

Crossed Sabers

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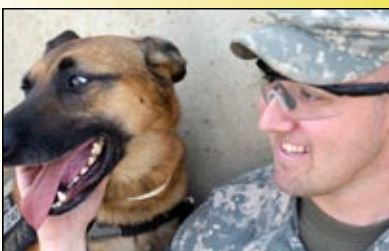
MULTI-NATIONAL DIVISION-BAGHDAD

MARCH 16, 2009

In this Issue



**Iron Eagle Door Gunners
Complete Aerial Combat
Training, Pg. 7**



**Man's Best Friend, Soldier's
Battle Buddy, Pg. 14**



**Joint Security Station
Sheikh Marouf handed over
to Iraqi Army, Pg. 18**



**'Buffalo Team' stays loose,
tightens security, Pg. 20**



**'Packhorse Soldiers' finish
the job, Pg. 24**



Photo by Sgt. David Hodge, 1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B

Spc. Mark Reihl, a military policeman assigned to the 1st Special Troops Battalion, provides personal security for members of an explosive ordnance disposal unit, Aug. 21, 2008, while they search for munitions in an abandoned house in the Abu T'shir neighborhood of southern Baghdad. Reihl, a native of Watertown, Conn., is currently serving a 12-month deployment with the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division—Baghdad, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Phoenix troops end diverse mission

Story by Sgt. David Hodge

1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B

FORWARD OPERATING BASE FALCON, Iraq – Nearly one year ago, Soldiers of 1st Special Troops "Phoenix" Battalion became the first unit of the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, to begin its mission in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom 07-09 and Multi-National Division—Baghdad.

Troops of the "Phoenix" battalion worked diligently to improve conditions for fellow Soldiers, Iraqi Security Forces and citizens in southern Baghdad. The battalion's approximately 565 Soldiers conducted operations both on and off Forward Operating Base Falcon in the Rashid district, said Lt. Col. Dave Hill, the battalion's commander.

"Perhaps the most unique aspect of the 'Phoenix' battalion was the diversity of its mission," explained Hill, a Pittsburgh-native. "Six companies with six completely different missions, and various platoon and detachment-sized organizations, worked across the entire brigade's operating environment."

Soldiers from the battalion's Headquarters and Headquarters Company (HHC) conducted a variety of missions, to include personnel security details, FOB defense, operating the dining facility and working in the Infrastructure Coordination Element (ICE), all while providing command and control for the battalion, stated Hill.

The ICE Team worked to synchronize civil-military operations and local reconstruction efforts to decrease a coordination gap between the Government of Iraq, Coalition Forces, District Council leaders, and ISF.

"The ICE Team prioritized, developed, and managed Rashid's projects, resulting in a partnership that directly contributed to increased Iraqi ownership of Coalition-funded construction projects," Hill said, adding the team managed more than 300 projects valued at approximately \$125 million.

One of HHC, or "Hurricanes," major accomplishments during the spring and summer months of 2008 was the Rashid Olympics, a youth sports program that offered basketball, volleyball and soccer to more than 10,000 Iraqi boys and girls.

"'Hurricane' Soldiers were indispensable in the (1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division's) transition to a non-kinetic fight by conducting more than 900 combat patrols across the Rashid district in order to perform critical engagements with Iraqi officials," Hill said.

Company A provided intelligence information throughout the brigade via a signals intelligence platoon, tactical unmanned aerial vehicle platoon, human intelligence platoon and a platoon dedicated to FOB security.

Hill noted the Soldiers of Co. A, "Sentinels," directly contributed intelligence information to battalion, brigade, and division-level commands with timely and

accurate intelligence assessments in support of ongoing combat operations.

Company B, "Big Dawgs" managed communications for more than 20 headquarters elements throughout Rashid, such as the 1st BCT headquarters, four battalion headquarters, an Air Force detachment headquarters and multiple Military and National Police Transition Teams.

The brigade's only signal company also contributed to the welfare of Soldiers by operating and maintaining 24-hour internet cafés around the FOB, said Hill.

"We managed 60 computers, 30 phones and 15 webcams in three different locations on the FOB for the Soldier's morale," said Capt. Michael Peterson, commander of Co. B.

One-on-one video teleconferences with spouses and Family back home proved to be a good option for promotion ceremonies, said Peterson, an Atlanta-native.

"My Soldiers have done awesome...I couldn't have asked for a better group. They ran the network very well, managed FOB communication and upgraded our network several times. We completed our mission and completed it with great success."

Soldiers of the "Phoenix" battalion welcomed other units to their ranks during the deployment; two engineer companies, two explosive ordnance disposal companies, two civil affairs companies and two psychological operations detachments.

See ~ **Diverse Mission** Pg. 3

Joint Campaign Plan provides focus for transition



HEADQUARTERS
MULTI-NATIONAL FORCE – IRAQ
BAGHDAD, IRAQ
APO AE 09342-1400

27 February 2009

Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Coast Guardsmen, and Civilians of Multi-National Force-Iraq:

Next month will mark the 6th year anniversary of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Your sacrifice, dedication and commitment have moved a nation from a brutal dictatorship to one where the Iraqi people can freely elect their representatives without fear. Future generations of Iraqis will study in the schools you helped build, heal in the hospitals that you have worked on, and participate in the administration of their country because of the institutions you assisted in establishing. Thanks to your efforts, the Iraqi people now have hope; and the Iraqi government is able to exercise its sovereignty and to take increased responsibility for the future of its people.

After extensive consultation with Iraqis, US military chain of command and civilian leaders, the President announced his plan for the responsible drawdown of US forces in Iraq and the continued development of a partnership between our two nations. In accordance with the Security Agreement and Strategic Framework Agreement, the President has provided clear guidance regarding the change of mission for our forces, and his plan provides significant flexibility to military commanders on the ground to implement this guidance.

Our Joint Campaign Plan sets out how we are transitioning from a primary focus on population security to one focused on building Iraqi capacity to achieve sustainable stability. Following an initial drawdown over the next six months, our forces will remain at a robust level through the critical time leading up to and immediately following Iraq's national elections in late-2009/early-2010. As of 31 August 2010 our combat mission in Iraq will end. US forces will be composed of a transition force that consists of a single headquarters, several Advisory and Assistance Brigades, and appropriate supporting forces. The mission of our transition force will be to train, equip and advise professional Iraqi Security Forces; to conduct coordinated counter-terrorism missions; and to protect our ongoing civilian and military efforts within Iraq.

I am continually amazed and humbled by your gallantry and adaptability, and I want to thank each and every one of you – as well as your families at home – for your selfless dedication and commitment to this cause which is vital to Iraq and our Nation. It is a tremendous honor to soldier with you.

Sincerely,

Raymond T. Odierno
General, US Army
Commanding

Questions, comments, story ideas? Contact the Crossed Sabers at nicholas.conner@mnd-b.army.mil. The Crossed Sabers is an authorized publication for members of the U.S. Army. Contents of the Crossed Sabers are not necessarily official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, Department of Defense, Department of the Army or the 1st Cavalry Division. All editorial content of the Crossed Sabers is prepared, edited, provided and approved by the 1st Cavalry Division Public Affairs Office.

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Diverse Mission ~ From Pg. 1

The two engineer companies conducted more than 600 route clearance and sanitation missions, finding multiple roadside bombs and clearing approximately 20,000 kilometers of roadway in Rashid.

Often working in conjunction with the engineers, the attached EOD companies successfully conducted more than 500 missions, collecting more than 12,500 pieces of enemy munitions from 102 weapons caches.

Company D, 404th Civil Affairs Battalion, attached to the 1st STB, 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div., handled most civil-military operations in direct support of the maneuver battalions, conducting more than 200 combat patrols throughout Rashid.

“From day one, “Phoenix” Soldiers were dedicated to improving the lives of the men and women in the Rashid district of Baghdad,” Hill explained. “Their tireless efforts and dedication to duty directly enabled the success of the Raider Brigade’s combat operations in Iraq.”

The Soldiers of the 1st STB will complete their yearlong deployment in March. Upon return to Fort Hood, Texas, the Phoenix Bn., will relocate to Fort Carson, Colo., and reset, refit and begin training for their next mission.



Photo by Sgt. David Hodge, 1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B

Staff Sgt. David Ray (right), a military policeman from Powder Springs, Ga., assigned to 1st Special Troops Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division—Baghdad, raises his right hand for his career re-enlistment, Nov. 7, 2008.



Photo by Sgt. David Hodge, 1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B

Spc. Timothy Birk, a cable systems installer and maintainer assigned to the Company B, 1st Special Troops Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division—Baghdad, keeps an eye on the horizon while chatting with three Iraqi boys, July 26, 2008, in the Radwaniyah neighborhood of southern Baghdad. Soldiers from the 1st STB, 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B, worked closely with many local leaders in the Rashid district to create a youth sports program.



Photo by Sgt. David Hodge, 1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B

Pfc. Bradley Bryan, from Houston, assigned to 1st Special Troops Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division—Baghdad, throws a guideline from an Aerostat to the ground shortly after launching the helium-filled balloon, July 1, 2008, at Forward Operating Base Falcon, Baghdad.



The *Daily Charge* can be viewed at the MND-B Portal, PAO homepage.



MND-B print and broadcast products can be found on the PAO Portal (NIPR), including the **Cav Roundup** and **The 1st Team Update**. All 1st Cavalry products can be found at www.cavcountry.net.



Freedom Radio Baghdad
AFN 104.1 and 107.7
American Forces Network FM

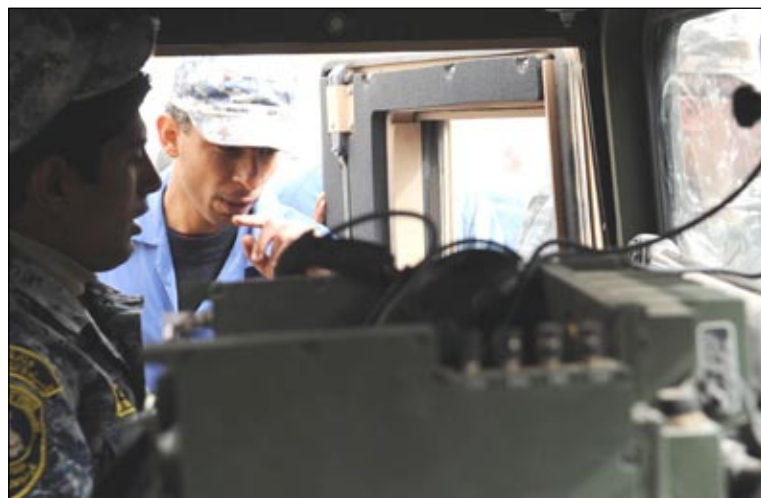
Paratroopers train NP mechanics on vehicle maintenance

Photos by Staff Sgt. James Selesnick

982nd Combat Camera Co. (ABN)

JOINT SECURITY STATION BE-LADIYAT, Iraq – Spc. Christopher Parker (right), uses a multi-meter device to check the electrical components under the hood of an up-armored humvee while training National Police mechanics assigned to the 8th Brigade, 2nd NP Div., during a maintenance training event Feb. 21 at Joint Security Station Beladiyat in eastern Baghdad.

National Police mechanics assigned to the 8th Brigade, 2nd NP Division, watch indicators and gauges on the dashboard of an up-armored humvee during a class on fault diagnosis and troubleshooting techniques Feb. 21 at Joint Security Station Beladiyat in eastern Baghdad. Paratroopers assigned to 2nd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division and their Iraqi counterparts have conducted several training events over the past month in order to prepare NP mechanics to repair malfunctions on the humvee.



Spc. Christopher Parker (left), a native of Portland, Tenn., 2nd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, shows an National Police mechanic assigned to the 8th NP Bde., 2nd NP Div., the location of components under the hood of an up-armored humvee during a maintenance training event Feb. 21 at Joint Security Station Beladiyat in eastern Baghdad.

“Straight Arrows”, Iraqi government hand diplomas to new generator mechanics

Photos by Capt. Michael Roscoe

4th Bn., 42nd FA Regt., 2nd HBCT, 1st Inf. Div., MND-B



BAGHDAD – The graduating class of a generator repair course gather with their diplomas and new tool sets awarded for their successful completion of the course. The Feb. 23 ceremony was held in the Karkh district of northwest Baghdad with community leaders and Multi-National Division—Baghdad Soldiers in attendance.

“I hope that the training you received here helps you all find a good job to support your family,” said Mr. Bashir, the training site manager. “I hope that some of you are running your own generator company in the future.”



A graduate of a generator repair course is congratulated at a ceremony Feb. 23 in the Karkh district of northwest Baghdad. Through the Demilitarization, Demobilization and Reintegration program, members of the Sons of Iraq and recently released detainees were offered the opportunity to train in the high demand skill of generator repair. Soldiers from the 4th Battalion, 42nd Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division—Baghdad checked in on a regular basis to ensure the training was being conducted properly and to see that attendance was satisfactory.

“Straight Arrows”

deliver soccer equipment to

Photos by Sgt. Xavier Land, 4th Bn., 42nd FA Regt., 2nd HBCT, MND-B

Iraqi youth

BAGHDAD - Capt. Christopher Guillory (left), commander, Company G, 4th Battalion, 42nd Field Artillery Regiment, hands out soccer jerseys to local Iraqi players at the Zawra Soccer Stadium in the Karkh district of northwest Baghdad Feb. 17. Family members, friends and groups from across the United States donated the jerseys and new soccer balls.



A soccer team displays their new jersey's at the Zawra Soccer Stadium in the Karkh district of northwest Baghdad Feb. 17. Members of the 4th Battalion, 42nd Field Artillery Regiment delivered the jerseys and new soccer balls, for future soccer matches.



Local soccer players watch a tournament match at the Zawra Soccer Stadium in the Karkh district of northwest Baghdad Feb. 17. Soldiers, serving with the 4th Battalion, 42nd Field Artillery Regiment, delivered soccer equipment to the players before the tournament started.



Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers serving with the 4th Battalion, 42nd Field Artillery Regiment, pose with a youth soccer team before a tournament at the Zawra Soccer Stadium in the Karkh district of northwest Baghdad Feb. 17. The Soldiers helped deliver soccer equipment to the local players at the event.

Rashid leaders, MND-B Soldiers commemorate al-Jamaheer radio station

By Sgt. 1st Class Brent Williams

1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B

FORWARD OPERATING BASE FALCON, Iraq – Soldiers of the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division—Baghdad, joined local community leaders to officially recognize the opening of a new public information radio station Feb. 18, during a ribbon-cutting ceremony in the Rashid district of southern Baghdad.

The Al-Jamaheer Radio Station, collocated with the Rashid District Council Hall in the Doura community, is an important achievement for the district leadership and benefits Iraqi citizens of southern Baghdad, said Hashem Mahmood Dahash, deputy chairman of the Rashid DC.

“We know the needs of the people. It is important for our people...this Al-Jamaheer Radio Station is important to educate the people.”

The local leadership held the commemoration to draw attention to the Rashid DC Hall’s newest addition and inform citizens of Rashid of the new radio programming, said Maj. Felix Acosta, governance officer, working with the 1st BCT’s Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team.

The public information radio station is controlled and operated by the Rashid DC to provide listeners information about local government initiatives and opportunities within the local communities in southern Baghdad, said Acosta, a civil affairs officer, assigned to the 404th Civil Affairs Battalion.

“This radio station exists to spread the news as far as reconstruction efforts, civic events and political objectives being sought to meet the needs of the people of Rashid,” said Acosta, who hails from Philadelphia.

Based on the success of the programming, the station could be picked up by local media organizations for greater funding and a larger audience, he said.

The radio station became a project in late August of 2008 with a request by DC leaders to help restore a sense of normalcy by providing public information to the approximately 1.6 million people of Rashid.

The radio station’s staff works hand-in-hand with the Rashid DC media committee to conduct interviews with various community and business leaders and advisors and provides the Iraqi people a medium to contact their representatives and share their views.

“The public has to be aware of all the efforts going on in the Rashid district,”

Acosta said. “The people out there are out there doing their job, but unless that plan is shared with the people, they think that no one is trying to work on their behalf or there is no plan.”

Acosta, working with the leadership of the 1BCT’s EPRT, used micro-purchase funds provided by the Department of State and Soldiers from the 1st STB to install the antennae and upgrade the capacity of the radio station, which started out with a 50-watt transmitter that was later upgraded to 1,000-watts.

The “politically neutral” station also offers a variety of programs to engage the people and build the culture, which will eventually foster the development and expansion of the independent radio station, said Acosta.

There is always potential for the independent radio station to grow in size and capacity; since the inception of the project the station’s capacity has already grown



Photo by Maj. Dave Olson, 1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B
Ali al-Shati, director of programming for the al-Jamaheer Radio Station, cues audio from pre-recorded radio programs during a broadcast from the Rashid District Council Hall building in the Doura community of southern Baghdad Feb. 18. Soldiers of the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division joined local community leaders to officially recognize the opening of a new public information radio station during a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

20-fold with the new transmitter capable of broadcasting to the outer reaches of the Rashid district.

“It builds hope for the future, provides information to get health and medical treatment, or educational opportunities,” he said. “This radio station is a necessity for the future and encourages leaders to find initiatives for their communities.”

The Rashid DC Chairmen promoted the radio station with the help from their neighborhood councils and chose the DC Hall for the location of the station for security purposes, said Saad al-Shamari, technical manager of the radio station.

Al-Jamaheer Radio Station runs from 7:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. daily offering education, music, entertainment, religion and open-talk forums and programs for the residents of southern Baghdad.

During the open discussion forum, listeners have the ability to call into the radio station and ask questions of their local leaders and community representatives, explained Saad.

The station, which started out receiving five or six calls a day, now averages 40 to



Photo by Maj. Dave Olson, 1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B

Rashid District Council Chairman, Yaqoub Yosif, cuts the ribbon commemorating the opening of the al-Jamaheer Radio Station Feb. 18, at the Rashid DC Hall Building in southern Baghdad. Col. Ted Martin, commander of the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division and members of the 1st BCT’s Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team helped make possible by providing funding and logistical support. The radio station, al-Jamaheer, which means “the Public” in Arabic, offers a variety of programming from education, entertainment and culture to a public talk show forum for the citizens of Rashid to call their local leaders and voice questions and concerns.

60 calls daily from local residents, who are happy to hear that a radio station is operating in southern Baghdad.

“If we succeed in our job in the radio, the listeners feel happy; then I can ensure that this radio station will be successful,” said Saad, who has experience working as a presenter for Iraq’s “Voice of the Public” radio program in 1985.

Working for the director of programming and supervising correspondents and broadcasters, Saad said he hopes to expand the hours of operation for the station and its capacity as power generation in southern Baghdad improves. ✂



Photo by Maj. Dave Olson, 1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B

Sajada al-Jabouri, radio deejay for the al-Jamaheer Radio Station, broadcasts live from the Rashid District Council Hall building in the Doura community of southern Baghdad Feb. 18.

IRON EAGLE

Door gunners complete aerial combat training

By Sgt. Jason Dangel

CAB PAO, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Aviators from the Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, completed aerial gunnery qualification training Feb. 12-18 at the Besmiah Range Complex located 20 miles south of the Iraqi capital.

The gunnery qualification is an annual requirement for both crew chiefs and door gunners from the CAB's 2nd and 3rd Battalions. During the six-day event, approximately 170 Soldiers trained on the proper execution of target acquisition and suppression from a moving aircraft.

"Aerial gunnery training is required annually, and it gives our guys a chance to go out and engage targets from different positions on the aircraft," said Staff Sgt. Jason Wahn, brigade standardization instructor, from Houston.

"For this range, specifically, gunners are required to engage targets during each prescribed mode of flight; the hover, air-land, moving fire and high-speed pass," he said.

Unlike the organic weapons systems readily available for AH-64D Apache attack helicopter pilots, both UH-60 Blackhawk and CH-47F Chinook helicopter pilots rely on door gunners and crew chiefs to man M240-H machine guns for aircraft defense and security while flying combat missions in Iraq.

"The gunnery is important and combat effective; we can't put our guys out there on the ground and let them shoot targets and then expect them to effectively engage the enemy from an aircraft."

-- Staff Sgt. Jason Wahn, brigade standardization instructor

Soldiers characterize the training as an essential component to the survivability of the helicopters and teach troops how to suppress enemy attacks long enough for the pilots to maneuver out of the hostile area and continue on with the mission.

In order to become a qualified door gunner, each candidate must first complete 40-hours of academic training which includes education on ammunition dispersion and ballistics, crew terminology, and target acquisition and engagement.

After the academic portion of the training is complete, gunners must complete seven training tables that focus on individual gunnery and M240-H familiarization.

The table eight, or live-fire gunnery at the BRC, is a culmination of the entire training program, and must be completed twice; once during the day and once under night-vision goggle conditions. Some of the targets on the range include old disabled military vehicles, barrels and silhouettes.

"Shooting from the ground doesn't have the same effect as shooting from the air," Wahn explained. "It's extremely difficult to accurately engage a target from the air due to the excessive wind speed and downwash from the rotor causes the bullet trajectory to be a lot different."

"The range primarily serves to train us in a realistic combat scenario, so we can be in flight and fire at the same time," he added. "The gunnery is important and combat effective; we can't put our guys out there on the ground and let them shoot targets and then expect them to effectively engage the enemy from an aircraft."



Photo by Sgt. Jason Dangel, CAB PAO, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B

Sgt. Matthew Tate, AH-64D armament specialist and door gunner, Co. D, 4th Battalion, 4th Aviation Regiment, Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, prepares to engage targets during an aerial gunnery exercise at the Besmiah Range Complex 20 miles south of Baghdad Feb. 14. The gunnery qualification is an annual requirement for both crew chiefs and door gunners assigned to the "Iron Eagle" brigade. Tate hails from Broken Arrow, Okla.

Communication is considered the most difficult aspect of the training, said Sgt. Jeremiah Shenefelt, standardization instructor and a Blackhawk helicopter crew chief, 3rd Bn., 4th Avn. Regiment, from Laramie, Wyo.

Communicating effectively while simultaneously protecting the aircraft, crew and passengers, are all part of the complex job of a door gunner.

"As a crew chief and door gunner, I have to multi-task to get the job done. I have to be able to listen to the pilots,

the radio calls and effectively manage the aircraft crew, so it can get pretty complex," said Shenefelt.

"Being a successful door gunner is up to each individual," he added. "We have all the tools we need to accomplish the job and it is up to us to be as successful as we want to be. The job description doesn't imply anything extremely taxing, but the challenge is obvious when we get behind the gun."



Photo by Sgt. Jason Dangel, CAB PAO, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B

Spc. Ryan Clark, flight instructor, Company C, 3rd Battalion, 4th Aviation Regiment, Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, from Boulder, Colo., engages a target from a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter during an aerial gunnery training exercise at the Besmiah Range Complex 20 miles south of the Iraqi capital Feb. 14. The gunnery qualification is an annual requirement for both crew chiefs and door gunners from the CAB's 2nd and 3rd Battalions. The training was conducted Feb. 12-18.

Women's Bazaar helps local Iraqi families

Story and photos by Spc. Jamie Vernon

2nd BCT PAO, 1st Armd. Div., MND-B

BAGHDAD—Women of the Mahmudiyah Qada filled tables with homemade products and Iraqi souvenirs during a special bazaar on Forward Operation Base Mahmudiyah, south of Baghdad, Feb 17.

Sponsored by Soldiers of Task Force 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 63rd Armor Regiment, the innovative event gave troops stationed on the southern base the opportunity to purchase items and assist neighboring Iraqi families at the same time.

"This is a great way for local women to improve their small businesses and take care of their families," said Capt. Sara Woods, with the 445th Civil Affairs Battalion, from Janesville, Minn. "It also allows our Soldiers to purchase authentic Iraqi souvenirs and gifts."

"The more they see us as helpful Americans and they get to know us, they get to know that we have children, they get to know that we have spouses, and they get to know that we're just normal people...and the benefits are multi-faceted."

-- Lt. Col. Anne Resty, Women's Initiative coordinator

Many of the women in the Mahmudiyah area lost their husbands to insurgent violence and struggle to provide for their families; making them easy targets for insurgents. The bazaar served as a way to show them they can create a better future for their families.

"This is a good project that is helping widows and people who need the money. I am so happy to be a part of it," said Madiha Gumar, one of the small business owners, and a member of the Mahmudiyah Women's Group.

This is the second bazaar Soldiers of TF 1-63 CAB have had the opportunity to be involved with and was much larger and had more participants than the first. Those who took part in the bazaar felt, not only they were walking away with something to take home, but also giving back to the local Iraqi community.

"It was very beneficial in what we're trying to do for Iraq. From a personal stand point it was really gratifying to know we were helping the widows and their children," said Dale Hamilton, a civilian law enforcement professional attached to TF 1-63 CAB.

Although the bazaar was considered a success at the end of the day, it also presented a foundation for each woman present to continue and expand her business.

"They came in and they sold these products to the Soldiers, and I think each one of them walked out with

a couple hundred dollars," said Lt. Col. Anne Resty, a Women's Initiative coordinator from Clarinda, Iowa. "So now afterwards they can buy more fabric and other materials to make more products that they can sell in the local markets as well."

The event also helped to increase the good relationship between the people of Mahmudiyah and the MND-B Soldiers stationed on FOB Mahmudiyah.

"The more they see us as helpful Americans and they get to know us, they get to know that we have children, they get to know that we have spouses, and they get to know that we're just normal people...and the benefits are multi-faceted," said Resty. "They're going to think of us as normal people and that we can help them."



A local Iraqi woman from the Mahmudiyah Qada stands by her table of merchandise with her son during the Women's Bazaar hosted by Task Force 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 63rd Armor Regiment at FOB Mahmudiyah, Feb 17. Homemade products and Iraqi souvenirs were arranged at the bazaar for sale to the Soldiers of TF 1-63. The unique program started through a partnership between MND-B units, Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Teams and the Women's Initiative program.



(Right) A local Iraqi woman from the Mahmudiyah Qada discusses her products with a customer during the Women's Bazaar hosted by Task Force 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 63rd Armor Regiment at FOB Mahmudiyah Feb 17. Many of the women in the Mahmudiyah area lost their husbands to insurgent violence and struggle to provide for their families.



Soldiers from Task Force 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 63rd Armor Regiment buy from a vendor during the Women's Bazaar at FOB Mahmudiyah Feb 17. Originally organized by the Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team and the Women's Initiative program, this is the second bazaar held on the base south of Baghdad.



A local Iraqi woman from the Mahmudiyah Qada displays her merchandise during the Women's Bazaar hosted by Task Force 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 63rd Armor Regiment FOB Mahmudiyah Feb 17. The Women's Bazaar allowed the local women to improve their small businesses and take care of their families.



A local Iraqi woman from the Mahmudiyah Qada arranges her table of merchandise during the Women's Bazaar hosted by Task Force 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 63rd Armor Regiment at FOB Mahmudiyah, south of Baghdad, Feb 17. The unique program started through a partnership between MND-B units, Embedded Provincial Reconstruc-

Night at the Apollo, Soldier-style

Story and photos by Spc. Dustin Roberts
2nd HBCT PAO, 1st Inf. Div., MND-B

BAGHDAD—As Multi-National Division—Baghdad Soldiers celebrate Black History Month, “Dagger” brigade troops planned and participated in a “Night at the Apollo,” on Camp Liberty Feb. 20.

Based on the Apollo Theater in the Harlem, N.Y., the event showcased Soldiers from many cultures; displaying their talents in poetry, song and various music genres.

“I decided on Apollo because the (theater) started as a firm part of black history,” said Sgt. Christopher Robinson, of Fort Riley, Kan., Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division. “The Apollo grew to accommodate many cultures; I wanted it to be a multi-cultural type event for people to have fun and come out and enjoy themselves.”

The show began with food and up-beat music and Soldiers quickly got into the relaxed atmosphere.

“I think it’s important to coordinate events like these because they lift morale,” said Robinson. “They take Soldier’s minds off of combat a little bit and let them know that they still can have fun.”

Soldiers from across Camp Liberty and the Victory Base Complex took part in the event.

“I saw the flyer for the talent show in the dining facility and I knew I wanted to participate,” said Spc. Katrina

Goss, a native of Killeen, Texas, with the Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cav. Div. who placed 2nd in the show. “It feels great because I had people from my unit in attendance; they’ve been supporting me from day one.”

Support also came from the BSTB, 2nd HBCT, 1st Inf. Div. senior leadership who participated in the event and awarded the top three performers with plaques.

“The highlight of the night was when Col. (David) Imhof and Command Sgt. Maj. (Anna) Gregory went up on stage to present the awards; that was the peak of the moment,” said Robinson. “It took about four weeks of planning to get everything right and I’m glad they were able to enjoy the talent show.”

Robinson said he hopes to host another talent show in the future so Soldiers can show-off their performance abilities to their fellow warriors.

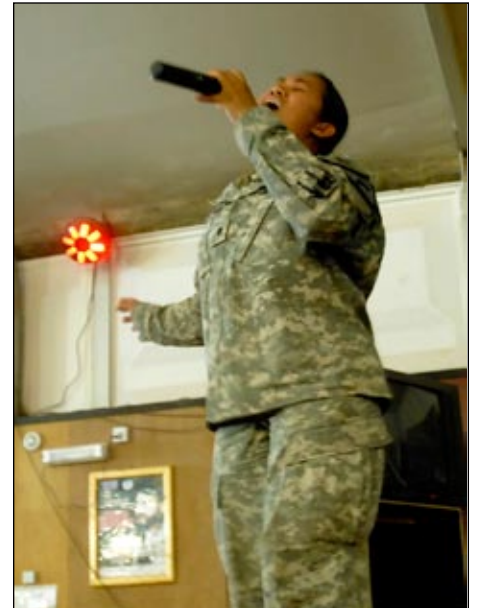
“It went really well; the whole event was spectacular,” he said. “I’m real thankful to everyone, including those Soldiers in the 1st Cav., who came out to support the event.”



Pfc. Daniel Gonzales (front), a native of Miami, Fla., and Spc. Jeremy Kattner (back), a native of Brew City, Wis., both with Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, perform a song by the band, ‘Blink 182’ in the battalion’s first talent show at Camp Liberty Feb. 20. The duo placed 3rd in the audience-judged show.



(Above) Sgt. Aliasha Turner, a native of Midway, Ala., Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, sings the event winning song she wrote; Me and You, at the “Night at the Apollo” talent show hosted by the Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, at Camp Liberty Feb. 20.



Spc. Katrina Goss, a native of Killeen, Texas, Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, performs the song, No One by recording artist Alicia Keys in a talent show at Camp Liberty Feb. 20. Goss placed 2nd in the contest, which was hosted in celebration of Black History Month.

Dagger brigade, USAID team up to re-open historic fish market

USAID partnered with the 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Multi-National Division—Baghdad to provide aid to the residents of the area, stimulate business and also provided a secure environment where new businesses could flourish.



Photo by Maj. Kone Faulkner, 2nd HBCT PAO, 1st Inf. Div., MND-B

An Iraqi child looks on as fresh water fish cook in the traditional “masgoof” method at the Shawaka Fish Market in the Karkh district of northwest Baghdad Feb 18. The Shawaka Fish Market offers the residents of Baghdad the opportunity to purchase fresh fish and also sell freshly cooked fish for consumption.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Peter Ford, 211th MPAD, MND-B PAO

Thomas Delaney (center), deputy mission director, United States Agency for International Development, Iraq, prepares to cut the ceremonial ribbon signifying the re-opening of the Shawaka Fish Market in the Karkh district of northwest Baghdad Feb. 18.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Peter Ford, 211th MPAD, MND-B PAO

Lt. Col. Doug Kirby, commander, 4th Battalion, 42nd Field Artillery Regiment, speaks during the re-opening ceremony for the Shawaka Fish Market in the Karkh district of northwest Baghdad Feb. 18. Kirby and his Soldiers in the 4th Bn. 42nd FA Regt. have served in the Karkh district for the past year, providing security and helping with reconstruction efforts in the district.

"INDEPENDENCE" BATTALION BEGINS IRAQ MISSION

Photos by Master Sgt. Sean Whelan, 56th SBCT, PAO



(Top) CAMP TAJI, Iraq—Lt. Col. Mark O'Hanlon (left), of Wallingford, Pa., commander of the 1st Battalion, 111th Infantry Regiment, 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, Pennsylvania National Guard, unfurls the battalion colors with Command Sgt. Maj. Mark Deutsch of Mohnton, Pa., headquartered at Plymouth Meeting, Pa. The unit traces its lineage to the "Associators" unit raised by Ben Franklin to defend Philadelphia from French privateers.

(Left) Lt. Col. Thomas Boccardi (left), commander, 1st Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade, 25th Infantry Division, accepts a framed Franklin Flag from Lt. Col. Mark O'Hanlon (right), of Wallingford, Pa., commander of the 1st Bn., 111th Inf. Regt., 56th SBCT, Pennsylvania National Guard. Soldiers of the "Independence" battalion assume Coalition Forces mission responsibility and security operations in Tarmiyah area north of Baghdad.



PANTHER

Soldier in Focus – Capt. Agustin Dominguez

Story by Staff Sgt. Alex Licea

3rd BCT PAO, 82nd Abn. Div., MND-B

FORWARD OPERATING BASE LOYALTY, Iraq - Today's Soldier in Focus is Capt. Agustin Dominguez, a fire support officer assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

Dominguez, of Miami, is a first-generation Cuban-American. He entered the U.S. Army in 2003 after receiving his commission from the United States Military Academy at West Point, N.Y., and is serving his second deployment to Iraq. No stranger to the Middle East, the 29 year-old has also deployed to Afghanistan.

Dominguez and his Soldiers have partnered with the 8th National Police Brigade, 2nd NP Div., since arriving in Iraq in January. Since his last deployment to Iraq, the improvements are what stand out.

"Now with our Iraqi partners you can see that they got it, they are very good, they are disciplined, they are always uniformed and they always do the right thing," he said.

Throughout this deployment, Dominguez has been involved in several humanitarian projects to provide much needed goods to the citizens of Iraq. He and his Soldiers teamed with his Iraqi counterparts to distribute thousands of blankets and children's toys to residents in the New Baghdad district in the eastern section of the capital.

Dominguez also assisted Iraqi Security Forces on several renovation projects to revive the New Baghdad economy and create jobs for its residents.

"We are focused on the renovation and improvement of several markets and roads, especially the roads that have access to the shops," said Dominguez. "All these projects will create jobs because we will hire residents in the respective area."

Dominguez is hopeful that these renovations projects will serve as a model of partnership and cooperation between the Government of Iraq, ISF and Coalition Forces.

Dominguez is scheduled to command an airborne field artillery battery this summer.

When he is back home in the U.S., Dominguez is an avid athlete and loves to play rugby.



Capt. Agustin Dominguez, a fire support officer assigned to 2nd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, Multi-National Division—Baghdad, shows Iraqi children his camera screen after taking their picture during a humanitarian drive Feb. 4 at a school in the New Baghdad district of eastern Baghdad. Dominguez, a native of Miami, Fla., partnered with National Police officers of the 8th NP Bde., 2nd NP Div., to distribute more than 800 wool blankets to the citizens of New Baghdad.

Photo by Spc. Josh Lowery 3rd BCT, 82nd Abn. Div., MND-B

Pennsylvania Guardsmen begin Taji tour

Story and photos by Sgt. Doug Roles

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD - Soldiers of the 328th Brigade Support Battalion, 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, Pennsylvania National Guard, participated in a transfer of authority ceremony Feb. 19 at Camp Taji; marking the official start to provide supplies, medical support and maintain equipment for the Stryker brigade's Soldiers.

"We look forward to the challenge ahead," said Lt. Col. Michael Curran, the battalion's commander, from Pine Grove, Pa. "The (2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division) has done a great job here and passed on their (tactics, techniques and procedures) to us."

During the ceremony, leaders of the 328th BSB uncased their unit's colors and raised their flag, signifying the official transfer of power at this sprawling airbase north of Baghdad.

"The BSB mission is to provide the brigade with all classes of supplies needed to perform the brigade's mission. We give them everything they need to fight the fight," said the brigade's senior enlisted member, Command Sgt. Maj. Thomas Buck, of Myerstown, Pa. "We maintain equipment and the level-two medical facility."

Buck said the two-week transition period preceding the TOA went smoothly. The 328th BSB Soldiers shadowed their out-going counterparts for the first week, then performed tasks in the second week with Soldiers of the "Warrior" brigade observing.

"It was done in a partnership. Our counterparts at 2-25 did an excellent job," said Buck. "They were prepared for the TOA. They really did set us up for success."

During the two weeks, Soldiers from the two units made joint-supply runs to the outlying joint security stations supported by the 328th BSB troops. Buck said that during the two-week "left seat/right seat" period, He saw his Soldiers evolve to gain a firsthand knowledge of how to accomplish their mission.

"The Soldiers are prepared and they're confident. They're ready to go." ✂



Lt. Col. Michael Curran (left), commander of the 328th Brigade Support Battalion, 56th Stryker Brigade, Pennsylvania National Guard, receives a framed print from Lt. Col. Mark Collins, commander of the 2nd Brigade, 25th Infantry BSB. Collins presented the print during a transfer of authority ceremony Feb. 19 on Camp Taji, Iraq, north of Baghdad.



Lt. Col. Michael Curran (left), commander of the 328th Brigade Support Battalion, 56th Stryker Brigade, Pennsylvania National Guard, and Command Sgt. Maj. Thomas Buck, 328th command sergeant major, of Myerstown, Pa., unfurl the unit's colors held by Spc. Devin Oliver of Lancaster, Pa., during a transfer of authority ceremony Feb. 19. The Soldiers of the 328thBSB provide supplies, equipment maintenance and medical care for the brigade.

Trooper rolls away with 10,000th MRAP



Photo by Spc. Howard Alperin, MND-B PAO

Brig. Gen. Michael Lally, commander of the 3rd Expeditionary Support Command presents a symbolic key to Pfc. Derek Sharp (right), a native of Greenville, Mich., with the 5th Squadron, 73rd Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division, Multi-National Division-Baghdad, Feb. 20. The key is to the 10,000th Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle fielded in Iraq. Accompanied by his team, Sharp accepted the honor, and then drove the MRAP off toward their assigned area of operation.



Raiders recognize leaders during Spur ceremony at FOB Falcon

Photos by Sgt. David Hodge 1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B

A golden spur is fitted onto the heel of a Soldier from the 7th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, during a ceremony, Feb. 22, at Forward Operating Base Falcon in southern Baghdad's Rashid district. The 7th "Ghost" Sqdn., 10th Cav. Regt., served in the southeastern Rashid neighborhoods of Abu T'shir, Saha, Hadar, Mechanixs, Radwaniyah, Ghartan, Karb De Gla and Arab Jabour during the deployment. Approximately 70 Soldiers received awards and spurs during the ceremony.



Lt. Col. Troy Smith, commander of the 7th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, places a golden spur onto the heel of Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Bobb, senior enlisted leader of the 1st "Raider" BCT, 4th Inf. Div., during a ceremony, Feb. 22, at FOB Falcon in the Rashid district of southern Baghdad. Smith, who calls Culpepper, Va., his home, and Command Sgt. Maj. Russell Reimers, top enlisted leader for 7th "Ghost" Sqdn., 10th Cav. Regt., and native of Rockmart, Ga.



Soldiers from the 7th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, mount 55-gallon barrels to be inducted into the Order of the Spur during a ceremony, Feb. 22, at Forward Operating Base Falcon in southern Baghdad. Approximately 70 Soldiers received awards and golden spurs during the ceremony.

Command Sgt. Maj. Russell Reimers, senior enlisted leader of the 7th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, addresses his "Ghost" Sqdn. Soldiers, Feb. 22, following an end-of-tour awards ceremony and spur presentation at Forward Operating Base Falcon in southern Baghdad's Rashid district. Reimers is a native of Rockmart, Ga.



MP Co. shifts efforts from Rustamiyah

Story by Spc. Howard Alperin

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD - Not every Soldier gets an opportunity to close down a military forward operating base.

Soldiers from the 340th Army Reserve Unit, Military Police Company, 91st MP Battalion, 8th MP Brigade, recently did just that by leaving Forward Operating Base Rustamiyah to relocate to Camp Liberty thanks to a Security Agreement that hands over the FOB to Iraqis in March.

The MPs have been able to shift living arrangements without losing focus.

“There are less missions now, but things continue now just as they did when Rustamiyah was our home base,” said Spc. Amanda Appi, an MP and Reservist from North Branford, Conn.

Getting to their assigned IP Stations, however, has changed due to the transition to Camp Liberty. “It’s a farther drive to our area of patrol. Days are a little longer.”

The MPs are expected to keep up with providing security, assessing checkpoints and inspecting police stations.

“We keep up with counts on the amount of weapons, detainees and patrols,” said Appi.

For identity purposes, they also enter information on detainees and IPs into Hand-held Interagency Identity Detection Equipment, added Appi.

“Deployment is winding down, and we are staying on top of the training that we taught the IP,” said Sgt. Harold Carmen, an MP and Reservist, from Plainfield, N.J. “Soldiers have learned a lot about dealing with different cultures.”

Though the unique atmosphere of Rustamiyah grew on Soldiers of the 340th MP Co., arriving at Camp Liberty has provided its share of morale boosters as well.

“Soldiers have expressed to Family back home they are going to a bigger FOB and they will have more access to the phone and internet,” said Carmen.

Carmen added, closing a FOB is a signal of Iraqi progress and moving ahead with the government of Iraq’s goals, but Soldiers are also excited about the prospects of returning stateside.

According to these MPs, Camp ‘Rusty’, as Rustamiyah was referred to, stands out as a solid achievement and will always hold significant memories for them.



Photo by Spc. Howard Alperin, MND-B PAO

After arriving to Camp Liberty, Spc. Nicole Delia (left), of Clifton Park, N.Y. and Pfc. Stephanie Malave, of Waterbury, Conn., both of the 340th MP Co., 91st MP Battalion, 8th MP Brigade, inventory chemical, biological, radioactive and nuclear equipment from the unit and additional gear from Forward Operating Base Rustamiyah, also known as “Camp Rusty” Feb. 17.

Victory Base personnel run race for remembrance

Story and photos by Spc. Laura Johnson

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD - To celebrate African American/Black History Month, equal opportunity leaders of 299th Brigade Support Battalion wanted to do something that all branches of the military and Department of Defense contractors could participate in, so they hosted a 5-kilometer race on Victory Base Complex here at Z Lake, Feb. 21.

“It took months of planning, but I thought it would be good for us to work together,” said Staff Sgt. Ericka Benjamin from Fort Riley, Kan., an equal opportunity leader for the 299th BSB.

The race began in the early morning hours with more than one hundred people waiting in line to sign up and receive a free T-shirt as a thank you for supporting the race and African American/Black History Month.

“It was a huge turn-out, more than what we expected,” said Benjamin.

Following a short prayer, participants who varied in rank, branch of service and culture lined the streets to begin the 5-kilometer course around Z Lake. While some contestants came in hopes of winning the award for first place, others ran to support the cause.

“It’s a good feeling to see people of different cultures, branches of service and units show their support,” said Benjamin. “For Soldiers, it’s a morale booster.”

At the start of the race, participants sprinted around the course. Some ran with the help of partners, while others decided to run alone.

Runners who finished early, stood on the sidelines to cheer and encourage those who were still finishing the race.

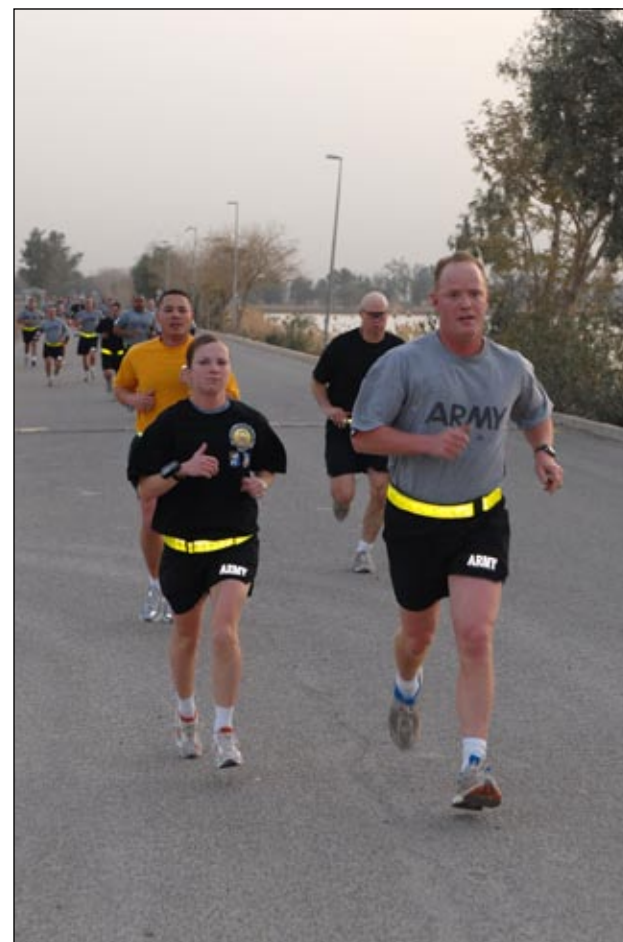
“I came in support of my battalion but also to win,” said 1st Lt. Andrea Bontrager also from Fort Riley, the first place winner for females; finishing the race in 23 minutes.

“Overall it was a huge success,” said race organizer Command Sgt. Maj. Julia Kelly of the 299th BSB. “It took a lot of moving pieces, but it came together nicely.” “I’m proud of everyone who helped or participated.”

Benjamin said she was happy to see the values of servicemembers and civilians of varying cultures and ethnicities supporting this event geared toward recognizing African American/Black History.



Participants in the Black History Month race at Z Lake, Camp Liberty, Feb. 21, await the crack of the pistol to start the race. More than 100 troops and Department of Defense personnel participated in the 5-kilometer course.



1st Lt. Andrea Bontrager (left) of the 299th Brigade Support Battalion, finishes first in the female-division, sprinting the last mile of the race with a partner Feb. 21. The Fort Riley, Kas., native finished the 5-kilometer course around Camp Liberty’s Z Lake in 23 minutes.

MAN'S BEST FRIEND, A SC

WITH A NOSE MADE TO TRACK THE SCENT OF DANGERS UNSEEN TO THE HUMAN EYE. MILITARY WORKING DOGS CONTINUE TO EXECUTE, KEEPING SERVICE MEMBERS THEY PATROL ALONGSIDE SAFE FROM NUMEROUS HAZARDS HERE IN IRAQ

By Spc. Phillip Turner
MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD - Soldiers trust their battle-buddies to have their backs in any situation. Regardless of the danger it is a bond of war, a closeness that is rarely verbal, just understood through a simple nod, or pat on the back.

Being emotionally bound to something or someone can be seen throughout nature; and is a common trait that all species share. Proof of this can be seen everyday here in Iraq between 'Military Working Dogs,' and the Soldiers who they patrol alongside on a daily basis, reminding us all that we have a common tie in the universe.

These Highly trained and proficient canines perform to the highest of standards in some of the most dangerous of situations.

Air Force Staff Sgt. Joel Townsend, and his partner Sgt. 1st Class "A-Tak", a Five year old Belgian Malinois, are a Military Working Dog team assigned to the K-9 Stryker Unit, 1st Cavalry Division, Multi National Division-Baghdad. During their six months of working together here in Iraq, they measure success by finding enemy improvised explosive devices, weapon caches, and in some cases, the enemy themselves.

"[A-Tak] is very proficient in explosive detection, and attack work, said the Stillwater Minn. Native. For him its not because he is vicious or malicious, its fun for these dogs, it is their mission. Finding a bomb or a bad guy that's his reward and [A-Tak] is very good at what he does. I know he will never hesitate, every time we go out the wire I put my life in his paws, and so far we've been doing alright."

Classified on paper as a sensitive item worth more than \$80,000, Townsend treats his four legged partner much differently than just another piece of government equipment.

"I sweep him every morning for scratches, and bumps, anything out of the ordinary that could keep us out of the fight. We do [Physical Training] together every morning, and we train everyday just keeping him proficient in his tasks," Townsend said.

"We do have those times when he knows its OK for him to be a dog, he knows how I feel about him, and he shows me as well. It's more than just a working relationship."

Just watching these animals in action it doesn't take long to realize how specialized and difficult their training must be. Dogs like A-Tak receive and perform commands with clock-like accuracy for nothing more than a positive word or a pat on the back.

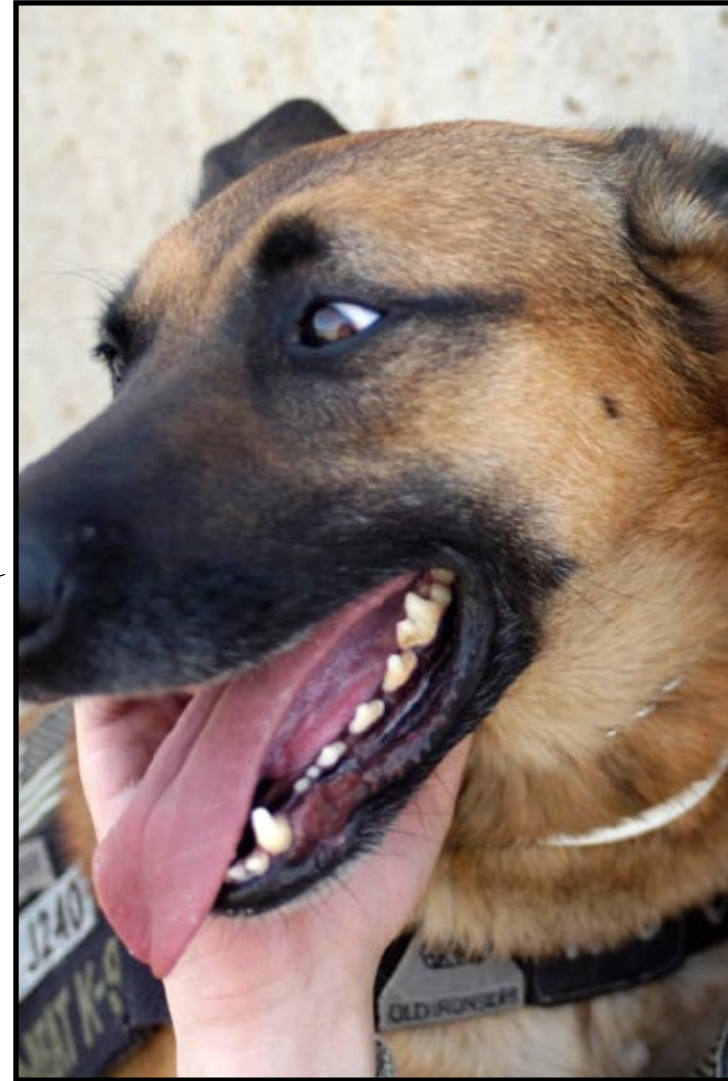
Military Working Dogs are trained to overcome typical dog "Behavior," explained Townsend. When passing by the entry to a dark building, most dogs will tuck their tail and turn away. A military dog is trained to enter that building, as the

handler's eyes and ears, to recon and alert his partner to whatever is inside.

'It's not just the training' explains Townsend. "These guys are a little nuts to begin with." Which ignites a barrage of long wet tongue kisses from A-Tak, as some sort of approval for the joke.

However, just getting to the training was the first hurdle. After volunteering for the program as a Military Police Officer, Townsend said he spent three years as a "decoy" just trying to get in the program. While waiting from approval by his chain of command, he did whatever he could to be involved in the military working dog program. From cleaning Kennels to "catching dogs," a reference for being on the receiving end of bite training, Townsend paid his dues and earned his opportunity to join this "elite team."

Now, as a full time handler Townsend



continues to evolve with an ever expanding training regiment from calling basic commands to how to correctly maneuver his companion safely in and out of vehicles, and down crowded streets.

All military handlers are required to attend the Military Working Dog Program Academy at the Yuma Proving Grounds in Yuma Ariz. The program is the closest and most realistic deployment training experience for these dogs and their Soldier/Airmen counterparts.

"They simulate [Iraq and Afghanistan] so well, you and the dog feel like you are in Iraq," remembers Townsend. "Pressure plate IEDs, buried weapons caches, 155 rounds, the [civilian living arrangements] it is exactly what you are going to see over here. We are living together, working together, learning together... the training prepared us both for coming here. It's an indescribable confidence that A-Tak and I gained."

It is this confidence gained that reinforces the training once these teams step outside the wire. The dog's attitude is a direct reflection of the handler's explains Townsend.

"Everything I feel is transferred right down the leash. He knows when I am anxious, un-easy, excited, or upset he feels that. These guys are the four-legged unsung heroes of this war... the last things you want to do as the handler is throw that off because you may not be having the best of days."

From their everyday heroics, to the times they spend together as best friends. Townsend is adamant to show all Servicemembers that the opportunity to work alongside A-Tak is not just another aimless business relationship. It is an opportunity to trust the Soldier next to you.

"This is hands down the coolest job in the military, we have a bond with these dogs are as attached to us as we are them. I have gone to war with this dog, and I would do it again in a heartbeat. I will go to the end of the world and back again for this dog, and I know he would do the same."



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SOLDIER'S 'BATTLE-BUDDY'



Photo by Spc. Phillip Turner, MND-B PAO

Air Force Staff Sgt. Joel Townsend and his partner, Sgt. 1st Class A-Taq, a two-year-old Belgian Malinois, have racked up numerous mission hours during their 13 months here in Iraq. Townsend says A-Taq provides an invaluable service to the Soldiers he works alongside in patrols; many of them owing their lives to A-Taq and other heroic military working dogs serving overseas.

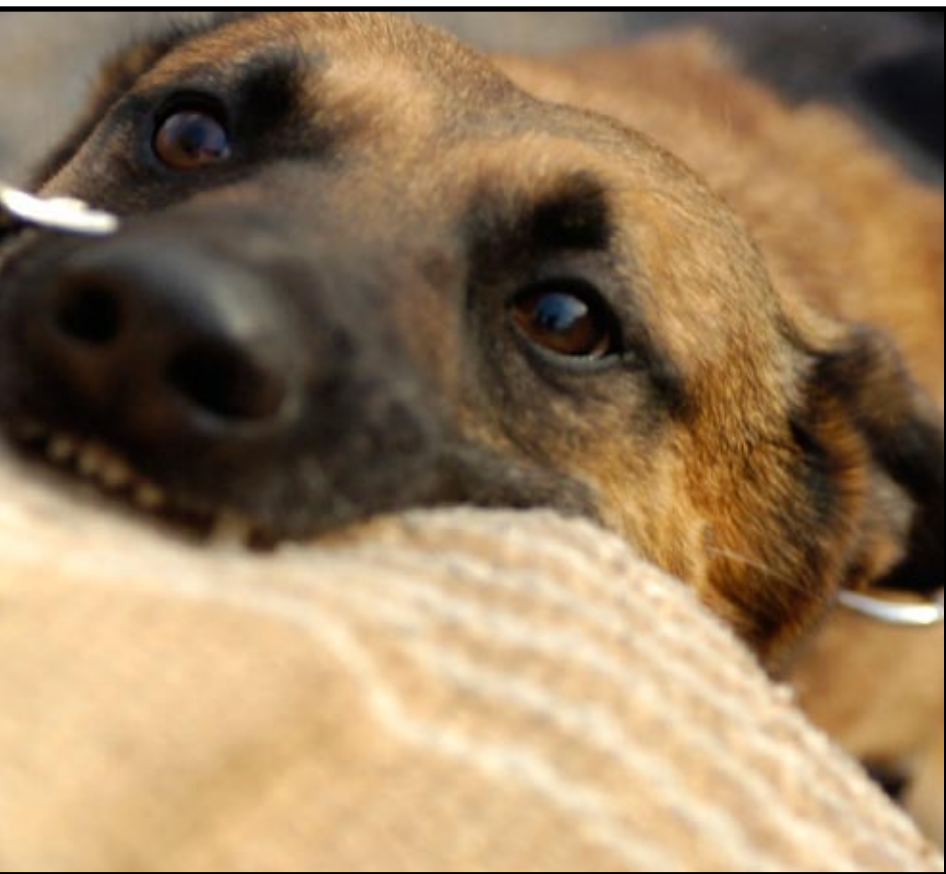


Photo by Spc. Phillip Turner, MND-B PAO

(Right) Sgt. 1st Class A-Taq, a military working dog assigned to the Stryker unit, 1st Cavalry Division, Multi-Functional Division-Baghdad; does bite work during attack drills at the Victory Base Camp Military Working Dog Compound Feb. 22. With nearly 1200 pounds of pressure per square inch, his bite is one of the most effective forms of subduing armed enemy personnel.

(Left) Sgt. 1st Class A-Taq licks the face of Air Force Staff Sgt. Michael Townsend at the Victory Base Camp Military Working Dog Compound Feb. 22. Townsend and his four legged companion are an integral part of exploiting enemy placement of improvised explosive devices, and weapons caches, here in Iraq.



Photo by Spc. Phillip Turner, MND-B PAO

Air Force Staff Sgt. Joel Townsend and his partner, Sgt. 1st Class A-Taq, a two-year-old Belgian Malinois, have racked up numerous mission hours during their 13 months here in Iraq. Townsend says A-Taq provides an invaluable service to the Soldiers he works alongside in patrols; many of them owing their lives to A-Taq and other heroic military working dogs serving overseas.



Photo by Spc. Phillip Turner, MND-B PAO



2009

The Year of the Noncommissioned Officer



Army NCO - No One is More Professional than I...

MND-B, IA team up to donate wheelchairs for Adwaniyah children

Story by Pfc. Evan Loyd

2nd BCT PAO, 1st Armd. Div., MND-B

BAGHDAD - Soldiers from Multi-National Division—Baghdad and their Iraqi Army partners provided a life-changing experience to Iraqi children with the delivery of over a dozen new wheelchairs in Adwaniyah Feb. 18.

As in many parts of Iraq, families simply cannot afford wheelchairs. That's when Iraqi soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, 55th Brigade, 17th IA Division took matters in their own hands and worked with soldiers of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, MND-B to acquire and deliver the wheelchairs.

Iraqi Army Lt. Col. Tahseen, commander, 2nd Bn., 55th IA Bde., noticed how people of his area needed wheelchairs; providing them could be a good opportunity to show the local populace that the Iraqi Army cared about them.

"This is my third tour in Iraq, and Lt. Col. Tahseen is one of the most competent Iraqi Army officers I have ever known. He unfailingly takes the initiative, and genuinely cares about the citizens of Iraq without regard to sectarian divisions," said Capt. Allan Carroll, of Kailua, Hawaii, commander of Company B, 1st Battalion, 35th Armor Regiment. "This event is one more example of his commitment to the greater good of his country."

In his speech after the donation of the wheelchairs, Tahseen decided that this was a chance to show the citizens he doesn't take any sides based on religious background.

"I hope that you will take these wheelchairs in the spirit of service with which we give them. I would have the citizens of Adwaniyah know that regardless of background, be you Shi'a, Sunni, Kurd, or Christian, you are all citizens of Iraq, and my battalion will serve you and will defend you to our utmost ability."



Photo by Justin Watson, 2nd BCT PAO, 1st Armd. Div., MND-B

Iraqi Army Lt. Col. Tahseen (right), commander of the 2nd Battalion, 55th Brigade, 17th IA Division, and Saad Hamid Schnater, manager of the Adwaniyah Clinic, donate a wheelchair to the family of a young girl with a nerve condition that makes walking painful Feb 18. Soldiers from Multi-National Division- Baghdad and their Iraqi partners in the 17th Iraqi Army Division provided a life changing experience to Iraqi children in the Mahmudiyah Qada.

Soldier in Focus – Sgt. 1st Class Donald Johnson

Story by Staff Sgt. Alex Licea

3rd BCT PAO, 82nd Abn. Div., MND-B

BAGHDAD - Sgt. 1st Class Donald Johnson, an electronic warfare officer with 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, has served in one component of the Army or another since 1986 when he enlisted in the Army as a wheel mechanic.

His first assignment was with Company C, 303rd Field Artillery, 8th Infantry Division, in Baumholder, Germany.

In 1988, he transitioned into the Army Reserve for two years with a Wisconsin-based engineer company.

After two years in the reserves, Johnson transitioned back to the Regular Army for seven years; followed by ten years in the Army National Guard.

In 2007, Johnson rejoined the Regular Army and returned to Baumholder under Headquarters and Headquarters Company of the 2nd Brigade, 1st Armored Division.

"The Army has helped to define me. I kept coming back because I missed the camaraderie. I enjoyed being part of something bigger than myself, and serving my country. I felt like I was making a difference."

Johnson served in many different positions during his 22 plus years in the Army. He has done everything; from being a mechanic to a company first sergeant.

"I loved those jobs because they allowed me to work closely with the lower enlisted and get to know and help them."

As a sergeant first class, Johnson acted as the first sergeant for Headquarters and Headquarters Company 2nd BCT, 1st Armd. Div. while the Soldiers trained for their deployment to Iraq in April 2008. While some might have been intimidated by working a level above their pay grade, Johnson rose to the occasion.

"It's not about your pay grade; it's about how you approach the job. It didn't matter what rank I was, I got support when I needed it and got the job done."

Johnson now works as the electronic warfare officer for the 2nd BCT; overseeing the battalion-level EWOs and making sure their equipment is maintained and tested.

"My job now is keeping Soldiers alive," said Johnson.



Photo by Pfc. Evan Loyd, 2nd BCT PAO, 1st Armd. Div., MND-B

Sgt. 1st Class Donald Johnson, from Barron, Wis., the electronic warfare officer of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, Multi-National Division-Baghdad, talks with local Iraqi kids while on a patrol May 31, 2008. His 22-year career has taken him from wheel mechanic to first sergeant. "I loved those jobs because they allowed me to work closely with the lower enlisted and get to know and help them."

"The Army has helped to define me. I kept coming back because I missed the camaraderie. I enjoyed being part of something bigger than myself, and serving my country. I felt like I was making a difference."

-- Sgt. 1st Class Donald Johnson, Electronic Warfare Officer

JSS Sheikh Marouf handed over to Iraqi Army

By Spc. Dustin Roberts

2nd HBCT PAO, 1st Inf. Div., MND-B

BAGHDAD – Soldiers serving with the 4th Battalion, 42nd Field Artillery Regiment, attached to the 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, gave the reins of Joint Security Station Sheikh Marouf to Iraqi Army soldiers with the 1st Battalion, 22nd Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division in a transfer ceremony Feb. 23.



Photo by by Spc. Dustin Roberts, 2nd HBCT PAO, 1st Inf. Div., MND-B

Lt. Col. Robert Kirby (left), a native of Louisville, Ky., commander, 4th Battalion, 42nd Field Artillery Regiment, and Maj. Hussein, commander, 1st Battalion, 22nd Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, sign the official paperwork confirming the hand-off of Joint security Station Sheikh Marouf from Coalition forces to Iraqi Security Forces Feb. 23 in the Karkh district of northwest Baghdad. The hand-over is part of the recently signed Security Agreement between Coalition Forces and the Iraqi government.

“Many may remember the darker days when a combined U.S. and Iraqi security station was necessary,” said Lt. Col. Robert Kirby, a native of Louisville, Ky., commander, 4th Bn., 42nd FA Regt. “The (Iraqi) security forces, the local leaders, and more importantly, the people decided there had been enough violence and it needed to stop.”

Since 2003, terrorists had a significant influence in the Karkh area of Baghdad, specifically the infamous Haifa Street, which was battleground in early 2007 between Sunni insurgents and partnered Coalition and Iraqi Forces.

“Terrorists tried to take over, but they will never again because of the hard work and sacrifice of Iraqi Security Forces and Coalition Forces,” said Maj. Hussein, commander, 1st Bn., 22nd Bde., 6th IA. “We will never forget those who lost their lives to help secure this area.”

After the partnered warriors neutralized their enemy in the Sheik Marouf area, Hussein said the neighborhood, district councils, government and religious leaders, and citizens of Karkh came together to ensure peace thrived through the area.

“I’m so thankful for the dedication of the people here. We removed the terrorist elements from here and we are here to stay.”

As security improves, the ISF continue to take the lead on ensuring their people are safe. Kirby noted that the transfer was an example of the ISF’s improvement over the last few years.

“Today’s transfer is truly another step

forward for the Iraqi people. It shows the capabilities of the Iraqi Army and Police to protect the people,” Kirby said. “While Coalition Forces no longer operate from this site, our commitment to share its goals does not change. We will continue to operate in partnership with the ISF to enable the bright future that lies ahead for the people of Karkh.”

He also said the Karkh’s citizens are beginning to reap the benefits of safety in their neighborhoods.

“From this site, Iraqi Army, Iraqi Police and Coalition Forces, in concert

with local government and civic leaders, and the people, planned and conducted operations to rid the area of the violence that plagued it.

Families are seen shopping in the markets or in the parks and children attend school without fear,” Kirby said. “Now the concrete walls are coming down and the people are living peaceful together without the threat of attacks and violence.” ✂



Photo by by Spc. Dustin Roberts, 2nd HBCT PAO, 1st Inf. Div., MND-B

Iraqi Army Soldiers serving with the 1st Battalion, 22nd Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division stand in formation with their Multi-National Division—Baghdad partners from 4th Battalion, 42nd Field Artillery Regiment, during the turnover ceremony at Joint Security Station Sheikh Marouf in the Karkh district of northwest Baghdad Feb. 23. The JSS served as a joint base in which both forces used to secure the population of Karkh.



An Iraqi Soldier serving with the 1st Battalion, 22nd Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division takes up his position as Soldiers of 4th Battalion, 42nd Field Artillery Regiment march off after the turnover ceremony of Joint Security Station Sheikh Marouf in the Karkh district of northwest Baghdad Feb. 23. The Coalition Soldiers and Iraqi Soldiers worked and trained together at the JSS to help secure the neighborhood from violence. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Dustin Roberts, 2nd HBCT PAO, 1st Inf. Div., MND-B)

Combat mechanic recovery classes open at Liberty

Story by Sgt. Catherine Graham

890th Eng. Bn., 225th Eng. Bde.

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – Combat mechanics and support troops from the 890th Engineer Battalion, 225th Engineer Brigade, took the opportunity Feb. 5 to take part in a new vehicle recovery course given at the 890th Eng. Bn. motor pool here.

The course has been designed to improve vehicle recovery operations within the battalion as well as for the unit which will replace the 890th Engineers in the next few weeks.

Throughout the course, Soldiers experienced realistic scenarios created to hone their skills as they drive outside the wire to recover disabled or damaged vehicles.

The mechanics used cranes on ‘mock-up’ vehicles to represent types of equipment they may encounter during actual recovery operations. They also used the course to test their driving skills.

Three classes were held during the trial phase of the four-day block of instruction, where the Soldiers served as troubleshooters for the course curriculum by completing a questionnaire and offered suggestions to modify the course.

The first two classes were offered to Soldiers experienced in the recovery and maintenance sections.

“The class was a little basic for me because I work in the recovery section, but I am happy to help troubleshoot the class for other Soldiers. My suggestion was to focus less on preventive maintenance checks and services and more on hand signals,” said Spc. Scott Monroe, a native of Gulfport, Miss., who attended the first class.

“Improving drivers’ training was my suggestion for the course,” said Sgt. Timothy Hines, a native of Dublin, Texas, a mechanic with the 836th Sapper Company.

Hines helped critique the second class, which he said included invaluable training for vehicle operators as they recover vehicles.

“I felt that accurate information from the equipment operator is a vital to the success of a recovery mission,” Hines added. “Drivers’ training will help the Soldier understand the importance of conveying correct information in relation to recovery.”

The third class was opened to Soldiers in the distribution platoon who were not experienced in the recovery process.

“I wanted to take the class to get a better understanding of the M916 (tractor trailer) truck. The class taught me how to back up the truck and trailer through a serpentine course and other difficult terrains,” said Spc. Montoya Brown, a native of Gulfport, Miss. and a unit supply specialist with the 890th Eng. Bn. Forward Support Company. “The class material was extensive and the hands-on experience was great. Using the battle damaged equipment was difficult but it gave us a worst case scenario experience.”

“I learned a whole lot. I could find no fault in the course. I am glad I had the opportunity to attend the class and I think a lot of Soldiers will benefit from the training,” added Brown.

The course marked the first time the 890th’s troops have trained at the recently constructed recovery operations training area of their motor pool. ✂



Photo by Sgt. Catherine Graham, 890th Eng. Bn., 225th Eng. Bde., 1st Cav. Div., MND-B



Photo by Sgt. Catherine Graham, 890th Eng. Bn., 225th Eng. Bde., 1st Cav. Div., MND-B

Combat mechanic, Spc. Scott Monroe of Gulfport, Miss., with the 890th Engineer Battalion, uses hand signals to back a wrecker up so that a battle-damaged vehicle can be repositioned onto a trailer during recovery training at the 890th Eng. Bn. motor pool Feb. 5.



Spc. Randall Waltman, a native of Biloxi, Miss. and a mechanic with the 890th Engineer Battalion, practices the operation of a crane at the 890th Eng. Bn. motor pool during hands-on training as part of a Feb. 5 vehicle recovery training class.

Truth in Testing

In-depth survey aims at improving Army vehicles

Story by Sgt. Catherine Graham

890th Eng. Bn., 225th Eng. Bde.

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – A 24-member team from the Army Testing and Evaluation Command based out of Fort Hood, Texas, surveyed members of the Fort Polk, La. based 46th Engineer Combat Battalion, 225th Engineer Brigade Feb. 23 here with regards to the RG-33L mine resistant ambush protected vehicle, a heavily up armored vehicle in use by the engineers for the last two months.

During their survey collecting mission, members of the ATEC team gathered approximately 90 surveys specific to the MRAP from 46th Eng. Bn. troops.

ATEC uses the surveys to correct deficiencies or make improvements to the new up-armored vehicles that protect Soldiers from combat hazards, such as improvised explosive devices. All total, ATEC has collected more than 900 surveys completed by Soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan over the last six months.

Sgt. 1st Class Jamie Walls of Killeen, Texas, who works for ATEC, has traveled throughout Baghdad to survey Army



Photo by by Sgt. Rebekah Malone, 225 Eng. Bde. PAO

Soldiers of the 46th Engineer Battalion, 225th Engineer Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, complete a leader evaluation of the RG-33L, mine resistant ambush protected vehicle. The survey is part of more than 900 surveys the Army Testing and Evaluation Command out of Fort Hood, Texas has collected on equipment currently used in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Soldiers who drive, ride in or work on the equipment.

“I’m doing something that might save a Soldier’s life,” Walls said. “I’d do anything to help bring home Soldiers safely.”

Walls said the ‘truth in testing’ motto of the AETC represents their goal to provide true findings of what goes on with the systems the Army invests in and equipment they purchase.

Sgt. Stacy Kirby of Anniston, Ala., a

truck commander for Company A, 46th ECB explained once a Soldier is in full ‘battle rattle’; wearing all of his or her gear and ammo, maneuvering is difficult in the front seats.

“Getting in and out of the vehicle with the weapon, gear and ammo can be challenging,”

Kirby said. “Maybe the dimensions could be reconsidered.”

Kirby appreciated the opportunity to speak about the vehicles so decision makers know the thoughts of Soldiers on the front lines.

“Only [those] experienced [with] using the vehicles can speak [to the realistic capabilities of the vehicle],” said Kirby. “You know the old saying, ‘ask the horse.’”

The Army recently implemented changes, thanks to survey results that revealed safety hazards to gunners on the turret from low hanging power lines. To combat this risk, Soldiers used PVC pipe running from the front to the back in an arch to prevent lines from catching on the



Photo by by Sgt. Rebekah Malone, 225 Eng. Bde. PAO

Sgt. 1st Class Jamie Walls, of Killeen, Texas, a representative of the Army Test and Evaluation Command out of Fort Hood, Texas speaks to Soldiers from the 46th Engineer Battalion, 225th Engineer Brigade, Feb. 23 about filling out surveys so future equipment can be adopted based on their recommendations. The Army Test and Evaluation Command out of Fort Hood, Texas has a team of 24 Soldiers throughout Iraq and Afghanistan collecting surveys on equipment currently used in theater.

turret or antennas.

“Soldiers used their minds to mitigate the risk to the gunners,” Walls said.

After listening to the concerns of the Soldiers, and seeing what the Soldiers did to combat the risk, all MRAP RG-33L’s that come into country are now equipped with equipment to mitigate the hazardous electric lines. ✂

'Team Buffalo' stays loose, tightens security

By Staff Sgt. Mark Burrell

MND-B PAO

In a cramped, wooden shack behind the 688th Engineer Company headquarters at Camp Liberty here, about 30 combat engineers sit on beat-up couches and poke fun at each other before another route clearance mission begins. "We sit around and listen to music and play cards after our mission prep is done," explains Sgt. Zach Rostan, the truck commander for the "Buffalo", a mine-resistant ambush-protected vehicle assigned to the Army Reserve unit from Fayetteville, Ark. "We all like to have fun and relax; we're going out looking for bombs you know, so we try to stay relaxed."

After 170 missions and over 1,000 hours clearing improvised explosive devices from Baghdad's streets since July 2008, the combat engineers know their jobs. The three engineers within 'Team Buffalo,' as they call themselves, periodically switch positions within the vehicle to ensure familiarization with each other's jobs, routes and equipment.

"The Buffalo's approximately 27 tons, but lots of the weight comes from armor," said Sgt. John Maes, a driver assigned to the 688th Eng. Co. The 27-foot long, 8-foot wide, six-wheeled vehicle is anything but diminutive. The vehicle dwarfs almost all other MRAPs in the convoy, but for good reason.

"Our job is to go out and find what kills most Soldiers over here, which is bombs," said Rostan, a native of Hot Springs, Ark.

"We are scannin' for bombs as well as suspicious activity to reduce the threat against us and the community," said Sgt. Thomas Dieter, the third Buffalo crewmember and the Common Remotely Operated Weapon Station operator. Like most Army Reservists, Dieter, a volunteer firefighter in his hometown of Roland, Okla., left a job in order to deploy to Iraq.

"I do the firefighting for my community and we're over here looking for bombs so the other forces can go out and find the insurgents, you know, to help protect our country," added Dieter. "I enjoy helping people out. I mean, it's our community."

This is the first deployment to Iraq for all three Buffalo operator engineers and since first arriving here, they have seen a huge difference in the communities, said Dieter. The shift in threat climate can be partially attributed to these combat engineers.

"We try to throw out candy and soccer balls and whatever to kinda show them that we're here to help and not try to hurt them," continued Dieter.

"Iraqi kids change their image of us when we give them stuff, and it doesn't hurt with the adults too," said Maes, a native of Fayetteville, Ark.

Along with handing out candy and soccer balls, the engineers also give the community a sense of security.

"If it wasn't for us, there'd be a lot more IEDs out here," explained Rostan.

"The insurgents want to kill Americans, but if they can't they'll kill anybody, to cause mass chaos," continued Maes.

With about 700 investigations so far, the Soldiers from "Team Buffalo" help prevent chaos everyday by going down the routes enough to notice when something is out of place and doesn't belong, added Maes.

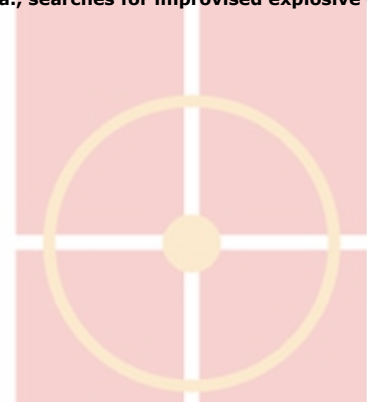
"I trust if we roll down a route and don't find something, it probably wasn't there," exclaimed Staff Sgt. Brandon Hampton, noncommissioned officer in charge of the day's convoy and native of Fort Smith, Ark. "Our job as route clearance is to go out and find the bombs so no one else has to find them the hard way."

Though these stalwart combat engineers spend long, slow, heavy hours rolling over the same pieces of pavement, it's better the 688th Eng. Co. find IEDs than letting other troops or innocent Iraqis find them the hard way, without the protection of a Buffalo. ✂



Photo by Staff Sgt. Mark Burrell, MND-B PAO

Sgt. Thomas Dieter, a combat engineer from the 688th Engineer Company, an Army Reserve unit from Fayetteville, Ark., attached to the 890th Engineer Battalion, monitors his Common Remotely Operated Weapon Station from the protection of a Buffalo Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected vehicle during a route clearance mission in the streets of Baghdad, Feb. 22. Dieter, a native of Roland, Okla., searches for improvised explosive devices making the community safer here.



Sgt. Thomas Dieter, a combat engineer from the 688th Engineer Company, an Army Reserve unit from Fayetteville, Ark., attached to the 890th Engineer Battalion, monitors his Common Remotely Operated Weapon Station from the protection of a Buffalo Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected vehicle during a route clearance mission in the streets of Baghdad, Feb. 22. Dieter, a native of Roland, Okla., uses the CROWS to search for potential improvised explosive devices, scan his sectors of fire and zoom in on suspected insurgents.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Mark Burrell, MND-B PAO



Photo by Staff Sgt. Mark Burrell, MND-B PAO

Sgt. Zach Rostan, a combat engineer and truck commander for the Buffalo Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected vehicle assigned to the 688th Engineer Company, an Army Reserve unit from Fayetteville, Ark., attached to the 890th Engineer Battalion, throws candy and waves to Iraqi children during a route clearance mission in the streets of Baghdad, Feb. 22. Rostan, a native of Hot Springs, Ark., and his crewmembers have been in Iraq since July, 2008. "When we first got here, people weren't as friendly, but now they wave back at us," said Rostan with a smile.

Mardi Gras for Baghdad? No problem

Story by Sgt. Rebekah Malone

225th Eng. Bde. PAO, MND-B

BAGHDAD - For deployed Soldiers of the Louisiana-based 225th Engineer Brigade, you can take the Soldier out of the state, but you can't take Mardi Gras out of the Soldier.

Thanks to a generous donation of more than 170 care packages as part of Operation Overseas Mardi Gras from Soldier's Angels, an organization aimed at supporting deployed service members, the engineers were able to celebrate in style.

The boxes, each addressed to an individual Soldier, were filled with decorations, beads, colorful masks, moon pies and of course well-wishes.

"You could tell Soldiers were happy to receive boxes full of moon pies, beads and other decorations," said Lt. Col. Greg Parker of Gonzalez, La. "The Mardi Gras décor and food provided 'joie-de-vivre' (joy of life) to experience Mardi Gras in Iraq."

The headquarters building was decorated for more than a week as Soldiers opened their boxes and added decorations to the displays.

"I received a t-shirt, mask, beads, fleur-de-lis and some candy," said Sgt. 1st Class Janis Smith. The Winnsboro, La., native gave her mask to members of a jazz band playing on Camp Liberty in celebration of the holiday.

Soldiers gave the recipe for a Mardi Gras favorite, king cake, to the cooks in the dining facility; and while the interpretation wasn't perfect, it definitely added to the electric atmosphere.

Soldiers, dressed in full-garb, celebrated as armored vehicle horns honked as they passed by those who were adorned in elaborate masks and costumes; undoubtedly their first experience of Louisiana culture in Iraq.

Louisiana Soldiers said sharing Mardi Gras was the chance to share just a little piece of themselves, the state they represent and a culture rich with history and tradition.

"We can learn a lot from the Iraqi Culture, but we can also share ours at the same time," Parker said. "Iraqi people love to celebrate just like we do."



Photo by Lt. Col. LaDenna Piper, 225th Eng. Bde., 1st Cav. Div., MND-B



Members of the Louisiana National Guard's 225th Engineer Brigade pose in front of their headquarters Feb. 24. The Soldiers won't let a deployment to Iraq stand in their way to celebrate Mardi Gras. Donations from home and a "joie-de-vivre" keeps the good times rolling.



Photoby Lt. Col. LaDenna Piper, 225th Eng. Bde., 1st Cav. Div., MND-B



Photoby Lt. Col. LaDenna Piper, 225th Eng. Bde., 1st Cav. Div., MND-B

Members of the Louisiana National Guard's 225th Engineer Brigade celebrate Mardi-Gras in style by dressing up in the traditional holiday attire of colored beads and masks while showing off their Louisiana state pride Feb. 24. Soldiers of the 225th Eng. Bde. just entered the second month of their eight month Iraq tour. The engineers assist the Government of Iraq and Iraqi Security Forces with the building and construction of various projects throughout Baghdad.

Sgt. RoKeisha Berymon of Alexandria, La., 225th Engineer Brigade, Louisiana National Guard, celebrates Mardi-Gras Feb. 24 in style by dressing up in the traditional holiday attire of colored beads and masks.

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

From the Revolutionary war to the war in Iraq, women in the Army are making history



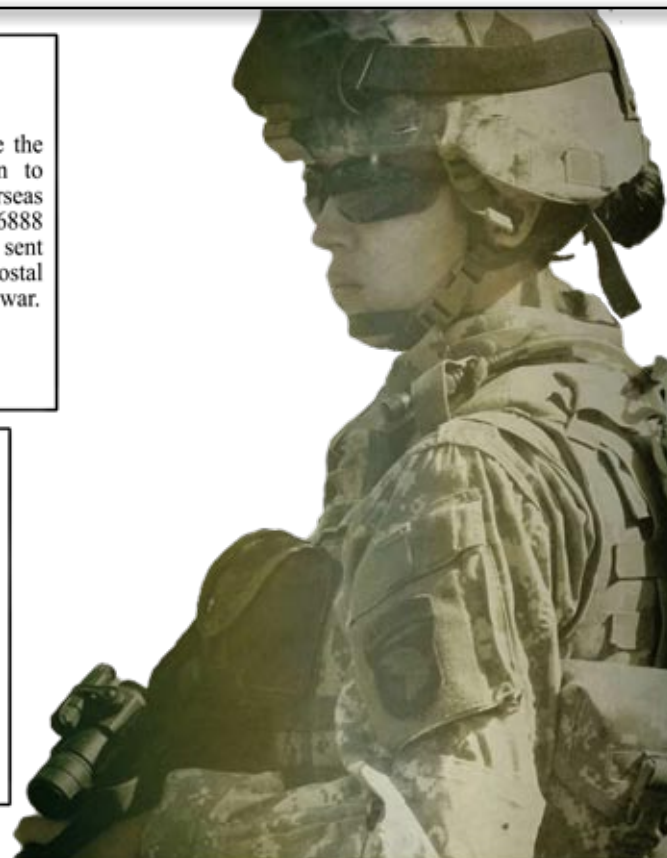
15 FEB 1945



MAJ Charity Adams became the first African American woman to command a battalion overseas during World War II. The 6888 Central Postal Battalion was sent to France to untangle the postal delivery system used during the war.

20 MAR 2005

SGT Leigh Ann Hester was the first female soldier to receive the Silver Star for exceptional valor since World War II and the first ever to be cited for close combat.



MWR, Mayor cell give Soldiers desert barbecue

Story by Spc. Laura Johnson

MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD - Camp Liberty's East Life Support Area Morale Welfare & Recreation center hosted a barbecue cook-out Feb. 22 at the East Mayor's Cell for Soldiers to blend past experiences and spices, conversation and family recipes, and to mix secret barbecue sauce with everyday operations. But most of all, it was an opportunity for them to relax.

Soldiers, MWR staff and members of East LSA's Mayor Cell got a chance to loosen up and build relationships with fellow Soldiers. The barbecue was a way to show off hidden talents in the cooking arena, enjoy good food, and a chance to converse with those who are usually on the move.

"It's all about the supporting the Soldier," said Lt. Col. Howard Geck, East Camp Liberty's mayor. "It also gives Soldiers a chance to network and to get to know the people they are around, such as MWR staff and us at the Mayor Cell."

Unfortunately, four of the five teams who signed up for the event weeks in advance cancelled due to unexpected missions. Still, the MWR staff and East LSA's mayor cell continued with the cook-off that eventually evolved into a cook-out.

"We're still going to barbecue, instead of it being a contest, we'll turn it into a cook-out for the Soldiers," said Garna Patrick, an East LSA MWR staff member from Houston. "It will give them something to look forward to when they return tonight."

The MWR staff began preparation in the early morning, setting up several grills so they could cook more food at one time for the anticipated crowd. They connected

speakers for the music, iced down the drinks and fired up the grills.

"We are trying to make it as close as possible to a Sunday afternoon at home," said Patrick.

The eclectic mixture of music and the smell of mesquite wood burning under the meat on the grills attracted Soldiers who from all over the area. Several Soldiers stopped and inquired if the barbecue was open to all.

"I'm glad they stopped, it gives us a bigger turn-out," said Tanla Roundtree, coordinator for East LSA MWR, who is also from Houston. "Sometimes the easiest way to get information out is through word of mouth."

Throughout the day more Soldiers attended the barbecue and, while waiting for the food to cook, some of them played a friendly game of volleyball. Those who didn't participate in the game enjoyed the music and talked with members of the mayor cell and fellow Soldiers.

"How often does a lower enlisted Soldier get a chance to have a conversation with the mayor," said Pfc. Stanton Kelley, a radar operator of Battery C, 2 Battalion, 5th Field Artillery Regiment from Ft. Sill, Okla. "It's good that they're out here for us."

As the barbecue started winding down, some of the Soldiers who initially entered the contest returned from their mission and were able to sit and eat a plate of ribs, brisket, steaks.

"We understand they have missions to go on, sometimes at the last minute," said Louis Hunter, East LSA MWR staff member, participant in the cook-out another Houston native. "When we do these things for them, it builds morale for Soldiers and contractors alike."

"These events such as the cook-offs

...give the Soldiers a chance to relax and talk with us," said Hunter. "It's stressful to go outside the wire day in and day out, that's what the MWR is here for."

"We can learn a lot from the Iraqi Culture, but we can also share ours at the same time," Parker said. "Iraqi people love to celebrate just like we do."



Photo by Spc. Laura Johnson, MND-B PAO

Garna Patrick, an East Life Support Area Morale Welfare and Recreation staff member, prepares steaks for Soldiers returning from missions during their barbecue cook-off Feb. 22 at the East Mayor's Cell on Camp Liberty.



Photo by Spc. Laura Johnson, MND-B PAO

Louis Hunter, an East Life Support Area Morale Welfare and Recreation staff member, turns sections of sizzling ribs and brisket on the grill during their barbecue cook-off Feb. 22 at the East Mayor's Cell on Camp Liberty.

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ARMY SAFE IS ARMY STRONG

A BAND OF BROTHERS & SISTERS

'Independence Brigade' assumes mission north of Baghdad

Story by Sgt. Doug Roles

56th SBCT, MND-B PAO

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - The 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 28th Infantry Division, marked the official start of its mission in Iraq during a Transfer of Authority ceremony Feb. 24 at Camp Taji.

The Pennsylvania National Guard brigade assumed responsibility for assisting Iraqi Security Forces in securing an area around Taji, northwest of Baghdad. The TOA marks an end of mission for Soldiers of the 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry, based in Hawaii.

"The Soldiers of the 'Independence Brigade' stand ready to serve side by side with their Iraqi counterparts to support their endeavor to build a safe and prosperous Iraq," said Col. Marc Ferraro, the 56th SBCT commander.

A two-week transition period preceded the turnover of responsibility. Soldiers from the two brigades worked together during that time in a "right seat/left seat" job; shadowing that saw the incoming Soldiers take the lead in day-to-day operations.

Ferraro acknowledged the sacrifices the Soldiers of 2nd Bde., 25th Inf. Div. made. He pledged to build upon their success.

"Eleven 'Warrior' Soldiers will return to Hawaii only in spirit today," he said, also noting the nearly 100 additional 2-25th Soldiers who were wounded during the deployment.

Ferraro said Pennsylvania's citizen Soldiers "will pursue the enemy" while working with the Government of Iraq, the local populace and reconstruction teams. He noted that the 56th SBCT's Soldiers have been working diligently since the brigade began its transformation to a

Stryker unit in late 2004.

"The challenges that lay ahead we will face head on with tenacity and iron will, just as our founding fathers did," Ferraro said.

A number of Iraqi officials attended the ceremony to say goodbye to the outgoing unit and welcome the new unit. One Iraqi military official said the region saw an increase in security and infrastructure rebuilding while Iraqi forces worked together with the Hawaii-based 2nd Bde., 25th Inf. Div.

"Security and providing services goes hand in hand," the official said. "I know the new brigade will work as hard as the outgoing brigade."



Photo by Sgt. Doug Roles, 56th SBCT, MND-B



Col. Marc Ferraro (right), commander of 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 28th Infantry Division, watches fellow "Keystone" Soldiers work to raise the colors of the "Independence Brigade." The Pennsylvania National Guard unit, headquartered in Philadelphia, officially assumed responsibility for a province northwest of Baghdad during a ceremony Feb. 24.

Test of the best: Soldier of the Year

"Modern Pioneer" Soldier wins at battalion-level, goes for brigade

Story by Pfc. Evan Loyd

2nd BCT PAO, 1st Armd. Div., MND-B

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - Spc. Janet McMahon, from Sobus, N.Y., a lab technician in Company C, 47th Forward Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, Multi-National Division-Baghdad, was recently selected as the 47th FSB Soldier of the Year and will soon compete in the "Iron Brigade's" Soldier of the Year competition.

McMahon said she studied long and hard to win her company-level competition prior to competing for FSB's Soldier of the Year.

After months of training, she stood in front of a board comprised of senior non-commissioned officers of the 47th FSB, answering a variety of questions focusing on Soldier skills to include: leadership, tactics, first aid, unit history, military justice, map orientation, physical training, battle focus training, and escalation of force.

"It took lots of studying to get to this level," said McMahon. "It's competitive and there is a lot to know."

McMahon has been in the Army for over five years and assigned to the "Iron Brigade" since July 2007. McMahon joined the military to see the world and has enjoyed being stationed in Europe. She plans on training as a therapist for cancer patients after her Army enlistment ends.

She is currently on her first deployment and despite being trained as a lab technician, McMahon has performed numerous other jobs since she first deployed with the 2nd BCT, 1st Armd. Div. to Iraq in April 2008.

"Since I've been here I've been the armorer, the commo (radio communications) representative, information management, a supply worker, mail room clerk; I even covered down on the orderly room," said McMahon. "Actually, lab tech is my smallest area here because we have another lab tech and he does the lab work while I

pretty much do everything else needed."

Despite her hard work and determination, McMahon didn't expect to beat out three other Soldiers' and go this far in the Soldier of the Year. Her original intention for attending the Soldier of the Month boards was to practice for promotion boards.

If she wins the "Iron Brigade" Soldier of the Year competition, she'll continue on the 1st Armored Division Soldier of the Year in Wiesbaden, Germany and then the United States Army Europe competition in Heidelberg, Germany.

"I think it would be awesome if I won," said McMahon. "I can't wait to see just how far I can go."

The 2nd BCT, 1st Armd. Div. "Iron Brigade" Soldier of the Year competition begins at Camp Striker, Feb. 26 and runs through Feb. 28.



Photo by Sgt. Daniel Nichols, 2nd BCT PAO, 1st Armd. Div., MND-B

Spc. Janet McMahon (left), of Sobus, N.Y., a lab technician with the 47th Forward Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, prepares to take blood for testing from Spc. Amanda San Nicolas, of Mesa, Ariz., Feb. 24. McMahon won her battalion-level Soldier of the Year competition and will continue on to the "Iron Brigade's" test of the best, Feb. 26-28.

TF Arrowhead's IG gets silver oak leaf



Photo by Staff Sgt. Jason Kendrick 56th IBCT PAO, 36th Inf. Div., MND-B



Col. Lee Henry (left), commander of Task Force Arrowhead, 56th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 36th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division-Baghdad, congratulates newly promoted Lt. Col. Dean Dahle following a promotion ceremony at Camp Victory Feb. 25. Dahle, the son of Marlys Dahle, has a history of public service with more than 20 years as an educator in the El Paso, Texas public schools system. The Wendell, Minn. native serves with the Texas National Guard, participating in hurricane relief efforts following both Katrina and Rita in 2005 and this, his first deployment to Iraq.

“Packhorse Soldiers” finish the job

By Sgt. David Hodge

1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B

FORWARD OPERATING BASE FALCON, Iraq — Soldiers of the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division—Baghdad turn to one battalion for combat service support in the Rashid district — the 4th Support Battalion.

During the recent Provincial Elections in Iraq, Jan. 31, approximately 30 percent of the 4th Supt. Bn. left the confines of Forward Operating Base Falcon to provide security at joint security stations allowing for more combat power around the many polling stations in southern Baghdad.

More than 130 “Packhorse” Soldiers assumed responsibility of entry control points and guard tower duties for approximately five days, said Command Sgt. Maj. Ronny Martinez, top enlisted leader for the 4th Supt. Bn., 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

“The Soldiers did great, and really added to the success of the Iraqi elections,” explained Martinez, from Salinas, Calif. “As I visited the Soldiers, I talked to numerous first sergeants and command sergeants major, and they had great things to say about ‘Packhorse’ Soldiers.”

The Soldiers of 4th Supt. Bn. provide combat logistical patrols to all joint security stations in the Rashid district of Baghdad and conduct a wide array of missions; maintaining the base defense operations center, training Iraqi Security Forces, operating the FOB medical treatment facility, maintaining elements of a quick reaction force and previously responsible for detainee operations.

Martinez believes his Soldiers faced the greatest challenge among other battalions in the brigade during the deployment with regards to detainee operations.

Before deploying in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom in March 2008, the 4th Supt. Bn. created Company I from within its ranks to manage detainee mission in Rashid.

While operating the Detainee Holding Area Annex from Baghdad’s International Zone, “India” Co. remained ready and prepared to process up to 60 detainees at any given time.

In December 2008, India Soldiers closed the DHAA, moved back to FOB Falcon and began operating the Intermediate Detention Collection Point, a small, temporary detention facility.

The Packhorse’s supply and distribution company, Company A, operated the brigade’s Supply Support Activity area.

“Packhorse” Soldiers from Company A, operating the brigade’s Supply Support Activity, processed over 360,00 requisitions during the deployment, said 1st Lt. Anna Glandorf, executive officer for Co. A.

“Anaconda” Co. delivered water, fuel, food, and build-

ing materials via 203 separate combat logistics patrols,” stated Glandorf, a native of Grand Rapids, Mich.

Glandorf explained how each CLP required, on average, two days of in-depth planning; one for the actual convoy, and one for the logistical requirements and support at the delivery site.

“The Soldiers have done really well,” Glandorf explained. “They have executed every mission with success and professionalism.”

The battalion’s headquarters element, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, managed FOB Falcon’s base defense mission and base defense operations center.

“Headhunter” troops managed several contracts for FOB security during the deployment, including a \$472,000 package to increase perimeter security along a main thoroughfare outside the base, said Capt. Warren Hummel, personnel officer for the 4th Supt. Bn.

Company B Soldiers provided maintenance to battalion and brigade assets and conducted generator maintenance, small-arms repair and wheeled vehicle maintenance training with Iraqi Security Forces.

Many of the ISF began using up-armored humvees instead of pickup trucks, which created the need for new and advanced training and mechanical knowledge, noted Sgt. Bryan Dewey, a wheeled-vehicle mechanic assigned to Co. B.

“Some of the more advanced classes were a higher skill level than the average Soldier can complete,” explained Dewey, who hails from Elizabethtown, Ky.

The in-depth instructions never overwhelmed the ISF mechanics, stated Dewey.

“The ISF mechanics are very fast learners and worked well in groups,” he added. “They are resourceful and don’t necessarily use standardized techniques.”

“The maintenance company completed approximately 3,700 work orders during the deployment and provided 24-hour support for the brigade and battalion personnel security detachment vehicles,” said 1st Lt. George Fruth, a maintenance control officer from Republic, Ohio, assigned to Co. B.

According to Fruth, none of the vehicles Co. B performed maintenance on throughout the deployment broke down while out in sector.

“That’s a pretty big accomplishment.”

The final contributor to the battalion’s diverse mission: Company C.

“Cobra” Soldiers from Company C operated FOB Falcon’s Level II medical treatment facility, treating approximately 8,100 patients and completing more than 200 medical evacuations during the deployment, said Sgt. Joana Carrillo, a combat medic from Tujunga, Calif.

Command Sgt. Maj. Martinez honestly feels the battalion never failed a mission, and the brigade never went

without anything needed to accomplish its mission.

As his Soldiers prepare for redeployment, Martinez will focus on what he considers the biggest challenge; Soldiers readjusting to normal everyday life and getting comfortable with their families again.

“The ‘Packhorse’ Soldiers performed great and completed every mission with professionalism and pride, even when the task is outside their ordinary military occupational specialty.” ✂



Photo by Spc. David Hodge, 1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B

Spc. Shavonna Gonzales, a medic from Gulf Shores, Ala., assigned to Company I, 4th Support Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, inspects a detainee’s fluid sample for evidence of a kidney infection during a medical examination June 2, at the Detainee Holding Area Annex at Forward Operating Base Prosperity, Baghdad. Company I Soldiers handle all detainees obtained through operations by the 1st BCT in the Rashid district of southern Baghdad.



Photo by Spc. David Hodge, 1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B

Spc. Vicente Ayala (left), a combat medic from San Antonio assigned to Company C, 4th Support Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, instructs a class on proper medical trauma care to policemen from the 7th Brigade, 2nd Iraqi National Police Division April 15, at Joint Security Station Doura in southern Baghdad. Soldiers from the “Packhorse” battalion make biweekly trips to different stations in the Rashid district to train policemen. (Photo by Spc. David Hodge, 1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B)

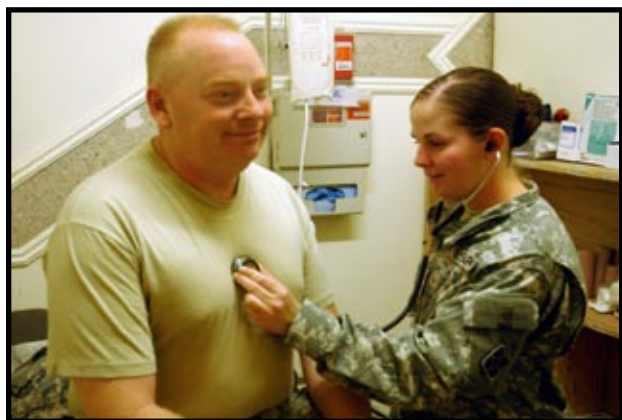


Photo by Spc. David Hodge, 1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B

Spc. Nicole Manley (right), a medic assigned to Company C, 4th Support Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, checks the heart rate of Staff Sgt. Paul Graupmann, an all-wheel mechanic assigned to Company B, 4th Supt. Bn., 1st BCT, April 28, at the Cobra Clinic on Forward Operating Base Falcon, Iraq.



Spc. Roberto Garza, a wheeled-vehicle mechanic, drains fuel from the tank of a humvee Nov. 22, at Forward Operating Base Falcon in southern Baghdad’s Rashid district. Garza, a Dallas native, likes being a mechanic because it is always a “hand’s on” job. Garza spends his days repairing engines, transmissions, or conducting quality assurance/quality control checks for Soldiers. He is assigned to Company B, 4th Support Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. David Hodge, 1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B)

46th Engineers strengthen prison, mission

By Staff Sgt. Mark Burrell
MND-B PAO

BAGHDAD – The Theater Internment Reconciliation Center under construction at Camp Taji is a new detainee facility that needs work. The Government of Iraq asked the Multi National Division—Baghdad military police that operate the facility to strengthen the holding cells, so the MPs called in the engineers to do a ‘little welding.’

“It was more than a little job,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Frank Thibodeau, the senior enlisted advisor of the 46th Engineer Battalion Combat Heavy, from Fort Polk, La.

“It’s a lot of work in a short amount of time with limited supplies,” said Capt. Jon Berry, the facilities contract construction managing engineer for the TIRC from the 508th Military Police Battalion from Fort Lewis, Wash.

The 46th Eng. Bn. sent three engineers to live and work in Taji. The Soldiers received a welding class when they arrived, but hard work and on-the-job training was all the engineers needed to complete welding five cells in just four days.

“They’re expanding their skill set in a nontraditional manner,” said Lt. Col. Matthew Zajac, commander of the 46th Eng. Bn. “It’s a value added.”

Their mission is to provide a second barrier for the roof and add outer protection to the cell walls inside the already heavily fortified TIRC, said Sgt. William Coburn, the only school-trained metal worker and welder on the project from the 46th Eng. Bn. Coburn and about 15 Sailors, assigned as engineers from Camp Taji, helped train the Army engineers for the project.

“I prepped the others and they picked it up like it was second nature,” said Coburn, from Charleston, S.C. “We’ve gotten thumbs up from the MP lieutenant colonel, and Navy leadership also said, ‘good job and continue doing the good work.’”

“We’ve got a good working relationship with the Navy guys as far as getting the job done,” continued Coburn. “We all put our hands in and everybody’s got a chance to put a bead down, to cut and to pre-fab work.”

Prefabricating the metal by staging and preparing it, welding metal beads onto the rebar and cutting steel pieces are what these troops are learning how to do with precision.

“Our mission is so technical if you don’t penetrate a bead right, it’ll bring down the whole shop; down the whole building; down the whole battalion,” reflected Coburn as he smiled; confident in his work and the work of the other MND-B engineers.

“Progress is steady and hopefully we’ll make mission in the near future, because it’s all about the mission.”

According to the troops, acquiring these new skill sets make them stronger assets to the team, to the unit, to the mission and will make a

stronger facility for the GoI.

signals helped the teams perform operations efficiently and quickly.

Spc. Leobardo Antonio, a heavy equipment operator, and native of Phoenix, Ariz., said he enjoyed working alongside the Iraqi engineers.

“The [Iraqi engineers] worked hard, they worked fast, and they worked long,” stated Antonio. “We all enjoyed working with them and look forward to future missions.”

The route sanitation mission continued for another two days and the joint team worked more than 20 hours to clear over 7,200 cubic feet of concrete rubble and debris off the roads of Baghdad.

“After the training was complete, the Iraqi Army engineer commander invited us to sit and eat local Iraqi food,” stated Kirby. “They were glad to have us there and we were happy to be there. The hospitality has been outstanding.”

The Iraqi Soldiers provided man-power and newly learned expertise to successfully execute the route sanitation mission, and also were instrumental in augmenting the site security.

“Everyone was delighted with the work the 6th IA engineers did,” stated Miller. “They pretty much operated on their own and they were fast, but safe. The Iraqis showed that they are ready to take the lead not only in securing their country, but performing other essential operations, such as route sanitation to stop the roadside bomb threats out there.” ✂

“Steel Spike” engineers achieve mission, fun



Photos by Staff Sgt. Mark Burrell,
MND-B PAO



Multinational Division – Baghdad
Soldiers play an impromptu game of football at Camp Taji while waiting for their convoy to continue the mission Feb. 17. Spc. Evan Lourie, from the 46th Engineer Battalion based out of Fort Polk, La., tries to evade the grasp of another 46th Eng. Soldier.



Command Sgt. Maj. Frank Thibodeau (left), the senior enlisted advisor of the 46th Engineer Battalion from Fort Polk, La., attached to the 225th Engineer Brigade, and Lt. Col. Matthew Zajac (center), commander of the 46th Eng. Bn., inspect a patched up bridge in northwest Baghdad Feb. 17 while another engineer provides security.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Mark Burrell MND-B PAO

Baghdad engineers Spc. Juan Chillogalo (left) and Pvt. Jatarus Alexander, both assigned to the 46th Engineer Battalion from Fort Polk, La., struggle to drop supplies off of their vehicle for their fellow engineers Feb. 17. The engineers of the 46th Eng. Bn. make periodic visits to Camp Taji to check on the status of work from their welders and deliver materials.

Remembering the old days

Entertainment choices before Reaganomics

By Staff Sgt. Jon Cupp

MND-B PAO

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq - Does anyone here remember the early and mid-70s? I'm sure there are a few folks out there, like myself, who still recall the way things were prior to the digital age; when DVDs had not yet been invented and VCRs, although in existence, had not yet hit consumer markets.

What I remember most was it was the era of Watergate; when 8-track tape players were cool, Elvis and Bruce Lee were kings and little was known about Chuck Norris.

It was a time when going to the movie theater was a rare treat and watching movies on network TV was a major event. People just didn't get to the movies as often then, so when you went, you made a night of it.

For starters, this was long before there were pre-bought/pre-sold movie tickets. It was an archaic and chaotic time—at least that's what those might think of a time when you had to actually stand in line for hours (sometimes in bell bottom jeans) to buy tickets. For wildly popular movies, like "Jaws", crowds were sometimes turned away because theaters had reached their seating capacity.

If you were lucky, and the line wasn't too long, you would get into the theater just in time to catch the coming attractions. If unlucky, you might miss the first 10 minutes of the film. But

the good thing was that the theater staff would let you stay seated after the movie was over to catch the parts you missed when the next showing started. Today, you would get kicked out of the theater or forced to pay admission again.

Movies back then were about \$1.75 to \$2.50 for an evening showing--compare that to the \$6.50 price some matinee showings are demanding now and the \$8.50 for evening showings.

Popular movies, like "Star Wars", when first released would play at the theater for a month or two and then you might not see them again for years. That is, until the movie would be re-released.

In those days you could always opt to buy an 8-millimeter or 16mm movie projector and buy movies for \$65 a pop (for a color copy and about \$40 for black and white) to get a glimpse of your favorite recent releases, but the movies were silent and they only ran 12 to 15 minutes in length—a very abbreviated and scaled down version of the movie.

Television had a much different aura as well. This was long before everyone had access to cable movie networks like HBO (which was started in 1972 and didn't go big on a nationwide scale until 1979). It was a time when you couldn't rent a movie and cable, if you want to call it that, only had 12 channels.

So when movies came on network TV for the first time, it was a huge, huge deal. It was a family affair, mom would pop the corn and

dad would gather the family together around a large wood-encased TV, probably made out of some kind of hard oak and once placed in your living room stayed where it was until you moved or the house burned down.

It was a major event, there again, because you didn't have the luxury of getting to pick what movies you watched or the choice of renting a movie. You were at the mercy of the TV networks or local UHF (Go ahead, "Google" it) stations. You always knew you were in for something special when the network used the guy who voiced the Love Boat commercials to introduce the film.

"Tonight, an ABC exclusive movie event, Roger Moore stars as James Bond in 'Live and Let Die'!"

Exclusive. It always was exclusive. But nothing was like the anticipation of getting to see a movie on TV, especially if it had been years since it had its first run in the theater.

In those days, people used to argue on how many years it would take to see "Jaws" on TV. Today it's only a matter of months until movies are released to DVD. People sometimes waited for years to see a movie on TV, but nowadays you can actually own a movie—no one could have imagined owning a movie in those days.

The big three networks (yes three, there was no Fox network then) made big, big money from sponsors, because millions and millions of households tuned in to CBS, NBC, and ABC to see premieres of movies that had not played in theaters for years.

When "Jaws" was first released in the theater in 1975, it ran for nearly three months and then left the theaters. It wasn't until four years later, in 1979, that the movie that equated swimming with entry into the food chain was

re-released at the theater. The following year, "Jaws" debuted on network television.

But by the late 70s and early 80s something was looming on the horizon that would forever change the way people watched movies on their televisions—the birth of the home theater which gave viewers new freedom in the guise of Beta and VHS tapes and laser disc players, allowing them to watch movies complete and unedited whenever they chose to.

It took a few years for video cassette recorder prices to drop from around \$1,000 to \$300. Most American households owned VCRs by 1986. It was then that the golden age of first-run network TV movie premieres became deader than disco.

In the late 1980s, TV networks were finding that ratings significantly dropped when they premiered theatrical movies; by the time it hit television, most folks had already seen the movie on their VCR. Unlike the 70s, when movie premieres on the big three networks garnered viewer numbers in the tens of millions, by the late 80s and early 90s, the numbers fell to just a few million.

Although those of us who are 40 or older still remember when going to the movies was saved for special occasions and when TV networks really were a big deal, I question if now we have it better or worse?

We didn't stay indoors watching TV every day or playing video games. There was no time—we had trees to climb, frogs to catch, games to play and mostly, our imaginations to entertain us.

When not yelling at kids to stay off his lawn or lamenting the loss of his hair, Staff Sgt. Jon Cupp enjoys researching WWII history, reading and spending time with this wife and son.

Fantasy sleepers: Three players who could produce big in 2009

By Spc. Phillip Turner

MND-B PAO

With Feb. 22 marking the mandatory report date for all big leaguers to join their clubs for spring training; its time get out the syringes, testosterone anabolic steroid, HGH and pre-written apology letter to the fans and organization. America's favorite past-time is already in full swing for the 2009 season.

After the publishing of Joe Torre's tell-all book about the inner workings and dealings of the most storied franchise in sports; as well as the ongoing steroid scandal that has clouded the past four seasons, now implicating the highest paid player in baseball Alex Rodriguez, it's hard to find any good news about baseball that can outshine the 'Death Star' of media attention commanded by the 'Evil Empire' in New York.

However, let's all try and get past the recent abominations of America's oldest organized league and look beyond the horizon towards a new season, which will hopefully have more headlines for actions on the field, than off.

Stat junkies and fantasy leaguers were probably disappointed with a lot of the production seen last year from guys you've come to know as solid day-to-day players.

For fantasy league players, these are the guys you want, sturdy fielders with an eye for making contact at the plate. They're not going to produce a lot of home run bang for the buck like David Ortiz in Boston, or Ryan Howard in Philadelphia, but their steady all around play can produce solid, balanced numbers that will give you steady point totals throughout the season. So here are some guys who I feel are going to have a solid year, and could be a nice addition to any fantasy roster.

It has been 20 years since a baby-faced 19-year-old Ken Griffey Jr. took the field for the Seattle Mariners. He shows a true passion

and admiration for the game his father taught him, and possesses (still to this day) one of the sweetest swings ever to whip through the strike zone. "Junior's" a virtual lock for first time ballot induction to Cooperstown; has 10 Gold Gloves, 13 All-Star appearances and is currently fifth on the all time home run list (611). Although he has seen a significant drop in plate appearances and offensive production since the turn of the century, his popularity with the fans has never wavered, particularly in Seattle where he will be returning in 2009 to finish his career and solidify his Major League Baseball legacy.

It's not just his return to Seattle that excites me and makes me believe in an offensive resurgence. It's the way I see him being used by the organization. While I don't see him starting every game in the outfield for the Mariners, "Junior" will see an abundance of work as a designated hitter (DH). This is going to help keep him healthy and give him more at bats during the course of the season than if he were to be the everyday center or right fielder. Griffey's major struggles over the past several years have been health-related issues keeping him out of the line-up. If the Mariners use him wisely by making him their DH and playing him sparingly in the outfield, it is extremely plausible that "Junior" can and will produce bigger numbers in batting average, on base percentage, slugging, and home runs. I am not saying go out and grab him early in your draft but don't pass on him either—this guy can still play.

Ty Wigginton is not your average infielder; at a stocky 6-foot, 200 pounds, you would expect to see him crouched behind home plate somewhere rather than being an all around utility fielder like he has proven to be. This is probably the biggest endowment Wigginton brings to whatever line-up he is inserted into. He will play anywhere, proving how unselfish of a 'team-player' he can be. He has seen time in both leagues over his 7-year career; as he has been bounced around from team to team, always being offered up for trade agreements usually mid-way through the season.

In spite of never really being given the opportunity to get settled in as an everyday player for any of the clubs he has played for, Wigginton has always shown to be a work-horse. Coming off of an average 2008 with the Houston Astros, where he batted .285 (career high), with 23 home runs and 58 RBI, Wigginton finds himself moving to Baltimore where hopefully he will become their permanent first baseman.

Why is this going to be a better year for Ty? Simple. He has come to a crossroads in his career as a result of this most recent trade. In this, his eighth pro season, he has to find his footing and prove to be a player worth investing in, if he wants to avoid his fourth trade. By placing him at first base, which I believe Baltimore will, this could turn out to be a Gold Glove year for the North Carolina native. He has only committed two errors at the 'single bag' in 85 appearances at that position. If he can continue to be a productive first baseman, and improve upon his production at the plate there would be no reason for the Orioles not to offer him a contract extension for the 2010 season. Bottom line he needs a good year, and his bulldog like tenacity and work ethic should help him achieve a new standard of play as he returns to the American League.

In the National league you could literally make a whole roster of under achieving players at least five times over. It just always seems the American league has all the star power, money, and fan fare; excluding the "Windy City" where the Cubs are always a big draw. However, with the Phillies coming off a world Championship and returning the Commissioner's Trophy to the National League for only the third time in eight years, maybe we could see a swing in dominance for the NL.

I don't exactly know if "I" would classify this next guy as having a bad 2008, but a lot of baseball analyst have and would disagree with my view. Since 2005, Jeff Francoeur has been an exceptional young prospect for the ever-aging Atlanta Braves roster, which they have recently tried to rectify by recruiting young hot talent from their farm clubs, such as catcher

Brian McCann along with Francoeur in 2005.

Over the course of Fracoeur's four year career, he has produced steady numbers, despite the fact he has a terrible habit of chasing pitches way out of the strike zone. However, he has proven to be quite the hacker, especially with runners in scoring position, posting 105 RBIs in 2005. Francoeur avoided arbitration by signing a one year contract extension with the Braves for the 2009 season.

I feel that Francoeur is a perfect fit in Atlanta (he is a hometown boy), who will eventually come into his own and be awarded the franchise tag much like Chipper Jones before him. But in order for it to play out this way, Francoeur must improve at the plate, be more patient while at the same time taking walks rather than trying to make contact with bad pitches. Defensively, the Braves couldn't ask for a better guy, I don't know anyone who will test Francoeurs arm; a lot of teams had to find out the hard way in the beginning. Now yes, Jeff did see a decline in average, extra base hits, home runs, and RBI's in 2008, but he also saw 50 less at-bats than he did in 2007. The drop off statistically for Francoeur was probably a direct reflection of this decline in plate appearances.

Regardless of how you manage your fantasy roster there is going to be a resurgence of Major League Baseball in America, and I think 2009 will be that year. The Alex Rodriguez, Barry Bonds, Jason Giambi days are over, allowing the opportunity for young, energetic players to change the face and fan perception of baseball.

This is what is needed; a renaissance of sorts, for a league that has been plagued with players taking themselves more serious than the game that made them stars. So when you line up on the couch and start your pre-season draft, avoid the 'anabolic stars' of the previous decade, and give the old school veterans and emerging stars of tomorrow a slot in your line-up. They may give you more than you expect, and you just might gain some perspective of the guys who continue to make baseball 'America's Favorite Past-time.'

Victory Chapel (Bldg# 31) SUNDAY: 0700 Liturgical Protestant Worship 1400 Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Service 1600Episcopal / Lutheran Worship MONDAY: 1000 SGM Meeting 1500 R&R - Reunion and Suicide Intervention Briefings WEDNESDAY: 0930 R&R - Reunion and Suicide Intervention Briefing THURSDAY: 1200 Liturgical Protestant Worship Rehearsal 1930 LDS Seminary (Annex #2) 1900 7th DAY ADV CHOIR PRAC 1900 Song of Solomon Bible Study (Mayor Cell Bldg 12) FRIDAY: 1830Jewish Shabbat Service SATURDAY: 1000 Seventh-day Adventist Bible tudy 1100 Seventh-day Adventist Service 1500 R&R- Reunion and Suicide Intervention Briefing 1800 12-Step Program (Annex #2) 1900 Roman Catholic Music Rehearsal 2000 Roman Catholic Mass	Mini Chapel (Victory MNC-I Chaplains Office, Bldg 24F) SUNDAY: 0800 Eastern Orthodox Divine Liturgy 1000 Protestant Sunday School 1300 Prayer Shawl Ministry 1500 Church of Christ 1930 Church of Jesus Christ of LDS TUESDAY: 1130 Roman Catholic Mass 1900 Women’s Bible Study WEDNESDAY: 1900 Men’s Fellowship Bible Study 1930 Church of Jesus Christ of LDS Mid Week Service THURSDAY: 1130 Roman Catholic Mass 1900 Women’s Bible Study 1900 Spanish Bible Study FRIDAY: 1130 Roman Catholic Mass 1300 Muslim Prayer Service 2000 Women’s Fellowship 2100 Blue Grass Music Night	Division Chapel (Liberty) SUNDAY: 0900 Protestant Worship Blended 1030 Roman Catholic Mass 1500 Multi-Cultural Gospel Service 2000 Protestant Worship, Contemporary MONDAY: 0500 Morning Prayer 1800 EML Briefing 1900 Gospel Bible Study 2000 Praise Dance Team Rehearsal TUESDAY: 1830 AA Meeting 1930 Catholic Choir Rehearsal WEDNESDAY: 1900 Mid- Week Multi-Cultural Gospel Service 2030 Gospel Musician Rehearsal THURSDAY: 1830 NA Meeting Room #3 1930 Gospel Choir Rehearsal FRIDAY: 0930 Marriage Workshop (4th Friday) 1900 Protestant Band Practice SATURDAY: 1800 Catholic RCIA 1830 Gospel Praise 2000 Men’s/ Women’s Ministry	Warrior Chapel (Liberty) SUNDAY: 0800 Church of Christ, Non Instrumental 0930 Contemporary Protestant 1100 Gospel Style Protestant 1300 Roman Catholic Mass 1700 Church of Jesus Christ of LDS TUESDAY: 2030 Catholic Bible Study WEDNESDAY: 1900 LDS Movie Night THURSDAY: 0900 Morning Prayer 1900 Gospel Bible Study FRIDAY: 1830 Wicca Circle Service 2030 Gospel Style Protestant SATURDAY: 1830 Gospel Choir Rehearsal 2030 Protestant Fellowship
Hope Chapel (Victory Bldg 24B) TUESDAY: 1800 Gospel Praise & Worship Rehearsal WEDNESDAY: 1730 Young Adults Bible study 1900 Protestant Worship Rehearsal THURSDAY: 1900 Catholic Choir Rehearsal FRIDAY: 1700 Contemporary Worship Music Rehearsal SATURDAY: 1630Gospel Choir Rehearsal 1930 Victory Gospel Experience International Slayer Chapel (Freedom Chapel) SUNDAY: 1000 Traditional Protestant 1200 Catholic Mass 1400 Church of Jesus Christ of LDS 1600 Eastern Orthodox 1900 Contemporary Protestant MONDAY: 1900 Bible Study “A History of Christianity” TUESDAY: 1900 Bible Study “God and the Military” FRIDAY: 1830 Catholic Hour	Chapel Schedule, cont. Engineer Chapel (Liberty) SUNDAY: 0800 Roman Catholic Mass 1000 General Christian Worship 1300 Church of Jesus Christ of LDS 1700 Praising Prayer and Preaching MONDAY: 1900 Tender Warrior Study TUESDAY: 1400 Chaplains’ Open House WEDNESDAY: 1900 LDS Institution Study 1900 n Rehearsal THURSDAY: 1930 Praise Band Rehearsal FRIDAY: 0930 “Book of Judges” Study SATURDAY: 1800 Catholic RCIA 1830 Gospel Praise 2000 Men’s/ Women’s Ministry	Stryker Chapel SUNDAY: 1000 Contemporary Protestant 1100 Sunday School 1200 Catholic Mass 1530 Church of Jesus Christ of LDS 1800 Intercessory Prayer 1900 Gospel Service MONDAY: 0630 Morning Prayer 1900 Gospel Council Meeting TUESDAY: 0630 Morning Prayer 1900 Bible Study WEDNESDAY: 0630 Morning Prayer 1800 Contemporary Praise Team Practice THURSDAY: 0630 Morning Prayer 1000/1600 EML Briefs FRIDAY: 0630 Morning Prayer 1300 Muslim Prayer (Prayer room) 1900 Creative Arts Rehearsal (Prayer room) 1900 Catholic Choir Rehearsal SATURDAY: 2000 Catholic Mass	Sather Chapel (BIAP) SUNDAY: 0830 Protestant 1000 Gospel 1145 Church of Jesus Christ of LDS 1530 Church of Christ 1800 Contemporary Service Choir Practice 1930 Contemporary MONDAY: 1930 Women’s Bible Study WEDNESDAY: 1900 “The S.O.U.R.C.E” Bible Study THURSDAY: 1900 Gospel Choir Rehearsal FRIDAY: 1800 Contemporary Service Choir Practice 1930 Men’s Bible Study SATURDAY: 1730 Reconciliation 1800 Catholic Mass

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the U.S. Constitution, the Army,
your unit and other Soldiers.*

"The price of freedom is eternal vigilance"
— Thomas Jefferson

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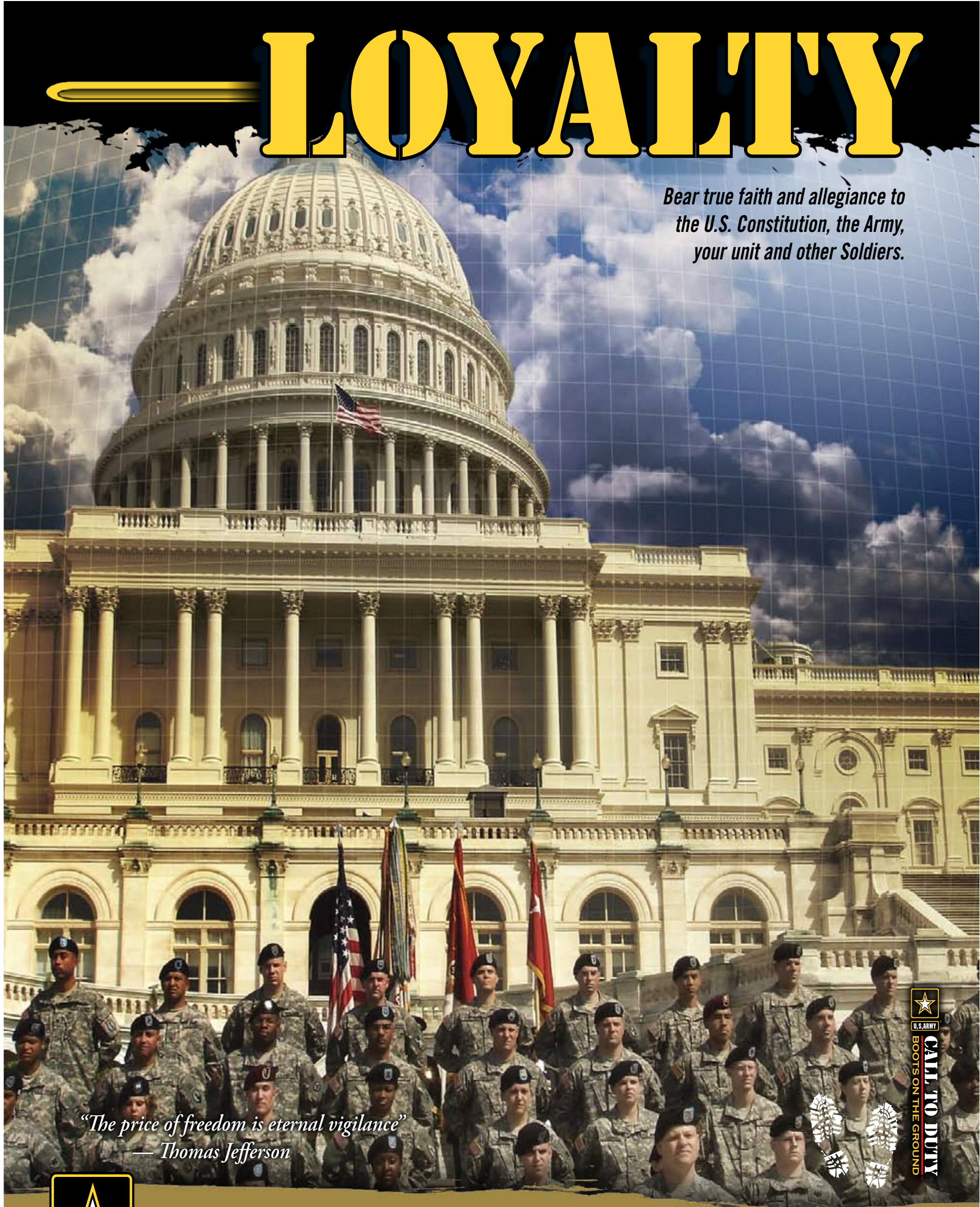
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