remembering their experiences together as kids in Guam, spear-fishing off of piers and playing on the beaches.

Both cousins agree that having a close family member here in Iraq with them has been very beneficial.

"It's been great knowing that Rufo's always got my back, helping me out, getting me stuff I may need or anything," said Toves.



47th Soldiers Conduct Sling Load Training

By PFC
Evan Loyd



SPC Matthew Crawford, from Baltimore, one of the sling load trainees of the sling load team of the 47th Forward Support Battalion, inspects a mock sling load for deficiencies during a sling Load training course held at Camp Striker Dec. 5, while SGT Anthony Davis, from Columbiana, Ala., an instructor of the sling load class watches. (U.S. Army photo by PFC Evan Loyd)

One way to beat traffic, avoid road-side bombs and bypass rough terrain is to park under a helicopter, strap your vehicle to it and let the chopper airlift you to your destination.

That's what Soldiers on the sling load team, 47th Forward Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, were training to do the first week in December at Camp Striker. It is a skill that the 47th FSB has been honing since they arrived in theater this past April from Baumholder, Germany.

“Our team started in April with the team being trained by the unit that the 47th FSB replaced. Before that, we only had three Soldiers trained,” said SSG Marcus Wilson, from Haines City, Fla., non-commissioned officer in charge of the sling load team. “Now we have 15 fully-trained Soldiers and we’re expecting more when this class is completed.”

Sling loads can carry more than just vehicles. They can carry a wide variety of supplies for the ground units.

“You can carry anything if the weight limit isn’t exceeded,” said SGT



Anthony Davis, from Columbiana, Ala., an assistant instructor of the sling load class. "Water, MREs, gear, ammunition, anything you can fit in a connex or even a vehicle, we can load it and the helicopter can bring it wherever it can fly."

One of the key points stressed in the sling load course is how to properly inspect rigged loads. During the class, the 47th SLT trainees performed a load inspection on an improperly rigged container.

"This course prepares us for future

missions," said SPC Matthew Crawford, from Baltimore, one of the sling load students. "It's always good to be prepared."

When dealing with containers that can weigh up to 26,000 lbs, safety isn't just a concern: it is a matter of life and death.

"The number-one thing that we want our sling loaders to know is situational awareness," said Wilson. "You have to know where the helicopter is, where your equipment is and why it's there. Inexperience is a killer in this job."

SSG Marcus Wilson, from Haines City, Fla., noncommissioned officers of the sling load team of the 47th Forward Support Battalion, shows trainees the proper way to set up a Sling Load before the trainees perform a load inspection on an improperly rigged container during a sling load training course held at Camp Striker Dec. 5. (U.S. Army photo by PFC Evan Loyd)





Santa Claus has an

Iron Brigade Christmas

By SSG
Scott Wolfe



CPT James Thomas, dressed as Santa, shakes hands with Soldiers in the motor pool of Patrol Base Assasin. Thomas serves with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, Multi-National Division-Baghdad. He flew around on Christmas day with COL Pat White, commander of the Iron Brigade, to lift Soldiers spirits. Thomas is a native of Oskaloosa, Kan., and White is native of Apple Valley, Calif. (U.S. Army photo by SSG Scott Wolfe)

Soldiers with the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, Multi-National-Division Baghdad received a visitor that took many by surprise Dec. 25.

At Combat Outposts Cashe, Cahill and Carver, along with Patrol Base Assasin, Santa and one of his helper elves decided to ride along with COL Pat White, the commander of the 2nd BCT, 1st Armd. Div., as he made his Christmas rounds.

Forgoing his sleigh for a Blackhawk helicopter, Santa, also known as CPT James Thomas, a native of Oskaloosa, Kan. and his elf, Warrant Officer Mark De-

boe, a native of Harlem, N.Y., doled out good cheer, laughs, and candy on a day most Soldiers would normally spend with family.

"We are bringing some holiday spirit and some cheer to Soldiers. I don't want them to think they are forgotten," said White, a native of Apple Valley, Calif.

Santa gathered Soldiers for pictures in the chow hall and the Morale, Welfare and Recreation buildings for group photos, while White helped himself to some deep-fried turkey at one of the patrol bases of Task Force 1st Battalion, 35th Armor Regi-

Regiment.

Santa was given a tour of all the headquarter areas and the new gym at COP Cashe South, where Task Force 1st Battalion, 35th Armor Regiment headquarters makes its home. While there, he gave candy and holiday wishes to everyone he saw. Two Soldiers made it a point to sit on Santa's lap and tell him what they wanted for Christmas next year.

Soldiers at Combat Outpost Cahill surrounded Col. White and Santa for a group photo after Kris Kringle walked through the crowds, shaking hands and having the elf dole out candy to "all the good boys and girls."

At the MWR building at COP Carver, Soldiers gathered around Santa for a group photo, and then more cameras started appearing. It seemed everyone wanted to take a picture with 'that jolly old elf.'

Where ever he went, he left smiles and holiday wishes.

The brigade commander spent most of his time in the background, just watching his troops as they played around with Santa in their midst.

Soldiers who asked for specific gifts had elf Deboe rummaging around in Santa's laundry bag of presents, acting like he was searching for that particular item.

With a cry of delight, elf Deboe would deposit a handful of candy in the Soldier's hands, telling him or her, "Sorry, some assembly required." He assured



Santa Claus, otherwise known as CPT James Thomas, who serves with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, has his picture taken with SFC Akinola Oladipo, a platoon sergeant in Company C, 2nd Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment at COP Cahill on Dec. 25. Thomas is a native of Oskaloosa, Kan., while Oladipo calls Newark, N.J., his home.(U.S. Army photo by SSG Scott Wolfe)

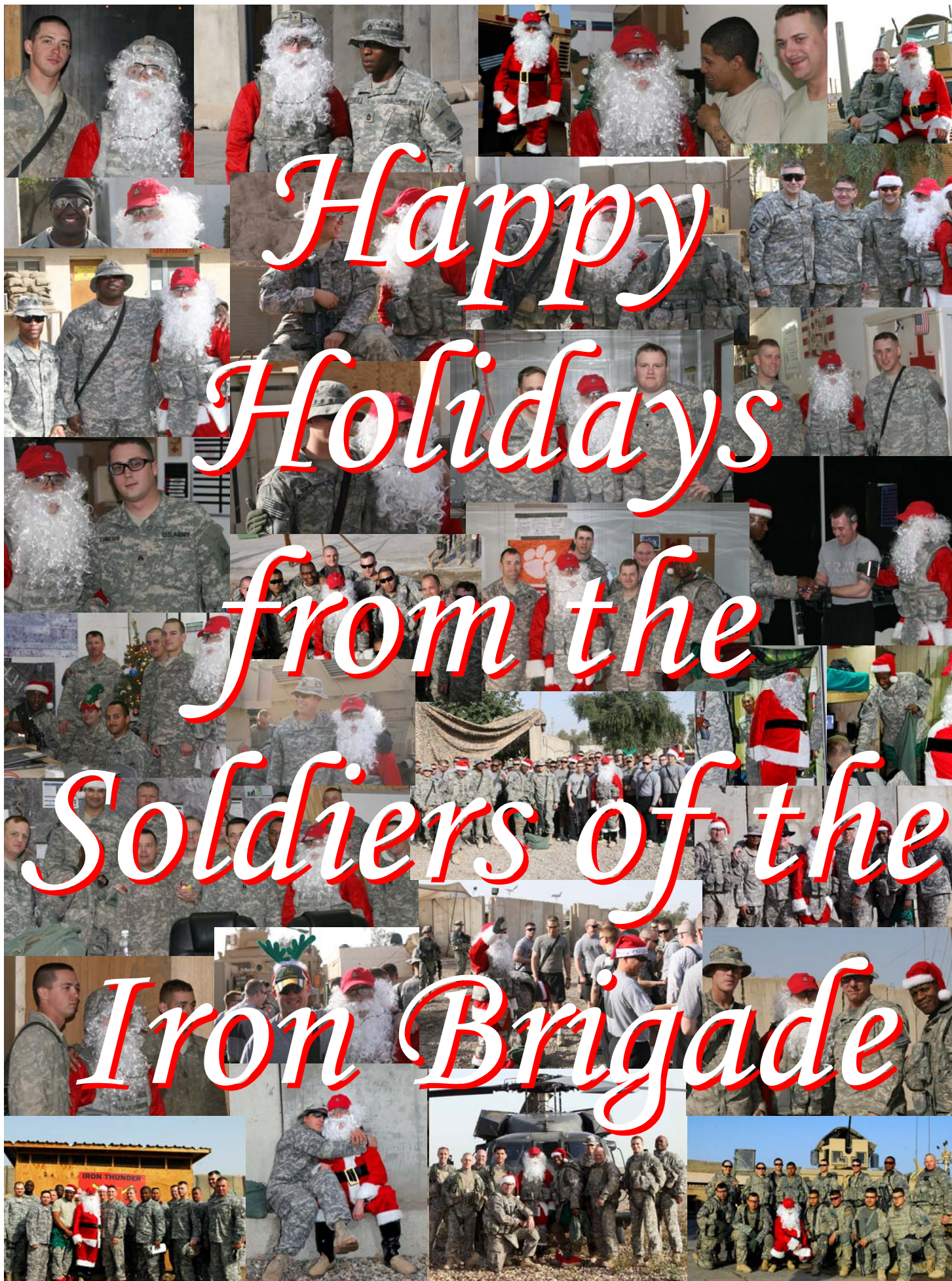
every Soldier that all the pieces were there. He was awful sorry that he could not find the directions though.

Before returning to Camp Striker, White pulled the crew of the two aircraft that had been carrying his party to the side and told him how much he appreciated their work on this holiday.

"You have helped make this holiday better for a lot of other Soldiers. You have my thanks."

He made it a point of shaking the hand of every member of that flight team.

The holidays are about being with families and friends and the visit from Santa reminded Soldiers that Christmas wasn't just at home, in Germany or the U.S. This holiday was here and now, with their squad, platoon, brigade... and Santa.



*Happy
Holidays
from the
Soldiers of the
Iron Brigade*

Soldiers send Season's Greetings Back to Families

By PFC
Evan Loyd



SPC David Allen, from Allentown, Penn., who serves with Company B, 1st Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment, Task Force 1-35, gives a holiday shout-out while SSG Kelly Collett, from Salt Lake City, Utah, 128th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, Division Special Troops Battalion, MND-B, records the Season's Greetings from COP Cashe, Iraq, Dec. 12. (U.S. Army photo by PFC Evan Loyd)

Soldiers in the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, received a chance to send a video holiday greetings back to their Families in Germany and the United States Dec. 12.

The troops stationed on or near Combat Outpost Cashe had two broadcast Soldiers recording shout outs in order to help boost morale for Iraqi based Soldiers and Family Members at home station by recording holiday wishes.

"It really builds unit's morale. It's great to see all the smiles as I look at my guys," said MSG Michael Sullivan from Yakestown,

Ohio, platoon sergeant for Battery C, 4th Battalion, 27th Field Artillery, Task Force 2-6 Infantry, 2nd BCT, 1st Armd. Div., MND-B. "I think it reminds them of home and gives them a break from the reality of being here."

Since many of the Soldiers won't be home for the holidays, this is a chance for their Families and friends to see their loved one is all right and looking forward to the end-of-deployment reunion.

"It's nice to be able to talk to my Family," said SGT Jonathan Brown, from Escondido, Calif., one of the Soldiers who recorded a greeting. "Even when I'm a thousand miles away they can still see me and see I'm ok."

The Soldiers provide their hometown in hopes that the local stations will air them. But, even if their hometown station isn't able to schedule airtime, Families and friends can still watch them on the internet by going to the Digital Video and Imagery Distribution System website.

DVIDS is a platform that uploads video recordings, pictures and news stories from the military via satellite to the internet so it may be viewed instantly from around the world.

"It's a great way to get videos, photos and audio files from the military to the public," said SSG Kelly Collett, from Salt Lake City, Utah, 128th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, MND-B. He was one of the two broadcast journalists recording shout outs. "Anyone who can use the internet can access these videos and watch them once we load them to the

system."

The DVIDS can be accessed by visiting their homepage at <http://www.dvidshub.net>. Once there, Families and friends can search for the Soldier's name and the unit that he or she is part of to find their greeting, a story, or photos of them. For easy access, the Iron Brigade's contributions to the system can be found at the <http://www.dvidshub.net/units/2BCT-1AD>.

"I think this is a great thing for a deployed Soldier and their Family," said SPC Ryan Wahl, from Grand Blanc, Mich., a Soldier of Task Force 1-35 Armor Regiment, who also recorded a greeting to his Family. "I just want to give a shout-out to my mom, my girlfriend and my friend Justin in Grand Blanc, Mich., Happy Holidays and I miss you guys."

SSG Kelly Collett, from Salt Lake City, Utah, 128th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, Division Special Troops Battalion, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, gives shout-out instruction to MSG Michael Sullivan from Yakestown, Ohio, Battery C, 4th Battalion, 27th Field Artillery Regiment, Task Force 2-6, and Soldiers in his platoon before their Season's Greetings from JSS Assassin, Iraq, Dec. 12.(U.S. Army photo by PFC Evan Loyd)



Pioneers show Iron Brigade

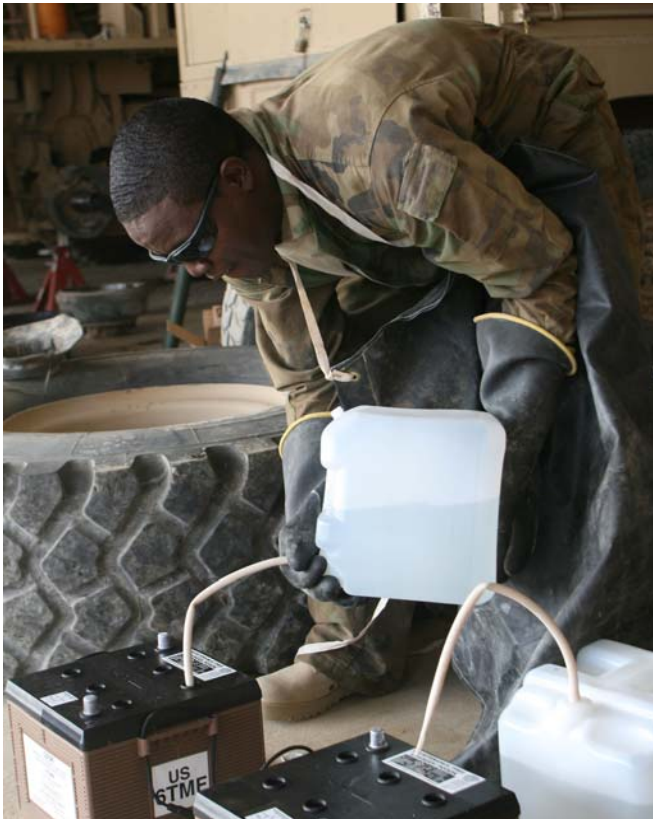
By SSG
Scott Wolfe

The meaning of maintenance excellence

Company B, 47th Forward Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad will be honored at the U. S. Army Europe Combined Logistics Excellence Award ceremony the first week of April 2009. The unit based out of Smith Barracks in Baumholder, Germany, will receive the gold medal award as the winners of the USAREUR Award for Maintenance Excellence.

At the ceremony awards will be given for maintenance, supply and deployment excellence, with the winners receiving golden trophies and the runner-up silver.

Chief Warrant Officer 2 Dorian Bozza, from Queens, N.Y., was the battalion maintenance officer for the 47th “Modern Pioneers.” He entered the unit for the award to recognize the battalion’s maintenance accomplishments during their current deployment to Operation Iraqi Freedom.



SPC Kip Bonds and SPC Ryan Spengler work together to refill the hubs of a humvee, going through maintenance services on Camp Striker on Dec. 15. Bonds and Spengler are wheeled-vehicle mechanics with Company B, 47th Forward Support Company, the winner of the 2008 Army Maintenance Award for Excellence in USAREUR and 7th Army. Bonds is a native of Kansas City, Mo., while Spengler calls Anaheim, Calif., home. (U.S. Army photo by SSG Scott Wolfe)

SPC Prince Jones, from Bowie, Md., prepares batteries for use in vehicles going through services on Camp Striker on Dec. 15. Jones is a wheeled-vehicle mechanic with Company B, 47th Forward Support Company, the winners of the 2008 Army Maintenance Award for Excellence in USAREUR and 7th Army. (U.S. Army photo by SSG Scott Wolfe)

"I put them in for the award to show 'Big Army' how the (47th) FSB is the lifeblood of the (2nd) Brigade," said Bozza who is now the battalion maintenance officer for Task Force 1-35 Armor, 2nd BCT, 1st Armd. Div., MND-B. "You can't run without maintenance, and they don't get the credit they deserve. The award is very time consuming, but also very rewarding to win."

Bozza spent a lot of time putting the packet together. It has 25 pages of supporting documents: from pictures to missions and descriptions of the extenuating circumstances surrounding them.

"After I put it all together, at first I could not believe what we had done. We did the maintenance for two battalions with one company for a while," said Bozza. "We took care of the maintenance for the Georgian contingent that was with us," referring to the coalition partner that had teamed up with the 2nd BCT until their redeployment to Georgia in August.

He laughed and said, "We had to translate the 5988E and Technical Manual into Georgian."

The 47th FSB is a legacy brigade and had to restructure its maintenance program before their deployment in April, 2008. Now, instead of each company having specialized personnel and taking care of their own vehicles in the battalion, one company does everything with access to all the specialized equipment needed for different repairs.

"That changed everything. We went from taking care of 178 vehicles to over 800. Add in the Georgians and that is another 68 vehicles," said SSG Matthew Crane, from Wolcott, N.Y., who is the Company B motor sergeant and also the unscheduled maintenance NCOIC. Any maintenance issues that are noted when an operator conducts preventive maintenance checks and services goes through him.

Bozza added that the Pioneers are much smaller than the 203rd Brigade Support Battalion that they replaced. The mission parameters and their responsibilities have not changed though.

"Our Job is to put vehicles on the road so they can do missions," said SFC Ignacio



CWO2 Dorian Bozza, battalion motor officer, and SFC Ignacio Ortega, battalion motor sergeant, of the 47th Forward Support Battalion. Bozza was the motor pool officer for Company B when he put in the company's application for the Army Maintenance Award for Excellence. Here they receive the news on Dec. 15 that Company B beat out the competition in USAREUR and 7th Army as the winners of the 2008 AMAE. The award is to be presented in early April. Ortega is a native of Guadalajara, Mexico, while Bozza calls Queens, N.Y., his home.(U.S. Army photo by SSG Scott Wolfe)

Ortega, a native of Guadalajara, Mexico. He is the battalion motor sergeant and next month will have been in the Army for 17 years.

He says he has never been with a unit to receive an award this prestigious.

"I don't know how we keep up with everything with all the stuff we inherited," added Ortega.

Bozza said that the non-mission capable equipment went from two to 57 after the 47th performed its first maintenance inspections on the signed-for vehicles.

"That was pretty bad," he said.

But the BMO thinks that Company B can take whatever is thrown at it and winning the AAME would seem to prove him right.

"I think the 47th does the best maintenance in the brigade," he said. "With all of the challenges and taskings, we do an excellent job."

To Ortega, winning the award means, "All we went through, all the teamwork, all came to something good."



Iraqi Army pays Sons of Iraq

By LTC
Wayne Marotto

An Iraqi Army Officer from 2nd Battalion, 23rd Brigade, 17th Iraqi Army pays a Sol member at Patrol Base Lions Den during Sol pay day activities on Dec. 19. The Government of Iraq assumed complete control of the Sol in October, paying a monthly stipend equivalent to \$300. Soldiers from Company B, 1st Battalion, 63rd Combined Arms Battalion, which is currently assigned to the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, provided overwatch and assistance for the Sol and IA. (U.S. Army photo by LTC Wayne Marotto)

More than 1,250 Sons of Iraq waited in line on a chilly day at Iraqi Army Patrol Base Lions Den, home to the 2nd Battalion, 23rd Brigade, 17th Iraqi Army, to receive their monthly pay Dec. 19.

The soldiers of the 2nd Bn., 23rd Bde., 17th IA commanded by Iraqi LTC Fataeh Rashed Hamed, efficiently handed out the \$300 monthly pay which is roughly equal to 356,850 Iraqi Dinar to the Sol members.

"The Sol payment is very organized. The commanders in the battalion hold a meeting with the Sheiks before the pay day and plan the activity," said 1LT Brad Roush, of Louisburg, Kan., platoon leader for Company B, 1st Battalion, 63rd Combined Arms Battalion, which is currently assigned to the 2nd Brigade Combat

Team, 1st Armored Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad. "Then they execute the plan. The IA and Sol work very well together and this battalion in particular operates independently."

The IA independence was apparent as the MND-B Soldiers on the scene mostly observed the pay day activities and occasionally checked to see if all the paper work was complete.

The Sol members were brought to the IA patrol base and organized in single file lines to show their picture identification, sign their name and give a thumb print by their Sheiks.

Sheik Falah Makedi Shiaa-al Amery brought his Sol tribal members to pick up their pay.

"We (my tribe) don't want the

the Americans to leave Iraq,” said Sheik Falah. “The American forces make a good program with the Sol and it helps us a lot.”

For many of the men, the Sol program is their only means to support themselves or their families.

“If there were no Sol, it would be bad and dangerous here,” said Sheik Falah. “The Sol puts security in the area to stop the attacks. The people now have a job and money.”

The Government of Iraq has now

paid the Sol members for two months with only minor problems since taking the pay responsibility from the Coalition Forces.

One Sol member, Alaa Muhammad Hussen, said that there has not been any problems for him receiving his pay for the last two months from the Gol.

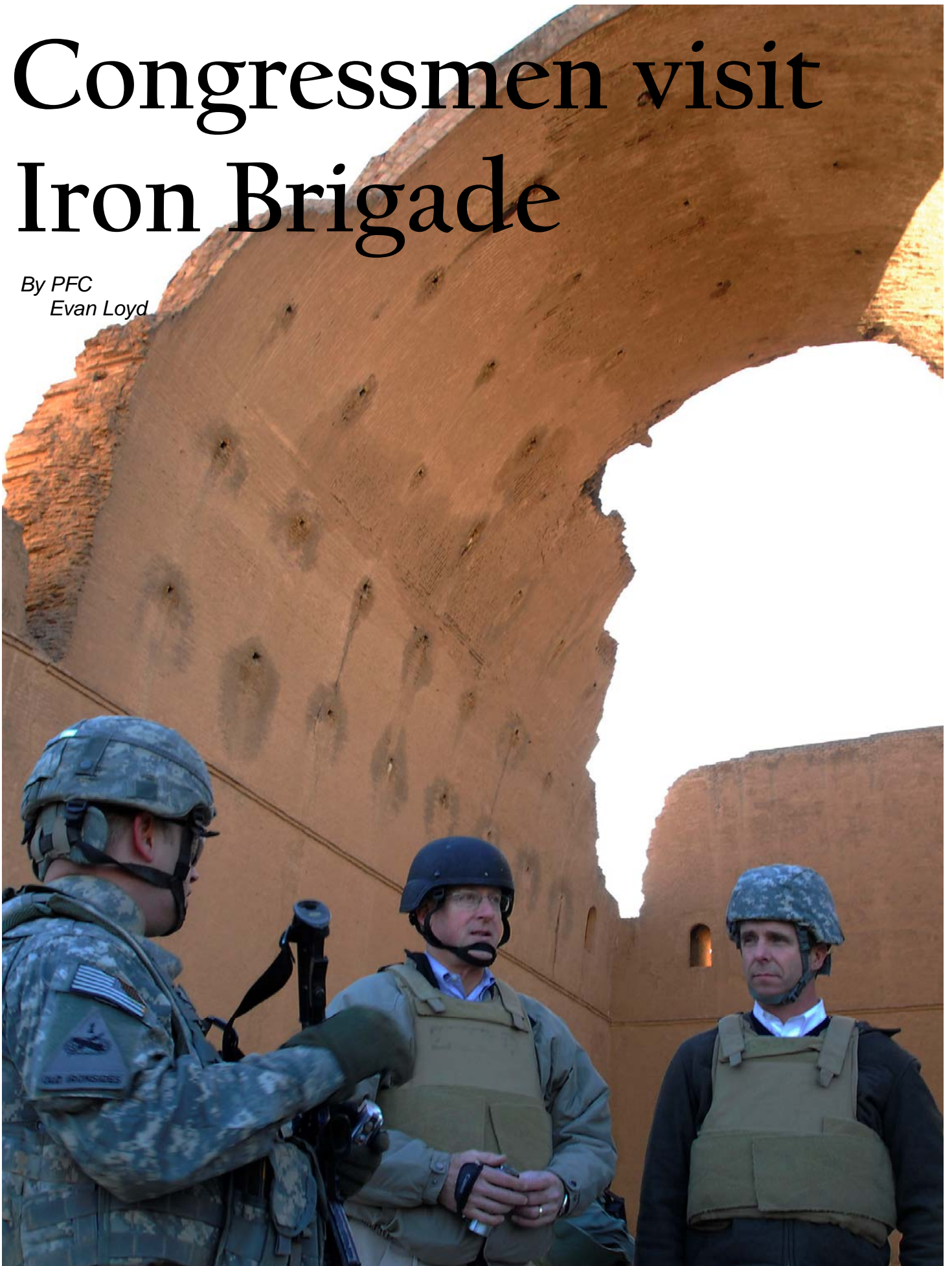
“There is a good relationship between the Sol and IA,” said Hussen. “I am happy to be an Sol, because my home is safe; I have a job and I get paid.”

A local Sheik waits with his tribal members for Sol pay day activities at Iraqi Army Patrol Base Lions Den on Dec. 19. The Government of Iraq assumed complete control of the Sol in October, paying a monthly stipend equivalent to \$300. Soldiers from Company B, 1st Battalion, 63rd Combined Arms Battalion, which is currently assigned to the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, provided overwatch and assistance for the Sol and IA. (U.S. Army photo by LTC Wayne Marotto)



Congressmen visit Iron Brigade

By PFC
Evan Loyd





LTC Michael Shrout, from Renton, Wash., commander of the 2nd battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment, explains the historical significance of the Ctesiphon Arch to Congressmen Joe Courtney from the 2nd district of Connecticut, Mike Conaway, from the 11th district of Texas, and Rob Wittman, the representative of the 1st district of Virginia, during a tour of the area surrounding COP Carver Dec.17. (U.S. Army photo by PFC Evan Loyd)

The 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, had four members of the U.S. House of Representatives visit the headquarters of the Iron Brigade at Camp Striker, Iraq, Dec. 17.

Congressmen Mike Conaway, who represents the 11th district of Texas, Gene Taylor who represents the 4th District of Mississippi, Rob Wittman who represents the 1st district of Virginia, and Joe Courtney who

represents the 2nd district of Connecticut met with their constituents and toured the battle area.

The first stop on their tour was at the brigade headquarters on Camp Striker. There, they were greeted by COL Pat White, from Apple Valley, Calif., the commander of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, who briefed them on the Iron Brigade's activities throughout the Mada'in and Mahmudiyah Qadas since arriving in April 2008.

After the brief, the Congressmen met with Soldiers to discuss any issues they had and to have photographs taken with their constituents.

"It was really amazing meeting Congressman Mike Conaway," said SGT Tess Krause, from Crosby, Texas, a supply sergeant of the Headquarters and Headquarters Company. "I didn't expect to meet a congressman when I deployed to Iraq."

The representatives were then flown to Combat Outpost Carver where they had a brief of the Salman Pak area by LTC Michael Shrout, a native of Renton Wash., and the commander of the 2nd Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment.

The Congressmen then toured Salman Pak to include the sixteen-hundred year old

Ctesiphon Arch and a local market. Before returning to the COP, they talked with Mr. Abu Bahar, the mayor of Salman Pak

Arriving at COP Carver in time for dinner, the members of the House were once again able to sit down and talk with Soldiers about their lives here in Iraq.

"It has been great coming and visiting the Soldiers here in Iraq," said Congressman Joe Courtney representing the 2nd District of Connecticut.

Coming to Iraq and visiting with the Iron Brigade gave these members of the House of Representatives the chance, however briefly, to become familiar with some of the same experiences and sights the people they represent have every day as they serve in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Congressman Joe Courtney who represents the 2nd district of Connecticut, talks over dinner with a Soldier of the Task Force 2-6 Infantry, about his involvement in the war during dinner after a tour of the area surrounding Combat Outpost Carver Dec. 17.(U.S. Army photo by PFC Evan Loyd)



A photograph of a military tank, likely an M1 Abrams, positioned in a grove of palm trees. The tank is dark green and has various equipment on top, including a white box and a mounted machine gun. The scene is hazy, suggesting a desert environment. The tank is the central focus, with palm trees framing it on both sides. The ground is covered with dry, brown vegetation.

Task Force Thunder
cleans up grove in

Operation
Panda Garden

By SSG
Scott Wolfe



1LT Andrew Schlaf, the fire support officer for Company B, 1st Battalion, 35th Armor Regiment, Task Force 4-27 "Thunder", directs a Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle onto a temporary bridge in the Jabour area, south of Baghdad Dec. 15. The bridge enabled all the vehicles involved in Operation Panda Garden to reach the staging area, by covering a canal that would have otherwise obstructed movement. Schlaf is from San Diego, Calif. (U.S. Army photo by SSG Scott Wolfe)

Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers continue to build upon their working relationship with the Sons of Iraq and Iraqi Army elements during Operation Panda Garden in the Jabour area, south of Baghdad, Dec. 15.

Company B, 1st Battalion, 35th Armor Regiment, Task force 4-27, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, MND-B, had over all control of the mission. They coordinated with the 4th Company, 2nd Battalion, 55th Brigade, 17th Iraqi Army and Sons of Iraq from the Jabour area for perimeter security during the operation.

The missions' intent was to clear prime, arable farmland suspected of being filled with mines and IEDs before completing cache sweeps through the area. The exercise was designed to deny suspected caches to al-Qaeda Iraq elements during the upcoming elections and provide useable farmland to the village.

"We've got our engineer assets and our tanks. They're going to clear that palm grove and make it usable for the local farmers," said 1LT Andrew Schlaf, from San Diego, Calif. He is the fire support officer for

Company B and coordinated all communication from the tactical operations center during this mission. “We just want to make sure that the Iraqi citizens don’t get hurt when they go out to farm.”

On a clear, sunny day with blustery winds, members of the explosive ordnance detachment from the 447th ECES searched what would become the command post during Panda Garden, first with a robot, then with suited-up personnel.

Air Force SSG Kathleen Lee and her military working dog, Cezar, inspected the rooms that would soon house the TOC for the duration of Panda Garden. Lee and Cezar are members of MND-B’s “Striker Kennels”, the K-9 working dogs attached to the Iron Brigade for this mission.

After the house was cleared by machine, man, and beast, Company C, 40th Engineer Battalion, working at the request of TF 4-27, started clearing the palm grove wind breaks on either side of the fallow field at the near end of the objective.

SPC James Gaudio, of Shabbona, Ill., is a combat engineer with the company and guided a remote-controlled vehicle, called a VNU-4, through the larger spaces between trees. The vehicle has a mine roller attachment he used to clear lanes through the groves. The roller plates weigh approximately 300 pounds each.

The remote uses a hand-held controller much like that of a gaming console, even with the squares, circles and triangles on the buttons.

Gaudio said that another configuration of the VNU-4 utilized that portion of the controller.

“I find it funny that I don’t play video games, and yet I get a joystick from one to run an Army robot,” said the combat engineer.



SPC James Gaudio, from Shabbona, Ill., is a combat engineer with Company C, 40th Engineer Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad. He remotely controls a VNU-4 mine clearing vehicle with a gaming console-style controller while searching large-open spaces between the palm trees in the Jabour area, south of Baghdad Dec. 15. The grove was being searched by the engineers at the behest of Task Force 4-27 “Thunder” for Operation Panda Garden. The mission’s intent is to deny any caches found in the grove and the farmland it surrounds from insurgent or AQI forces during the upcoming elections. The area is suspected of containing mines, unexploded ordnance and improvised explosive devices. (U.S. Army photo by SSG Scott Wolfe)

Other members of Company C cleared the areas around trees and locations where the remote vehicles could not reach using a combination of mine-detectors and careful probing by hand.

SPC Aaron Laperna, a native of Dorr, Mich., explained that the mine detectors are a combination metal detector and small ground-penetrating radar array. When the detector goes off, it is because it has observed a change in the density of the ground underneath, coupled with metal content.

The empty field itself would be cleared by the tanks of Company B, with mine-roller attachments prominent on their armored behemoths. These tanks would prowl throughout the plot of land, trusting in their armor to protect them from an IED or mine.

Later, the field was searched by a Husky from the engineer company. It is a single-Soldier vehicle that uses radar detection panels to look beneath the surface of the ground. When the vehicle operator

would register an anomaly, he marked the location for a follow-on team with ground-penetrating radar mounted on a two-wheeled cart for further investigation.

The operation lasted until the Dec. 19th and coordinated many different elements to ultimately make life better for local Iraqis.

When the mission was declared over, the village leader had the ability to have his people plant more valuable farmland and harvest the dates from the palm grove.

Before TF 4-27 planned to clear the area of both hazardous obstacles and possible caches, the field and grove were resources in reach, but unavailable to the village of South Arab.

The wide range of systems utilized shows that MND-B forces are committed to denying caches from criminal elements who would wish to disrupt the upcoming elections and to bettering the lives of the Iraqi people.

An Abrams tank from Company B, 1st Battalion, 35th Armor Regiment, Task Force 4-27 "Thunder", clears fallow fields surrounded by an untended palm grove in the Jabour area, south of Baghdad Dec. 15. The farmland is suspected of being mined and containing unexploded ordnance and improvised explosive devices. The tank has a roller attachment at its prow used to uncover mines and other explosive devices. Operation Panda Garden, under the direction of the company, is intended to clear the area of explosive devices and search for any caches buried in the area. The cleared farmland will then be used by local villagers and the grove will be tended for its dates.(U.S. Army photo by SSG Scott Wolfe)





Wetzel Wizard

Dec 2008

Our Magic is Knowledge!

Focus on Learning

Every year, Wetzel Educators meet to discuss the academic needs of the students in our school. This year we identified that our students need to work on critical thinking skills in order to help them to become more successful life-long learners. We created a school performance goal based on the need to increase our students' thinking skills across the curriculum. In order to help our students to accomplish this goal, the staff at Wetzel selected a problem-solving strategy that will help them learn to analyze and creatively solve problems in all content areas. The strategy that we selected is called TIPS + E. Each letter in the acronym refers to a specific part of the analytical thinking process. Here is a breakdown of what each letter represents:

- T- **Think** about the problem
- I- **Information** given
- P- **Plan** how to solve the problem
- S- **Solve** the problem
- E- **Explain** your thinking

Each teacher encourages the use of critical thinking skills in their classrooms. Some of you may be very familiar with the TIPS + E strategy. It is being used in classrooms across our school in a variety of subjects and curricular areas.

Please encourage your child to use this strategy at home as well. By using this intervention, students will form skills needed to become better life-long problem solvers and be able to think more critically.

If you have any questions about how this strategy is being implemented in your child's classroom, please contact your child's teacher or the subject area specialist.

Mission & Goals Of WES

The mission of the Wetzel Elementary School Community is to promote an environment that enables all students to acquire the knowledge and skills to become successful life-long learners and responsible citizens in an ever-changing, global society.

Student Performance Goal #1: All students will increase their literacy skills across the curriculum. Essence: Literacy skills are defined at Wetzel Elementary School as the ability to comprehend written text and communicate ideas.

Student Performance Goal #2: All students will increase their thinking skills across the curriculum. Essence: Thinking skills are defined at Wetzel Elementary School as analyzing and interpreting information, devising strategies for solving problems and justifying solutions to problems.

Dates to Remember:

Dec. 17- Lunch and Learn

11:45-12:45 How to use TIPS+E

Dec. 18 – Winter Talent Show 1700-1830

Dec. 19 - Early Release@ 11:01

Dec. 22 -Winter Recess Begins

Jan. 5 - Instruction Resumes

Jan. 16- Early Release @ 11:01

Jan. 19 - Martin Luther King, Jr. Day – Federal Holiday

Jan. 22 - End of Second Quarter

Jan. 23 - No School for Students - Teacher Work Day

Jan. 26 - Begin Third Nine Weeks

Jan. 26 - CSP Day -

No School for Students

Jan. 30 - Parent Teacher Conferences



Wetzel Wizard

Dec 2008

Our Magic is Knowledge!

Holiday Cake Decorating Contest

Calling all Wetzel Wizard Bakers! Here is a great way to showcase your talents:

Adult Contest Rules:

1. It must be a cake you **bake** and you **decorate completely by yourself**.
2. Every cake entry must have an **application and a picture of you decorating it**. It must be decorated as a **winter holiday theme**.

Child Contest Rules:

1. An adult can help you bake the cake, but not decorate it.
2. **You must have a picture of yourself decorating the cake**. An adult may not help you assemble or decorate the cake. **You must do it all by yourself**. It must be decorated as a **winter holiday theme**.

All Cakes & Entries Must Be Delivered to Mrs. McKenzie, Room 207 on December 18th, by 3 P.M.

Judging will take place on December 18th and the winners announced on December 18th at 6 P.M. in the Cafegymatorium.

***The cakes will not be returned** POC Mary McKenzie mary.mckenzie@eu.dodea.edu

Wetzel Elementary School Presents: Celebration of the Arts:

When: December 18, 2008

Time: 4:30 – 6:30

Where: In the Cafegymatorium

Agenda: 4:30 Essay and Art Contest
Awards Presentation

5:00 Talent Show

6:00 Cake Decorating Contest
Awards and Auction

*Reception of cake and punch to follow
POC's for the evening: Mrs. Mary McKenzie and Mr. Steven Rayburn

A Wetzel Parent Shares her Navajo Heritage

As a part of this study on Native Americans, a first grade class hosted a Navajo parent. Mrs. Locklear set up a display and spoke with the children about growing up on a reservation. Things are quite different now, but it was so nice hearing about the past. She shared with us their clothing, art, and taught us some Navajo words. We thank Mrs. Locklear for making time for us!



A Flat Person from North Carolina Visited a First Grade Class

Flat Kristina visited us from Raleigh North Carolina. She was able to play outside in the snow with the students before traveling back inside her envelope. Flat Kristina also went to meet the Principal. The children wrote a letter to accompany Kristina on her travels back to North Carolina.





Wetzel Wizard

Dec 2008

Our Magic is Knowledge!



Mrs. Balilo is giving Flat Kristina a proper Wetzel Wizard welcoming!

Registrar Remarks

- 1) The following website provides information about school closures during inclement weather: <http://g3operations.hqusareur.army.mil/Divisions/OPS/ASGConditions/default.asp>
- 2) Please assist your child in memorizing their home, cell, and work numbers. A great tip is to write the numbers in their agenda.
- 3) Please call the school or e-mail Mrs. Peterson susan.peterson@eu.dodea.edu if your child will be late or absent by 9:00. If a parent can not be reached, protocol is to call the local emergency contacts, or sponsor work place, and so on until your child's wellbeing can be verified.

Student Leadership Club's Food Drive

The student Leadership Club would like to extend an ecstatic thank you to all of our wonderful Baumholder Families for their generosity during the Thanksgiving Food Drive. Wetzel was able to deliver over 1,100 food items to the Post Chapel. This enabled many baskets to be made for our less fortunate families and there was extra food to resupply the emergency pantry at the chapel! A special congratulations to the following top three classes:

- 1st Place: Mrs. McKenzie's 2/3 Class
- 2nd Place: Mr. Gus' 6th Grade Class
- 3rd Place: Mrs. Greenlee's 2/3 Class

The Wetzel Wizards know how to take care of each other as great community members!

DODEA Customer Satisfaction Survey

In our continual efforts to improve the quality of education we provide, your voice is critical to us. We want to know how successful you think we have been in meeting your needs this year and are very interested in learning those areas in which you believe we have room for improvement. Your opinion is very important to us and will contribute to the decisions DoDEA educators will be making about our schools in the near future.

I know how difficult it can be to find time for yet another task among the many family and professional responsibilities we all have. However, some things, such as the surveys below, are genuinely worth the extra time and effort they require. I am requesting that each eligible participant complete the appropriate survey. Completing the survey will assist us in identifying and addressing areas that need attention.

We have designed the survey to be as brief as possible. The questions were drawn from surveys given across the United States so that our results will also help us compare your responses to those nationwide. Please let your voice be heard by answering the following questions and also, if you wish, by adding comments in the space provided. Your views are anonymous, greatly appreciated and given serious consideration in our decision-making.

I thank you for your attention to this and for the extraordinary level of support our schools receive from you.

Sincerely,
Shirley A. Miles
(Director of DoDEA)

The survey can be found on our School Webpage or simply click on the link below.

<https://webapps.dodea.edu/CSS0809/survey/intro1.cfm?ST=P>

If you do not have a computer at home, please stop by our Information Center and Ms. Chamness, our Information Specialist, will be more than happy to assist you! Thank you for your continued partnership.

S1 Personnel

By SFC Steven Martz



Officer Candidate School

Are you thinking about becoming an Officer and just don't know where to start? Officer Candidate School, or OCS, is the top program for becoming an Officer if you either already have your Baccalaureate degree or are close to completion. All eligibility requirements are outlined in Chapter 1, AR 350-01 and applicants must submit all required documents outlined in Chapter 7.

There are two methods of selection into OCS. The first is direct select through an Army General Officer Commander and the second is the HRC board select method. Though the direct select process has a higher standard, it is also the easiest way in. In order to be selected through the direct select program, you must not have reached your 38th birthday, not require any waivers, and have a minimum of a four year degree. All applicants require a structured local board interview and must write a written statement indicating "Why I want to be an Army Officer." Structured local boards are comprised of three Army

Officers who will interview the applicant using DA Form 6285.

Once the applicant has submitted all the required documents and gone through the structured local board, the OCS packet is forwarded to Division G1 for the Commanding General's review and signature. If the Commanding General endorses the OCS packet, the OCS packet is sent to HQDA for the next branching board. If the Commanding General does not endorse the OCS packet, the packet is forwarded to HQDA for the next selection board, and if selected, will follow on to the branching board.

Though the Brigade has not set a structured local board schedule, the first board will commence soon, so if you are interested, begin preparing your packets immediately. For more information on the OCS process, go to [HTTPS://www.hrc.army.mil/site/active/opdistacc/ocs/cocs/htm](https://www.hrc.army.mil/site/active/opdistacc/ocs/cocs/htm) or www.goarmy.com/ocs.



Safety Bulletin

By Jerrold Scharninghausen



Insect Activities

Winter normally implies an end to insect activity. Here in Iraq, winter is when the bugs come out in force.

During the summer months, the temperatures are simply too hot for any major insect activity.

Additionally since water is required as part of their lifecycle, breeding areas are extremely limited during warmer weather.

Once the rains hit however, Iraq becomes a gigantic insect breeding ground. You have probably noticed that the number of flies, mosquitoes and other insects have increased dramatically since the rains started. We won't be able to avoid them entirely, but you can minimize their impact.

To avoid biting insects, apply standard military skin repellent (DEET) to all areas of exposed skin. DEET (NSN 6840-01-284-3982) is available through the supply system. For house flies, sanitation is the key. Keep your work and living areas clean and empty trash regularly. Also, do not leave food sitting out uncovered. Flies can act as mechanical vectors for many bacterial and viral diseases. Whatever that fly brought with it from that pile of camel dung will probably not enhance the flavor of your meal.

Insecticide application is one other option. Do not use Fly Bait in areas where food is prepared or served. Fly Bait attracts flies to that location, but the smell or real food may be more attractive. Think of it this way, would you rather have a MRE or a steak dinner. Sure some people may chose the MRE to avoid the walk and

standing in line, but the majority will go for the steak. It's not any different for the flies. Bringing them in close to the DFAC just gives them additional choices. The insecticide label gives specific instructions on application distances from food service facilities. Don't create problems for yourself by not reading the label.

Insects are not the only population increase that occurs in winter. Rodent populations increase as the available food increases, so more insects mean more rodents. To avoid attracting rodents into your area, keep it clean. Remove the trash daily. Do not leave any food, including sealed items such as cookies, potato chips, etc. sitting out in the open. Rodents are good climbers. Putting food on the top shelf will not prevent them from getting a meal. Keep all items in an air tight container to prevent the smell from attracting the rodents to start with.

The effects of the rains don't just stop there. As the population of rodents increase, snakes move into the area to be close to their food source. The snakes commonly found in Iraq include vipers, pit vipers, mole vipers, cobras and black snakes. Their venom ranges from bad to worse. If you see a snake, do not under any circumstances attempt to handle it.

Leave the area and report it so that it can be removed properly. Of course, not attracting the snakes into your area to start with is much better for your blood pressure. It all comes down to basic cause and effect. Keeping your areas clean and food stored properly will prevent unwanted visitors.

Chaplain's Corner

By CHAP (CPT) Archie Durham
Task Force 4-27 Battalion Chaplain



Spiritual Nutrition

Nutrition is a hot topic for Soldiers and their spouses especially around the holidays. Everyone wants to make sure that they are eating a balanced diet. No one wants his or her weight gains or losses to become problem issues. Most of us relate our nutritional habits with our health. However, when it comes to the topic of our spiritual health, I'm afraid that we are not getting the spiritual nutrition that we need in order to maintain a happy family life.

The Spiritual nourishment I'm referring to involves four primary elements: 1.)healing, 2.)sustaining, 3.)reconciling, and 4.)guiding. The first element, *healing*, involves individual efforts to help both ourselves and others to overcome some impairment in order to move toward wholeness. The second element, *sustaining*, refers to acts of caring given by individuals to help hurting persons to endure and/or to transcend circumstances. The third element, *reconciling*, refers to our efforts to re-establish broken relationships. The final and fourth element, *guiding*, refers to helping people make wise choices, which in turn, only promotes growth and spiritual maturity.

A recently published book entitled "Revolution" published by the Barna Institute speaks about a new movement among Christian believers in America. This revolution suggests that Christians do not have to

leave their current jobs and geographic locations or become traditional "ministers" or "missionaries" in order to share their faith. Rather a cross section of Americans including supervisors, office workers, neighbors, friends, and family members have decided to make the circles of their everyday lives a holy sanctuary and a pulpit from which they can minister to needs of others.

This book suggests that Christians now realize that they can provide spiritual nourishment for others from their offices, their homes, and other places that are not normally associated with the church. In other words, one of the best places to both provide and to find spiritual nourishment might occur within a small group, one that consists of only two or three people who get together in an office or a home to have a Bible study. Of course, I am not suggesting that we "forsake the assembling of ourselves together" in a church service. However, I am suggesting that when trying to maintain a balanced diet of spiritual nourishment, we should find daily meals within the circle of our everyday lives.

So, this holiday season when you are thinking about what diet has the best nutritional values, don't forget about the spiritual nutrition you need in order to maintain a happy family life.



Striker Justice

By SGT Natasha Stevens
2nd BCT Prosecution Task Force Paralegal NCO



A New Year with a new Detention Operations mission

In light of the United Nations Security Council Resolution expiring on 1 January 2009, and the newly endorsed Bi-Lateral Security Agreement taking effect, it has become evident that the mission of detention operations has evolved from intelligence-based targeting to warrant-based targeting. Under the new agreement, local nationals who pose a security threat can only be detained with a warrant.

In order to obtain a warrant, two local national eyewitnesses must present sworn testimony directly to an Iraqi Investigative Judge (IJ). Upon hearing the witnesses and reviewing all other available evidence, the IJ will then make a determination issue a warrant for the arrest or not. Biometrics and DNA evidence will be considered, but are not yet viewed as concrete evidence by the majority of the Iraqi Judicial community.

In order to comply with these new requirements, the brigade has created a Prosecution Task Force, composed of individuals from multiple branches whose sole responsibility is to network with local Iraqi Security Force and Central Criminal Court of Iraq counterparts to procure warrants. The current mission of the Brigade Prosecution Task Force (BPTF) has been focused on the filtering a list of over 900 detainees expected to be released and trying to obtain warrants for as many as possible. The BPTF has obtained over 80 warrants, the majority of them issued against high value targets across the bri-

gade's operational environment.

When Coalition Forces moved into Iraq in 2003, multiple theater confinement facilities were established. To date, approximately 16,000 detainees are in CF custody. The new Security Agreement guidance will subsequently result in a gradual release of over 900 detainees originally captured in our current OE. Many of these detainees have yet to be tried at the Central Criminal Court of Iraq for lack of eyewitness testimony and evidence to corroborate the original reason for detention.

Warrant requirements are nothing new to those familiar with the American Judicial system, however Iraq's system is still being refined. Coincidentally, the hundreds of judges from different jurisdictions, in many circumstances, are very reluctant to engage witnesses against terrorist's cases out of fear for their lives and for their families' lives. The haphazard jurisdictional alignment and the constant security fears directly correlate to the limitations of the local provincial judges and police.

Even though the transition to warrant-based targeting will change the way Soldiers detain local nationals (who are not actively engaging in criminal or combat activities), this new system is a significant step forward for the Iraqi Government and judicial system.



Doctor's Desk

By CPT (Dr.) Joseph May, MD
2nd BCT Surgeon



Happy Holidays

For many the holiday season brings with it an atmosphere of festivity and celebration. However, as Iron Soldiers prepare to spend the upcoming holiday season separated from our families and loved ones, some may feel nostalgic and even depressed. Here are some tips to make the most of the holidays while deployed:

Watch your nutrition—Holiday weight gain is not unavoidable. It's easy to overindulge when the homemade cookies, boxed chocolates, and candy sits out for all to enjoy. It's not a problem to sample them, but remember to do so in moderation. Healthy choices in nutrition often translate directly into an improved sense of well-being.

Mark family traditions—Deployed parents usually find the holidays the most difficult time of separation from their families. It is important to make the most of opportunities to participate in family traditions, even if joining in on internet chat or phone. This helps children realize that their parent, even though separated from them, is still an active part in their life back home. Open

up gifts together, call home during family meal times, and spend time talking about past holidays and family traditions together.

Don't be alone—Remember that your deployed colleagues are sharing the same feelings of separation that you are. Take time to reach out to them, and share the holidays together. Participate in unit parties, fun runs, or other events to mark the season.

Don't be afraid to ask for help—If you are feeling especially blue during this season, please talk to someone you trust—whether that be a buddy, a leader, a chaplain, or a mental health provider. There's nothing wrong with feeling upset, so don't be afraid to ask for help.

Take some time during this holiday season to reflect on what it's all about. And use it as an opportunity to take positive steps toward improving your mental and physical health.



STRIKER TORCH

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