



Lightning Weekly

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MAR 30, 2009

Light Shines on Mosul Reconstruction Projects Through Hospital Windows



Pfc. Spencer Smoot, medic for 3rd Platoon, C Company, 1st Battalion, 67th Armor Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division is reflected in the cracked glass of a window in the Alsalam hospital in Mosul, Iraq.



Soldiers with C Company, 1st Battalion, 67th Armor Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division maneuver a staircase in the Alsalam hospital in Mosul, Iraq.

STORY BY

Pfc. Sharla Perrin

3rd HBCT, 1st CAV Public Affairs Office

FORWARD OPERATING BASE MAREZ, MOSUL, Iraq

— Lt. Col. Kirk Fernitz, the deputy chief of the Mosul Reconstruction Operations Center and Soldiers from C Company, 1st Battalion, 67th Armor Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, paid a visit to the Alsalam hospital in southeastern Mosul, March 17, to review an ongoing window-replacement project there.

The goal in replacing the hospital's windows was to improve and increase the health care environment for its surrounding community.

"Unfortunately, the Alsalam hospital in Mosul was damaged by the blast and concussion of nearby improvised explosive

devices," Fernitz said. "Assisting the hospital with structural repairs and improving its appearance is important in enticing patients to seek treatment there, which keeps the hospital in business and attracts future health care applicants."

Fernitz said that projects like this are showing the citizens of Mosul that the government is capable of and genuinely interested in improving the health and welfare of its citizens.

Besides overseeing local reconstruction projects, the MROC has been helping with the development of the province's respective director generals through a process called civil capacity building.

"The key to civil capacity building is for the Iraqi leadership to develop the capacity to coordinate and to independently work out their issues," said Fernitz. "Once the Iraqis are consistent with the process and can

'catch their own fish,' we consider our job done."

The Coalition forces that inhabit the Ninewah province also coordinate with the director generals and the MROC. Units who operate in Ninewah, like Co. C, nominate projects which are presented by the MROC to the director generals for approval. Then, members of the MROC provide assets to the projects which are presented by the MROC to the director generals for approval. Then, members of the MROC provide assets to the director generals, such as engineers, to execute the projects.

So far, the local government has ensured that chlorine is delivered every month to the four water treatments in Mosul and overseen ongoing trash and rubble removal projects, repaired water lines and replaced the windows in the Alsalam hospital, Fernitz said.

Cooperation Between Iraqi Security Forces and Coalition Forces Leads to Capture of Criminals

STORY BY

Pvt. Justin Naylor

2nd HBCT, 1st CAV Public Affairs Office

FORWARD OPERATING BASE WARRIOR, Kirkuk, Iraq – Cooperation between Iraqi police, Iraqi Army and Coalition forces led to the arrest of five criminals in the village of Yourgun, Kirkuk, March 16.

The individuals were suspected of conducting insurgent activities and various other crimes and were detained based on their outstanding warrants.

This mission was the largest-scale cooperation between IA, IP and 4th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, in the squadron's area of operation to this date, said Lt. Col. Andy Shoffner, 4th Sqdn., 9th Cav. Regt.'s commander.

"When we went in to the town we had a list of people we wanted to detain," Shoffner said.

Upon entering the village, with the assistance of local tips, Iraqi Security Forces halted two individuals attempting to flee on foot and later found three more criminals wanted by the IP, Shoffner said. "What made this a success was the coordination between the Iraqi army and Iraqi police."

"Three years ago, we planned and they followed," said Capt. Jesse Prince, commanding officer, Troop A, 4th Sqdn., 9th Cav. Regt. "Now they are planning their own missions. It is a significant increase in the efficiency and capability of the ISF."

The U.S. military was just there to augment their outer-cordon and provide aerial support, explosive ordnance disposal and military working dogs, Prince said.

"The people of the village expressed their happiness at seeing us all working together," Shoffner said.

According to Shoffner, continued joint operations in the region are planned for the future, and residents of the area will continue to see coordination between IA, IP and U.S. military.

Scorpion Transport Service

STORY and PHOTO BY

Spc. Opal Vaughn

14th Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE WARHORSE, DIYALA PROVINCE, Iraq –

Calf length socks, khaki shorts, shirt buttoned to the collar, hair gelled and whipped to perfection – from top to bottom, an air of confidence transmits from this body of excellence.

Now picture this – worn khaki boots caked in who knows what, dirt covered digital print trousers and shirt aimed to camouflage in varying environments and hair buzzed to the scalp – from top to bottom, a sense of accomplishment echoes from this body of stealth.

Transportation is perhaps not a glamorous, sexy or even stylish job, but it is one that must be done.

"We are an important asset to not only Soldiers but for civilians as well," said Staff Sgt. Apostolos Gregorious, platoon sergeant, Scorpion Platoon, 5th Squadron, 1st U.S. Cavalry, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division. "We have a wide variety of things we are tasked with, but mainly we conduct security for convoys, route clearance and provide escort for PSYOP and Civil Affairs."

Being a small platoon has its advantages, especially if a detour has to be taken during a mission.

"Our job allows other maneuver units to conduct missions," said Sgt. Leonel Vazquez, section sergeant, Scorpion Platoon, 5-1 Cav. "It's very important that we are able to accomplish our mission so that the actual maneuver units are able to complete theirs. We are not actually, per say, a maneuver platoon, but in the event that we are engaged by the enemy we're trained to take care of things as needed."

Regardless of how big or small Scorpion platoon may be, they always accomplish their mission.

"With this platoon, it's the Soldiers that make the missions happen," Gregorious stated. "All we have is each other, so it is up



Oceanside, Calif. native Spc. David Tidwell, gunner, Scorpion Platoon, 5th Squadron, 1st U.S. Cavalry, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, prepares to head out on convoy while at Forward Operating Base Warhorse in the Diyala province of Iraq, March 6.

to the Soldiers and my NCOs to make things happen."

With duty, pride and honor, Scorpion continues to set standards in everything they do.

"We're very detailed, crisp and we're trained only to do the best," Gregorious stated. "I feel that this platoon, a platoon made up of communications specialists, mechanics and a couple combat arms guys that were thrown together...through rigorous training we are excelling and doing it better than any other guys."

Working together as a team to get the mission accomplished is what the Army is all about.

"We are part of a team and we're helping others along as well, for anything, Scorpion is always here to help. Even though we operate independently we are still part of the big family in support of the mission, 100 percent," Gregorious stated.

"We only do the best, we're Scorpion," Gregorious stated.

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PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER: Lt. Col. David P. Doherty

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Soldiers Participate in Kurdish Newroz Celebrations

STORY and PHOTOS BY

Spc. Daniel Nelson

145th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE MAREZ, MOSUL, Iraq – Soldiers from the Command Post-North team, 25th Infantry Division and Task Force Lightning, were invited to take part in the celebrations of Newroz, which marks the turn of the Kurdish New Year and the first day of spring.

Newroz is observed by Kurdish people from March 20 through March 25, celebrating to mark the liberation from the tyrant King Zuhak, 2,709 years ago.

The provincial governor of Erbil, Iraq, Gov. Nawzad Hadi Mawlood, along with the proud people of the city, hosted the CP-North team for their celebration on March 20.

The crowd cheered when the Soldiers arrived, welcoming them to the event, showing their appreciation for what they have done for Iraq.

There as a guest of honor, was Brig. Gen. Robert Brown, the Multi-National Division-North Deputy Commanding General (Support), 25th Infantry Division, and approximately 20 other Soldiers from the CP-North team.

The festival was held in a city park where traditional Kurdish folk songs were sung and time-honored dances were performed for the crowd.

The park was filled with Kurdish men wearing customary head pieces and baggy pants, while the women wore brightly colored sequined dresses.

Following the performances, Brown took part in the ceremonial lighting of a bonfire.

The fire comes from the Kurdish story of Newroz where villagers made bonfires on the mountaintops to let people know of a successful revolt to overthrow King Zuhak.

Kurdish people still today make bonfires on hillsides and mountaintops to symbolize new beginnings. They use this day as the first calendar date of a New Year.

"It was an incredible honor to light a torch that symbolizes freedom," said Brown.

"They concentrate more on the aspect of freedom than just as a new year," added Brown. "It's almost like New Years and the 4th of July combined for us."

The Soldiers were taken to a Kurdish restaurant following the festival in the park where they were treated to a banquet with Gov. Hady.

A second group of approximately 20 Soldiers accompanied Brown and met with Gov. Tamar Ramazan Kuchar, the provincial governor of Dohuk, Iraq, to celebrate Newroz



Brig. Gen. Robert Brown, deputy commanding general (support), Multi-National Division – North and Task Force Lightning, celebrates Newroz with the people of Baktma, Iraq, 21 Mar.

on March 21 throughout villages in the Dohuk region.

Celebration for Newroz took place in the countryside of Baktma, which is a village just outside of Dohuk.

There, the Soldiers were welcomed to the event and took part in the traditional "pinky dancing" with the Kurdish locals.

"Their customs were a little different from what we're used to," said Sgt. 1st Class Kyle J. Swope, operations noncommissioned officer-in-charge and CP-North platoon sergeant, "but it's always nice to see customs and traditions from other countries and be a part of it."

Following the festivities in Baktma, Gov. Tamar took Brown and the other Soldiers to Saidka, the governor's home village. A Kurdish feast was prepared there for the Soldiers for lunch.

"They made us feel welcome. The people were excited to see us and were happy to celebrate with us," added Swope.

Both men and women from the area wore traditional garments and danced to customary music being played using bezeks, Kurdish horns, and duhouls, Kurdish drums.

"It instills a sense of pride and mission accomplishment for American Soldiers that were able to witness this," said Swope. "It shows that all the hard work and sacrifices that Soldiers made are coming to fruition with freedom for Iraq."



Sgt. 1st Class Kyle Swope "pinky dances" with Kurdish locals from Baktma, Iraq, a village in the Dohuk region during their Newroz celebration. Pinky dancing is a customary Kurdish dance typically accompanied by music from a bezek and duhoul, Kurdish horn and drum.

This Week In Tropic Lightning History

TROPIC LIGHTNING NEWS

MARCH 30, 1970 – CU CHI, VIETNAM –

Once again the Bobcats have shown their proficiency for undermining Charlie's plans. Company A, 1st Battalion (Mechanized), 5th Infantry in conjunction with one platoon from Company A of the 2d Battalion, 14th Infantry killed 28 enemy soldiers.

With superb co-ordination the Bobcats worked out like a pair of kings on a full checkerboard. Prior to setting up a night laager in the Hobo Woods, long known as an enemy haven despite constant sweep operations, a point man of the Bobcat's Alpha Company came under fire.

Further indication of the enemy's presence was observed from the air where a large bunker complex had been sighted. Two Huey Cobra gunships were radioed in and sprayed the area with fire from rockets and miniguns.

Utilizing three platoons, one of which was attached to Company A of the 2d Battalion, 14th Infantry, Alpha Company commander Captain Randall L. Yeargan of San Antonio, Tex., ordered each element to begin a cautious sweep through three separate hedgerows. As each platoon advanced on its respective hedgerow, three individual battles began to emerge.

The key reason for the battle's tremendous success lay in tactics of fire and maneuver, an exercise with which any infantry AIT graduate will feel all too familiar.

Each platoon systematically moved into its own bunker-and-spider-hole infested hedgerow. The third platoon, led by 1LT Paul Robinson of Otisville, Mich., was credited with timely organization of his men and accounted for eleven enemy dead.

Moving in the best fire and maneuver formations, the platoon's men gave each other cover as they proceeded to rid each bunker of its occupants.

"The only reason we were so successful was because everyone functioned together," remarked Staff Sergeant Roy Alexander of Peoria, Ill., third platoon sergeant.

According to Alexander the biggest weapon employed against the enemy was the hand grenade. The third platoon alone used twelve grenades to drop into individual holes.

Other weapons also played key roles. Specialist 4 Gerald Murch of Glasgow, Mont., was pretty convincing with his M-60. He shot one NVA who decided to pop up at the wrong time.

Sergeant John Mondino of Zeigler, Ill., found his M-79 grenade launcher a handy piece of hardware, especially when he scored a direct hit on one fleeing enemy troop.

Alpha Company's first platoon, under the leadership of 1LT Andrew C. Allred, used nearly identical tactics to overrun its respective hedgerow.

Specialist 4 Robert Gast, of Cincinnati, Ohio, shot one NVA who had been passed up by the lead element. Gast's action was indicative of the teamwork employed and no doubt saved a member of his unit from being shot in the back.

By nightfall, the ordeal had lasted three hours. Illumination flares gave the Bobcat Company enough extra light to thoroughly rid the area of enemy soldiers. The next morning the company again swept the area of the previous day's contact.

The NVA unit paid a high price for its initial sniper fire. Twenty-eight enemy lost their lives to the mechanized units, and blood trails were found leading away from the area.

Of the trophies taken, probably the most impressive was a .30 caliber machinegun mounted on wheels.

Other weapons captured included 14 AK-47 assault rifles, 1 60mm mortar tube complete, 40 CHICOM grenades, 40 rounds of butterfly bombs, 7.82mm mortar rounds, 2 RPG-2 launchers, 3 RPG-7 launchers, 20 RPG-2 rounds, 5 RPG-7 rounds and numerous documents.

25th Infantry Division Did You Know?

- Since the 25th ID was constituted in 1941 the division has taken part in 28 major campaigns, from WW II to today's Global War on Terrorism.
- As a result of the 25th ID's participation in those campaigns, the division has been awarded eight unit level decorations, from the United States and three foreign governments.
- At the conclusion of WW II the 25th ID remained on occupation duty in Japan for five years.
- By the time the 25th ID returned to Hawaii after the Korean war, the division had been away for 12 years.
- The 25th ID's initial involvement of the Vietnam War was in early 1963 when 100 helicopter door gunners were sent to the Republic of South Vietnam at the request of the U.S. Military Assistance Command in Vietnam.
- The last element of the 25th ID to depart Vietnam was the 2nd Brigade, who arrived back at Schofield Barracks in the early days of May 1971.



JULIE ANDREWS and the Von Trapp family? No, it's the 25th Division "Donut Dollies." Since there weren't any Austrian mountainsides to romp across the Red Cross girls figured a drainage ditch would have to do. (Photo by SP4 Rich Fitzpatrick)

NEWS FROM THE HOME FRONT

HAWAII

HONOLULU – With local unemployment at a 30-year high and a reeling economy showing few signs of regaining its legs anytime soon, some 8,100 job-seekers crowded the grounds of Honolulu Community College yesterday to take the first step in securing one of 160 new jobs at Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard.

An hour before the close of the fair, with the HCC parking lot packed tight, scores of would-be applicants were still making their way to the campus from far-flung parking spaces up and down Dillingham Boulevard.

Organizers said the turnout was roughly twice as large as last year's fair at Sand Island.

The state's largest industrial employer expects to fill 120 apprenticeships and 40 engineering and engineering support positions in January.

Representatives from 18 trades as well as the engineering department were on hand to share information with job seekers. By mid-morning, most had exhausted their supply of brochures and other informational handouts.

"The economy drove a lot more people here this year," said Jose Vargas, a general foreman representing the shipyard's sandblasters and painters. "There is a lack of jobs out there and people getting laid off. This is a great opportunity for people to get their foot in the yard through our apprentice programs."

Apprenticeships are four-year, work-study programs that pay trainees while they earn an associate's degree in applied science from HCC and learn their trade on the job. The positions start at \$18.30 or more per hour and reach \$27 or more after four years.

Yesterday's fair was for informational purposes only. Prospective applicants were directed to choose three trades and file their applications online. Applicants will need to take an assessment test in May. Interviews with select applicants will take place in June, with hiring notifications to follow in July. New employees will begin work on Jan. 19.

Yesterday's fair attracted prospective workers of all stripes, from soon-to-be high school graduates to experienced professionals who have been laid off to those simply looking for more job security in an insecure time.

Last month, Hawai'i's unemployment rate reached 6.5 percent, its highest level since October 1978. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, unemployment more than doubled from the 3.1 percent seasonally adjusted rate a year earlier. The total number of unemployed in Hawai'i stood at 42,250 last month, with 5,232 new initial filings so far this month.

Nemmy Santos, 47, of 'Ewa Beach, was laid off from his job as an architectural

designer in January.

Unemployment compensation and his wife's job as a contracts administrator have kept the family afloat, but Santos is eager to get back to work, even if it means changing fields.

"It's hard to find a job in my field, especially with the economy the way it is," Santos said. "Construction is the first to be affected, so I'm here trying to see if there is something else I can do."

Andrew Yunson, 18, of Nanakuli has been working as a contractor at Hickam Air Force Base for the past six months and hopes to snag an apprenticeship in electrical work at the shipyard.

He came to the fair with his girlfriend, Madison Cuttrell, who is an electrical engineering student at the University of Hawai'i, and their 2-month-old son, Kolten.

"I just want to find a good career," Yunson said. "I'm going to study hard and do whatever it takes."

Kaua'i resident Cameron Chandler, 20, graduated with a degree in electronics from Heald College six months ago but hasn't been able to find a job in his field.

Chandler came to the fair with sisters Rennie and Kellyn Higa, both of whom are seeking more secure, more fulfilling jobs than the ones they have now.

"It's been hard," Chandler said. "The economy just isn't too good right now."

James Butterworth, 50, moved from Florida to Hawai'i a year ago. He makes ends meet doing private home construction. "It's okay here but on the Mainland it's pretty much at a standstill," he said, but he, too, is looking for more stable employment as a shipwright, a welder or a fabricator.

"I'm looking for more security and more benefits," he said.

For Nocolae Holt, 29, of Hale'iwa, the urgency to find gainful employment grows each day.

Holt worked for a moving company for six years but left to pursue a trade in drywall. But with the slowing of the economy has come a severe paucity in jobs, and Holt said he hasn't been able to find work since November.

Holt's wife, Faith, works as a legal secretary, helping to provide for their two children, Matthew, 5, and Joshua, 4.

But Holt also has \$400 per month child support payments to make for a daughter in California, and it's getting to the point where eating in and getting rid of the mobile phone won't be enough to stretch the household budget.

"I'm going to look at all these papers and brochures that I got and go from there," he said. "You tell me what to do, show me how to do 'em and I'll do it. When it comes to work, I'll work."

As he left the HCC campus, Holt stopped to survey the thousands of other job seekers with whom he'll be competing. With just one position for every 50 people on hand yesterday, Holt knows his chances are slim at best.

"Pretty awesome," Holt said, scanning the crowd. "I wonder who'll be the lucky ones."

TEXAS

KILLEEN, Texas – They don't get a high-flying cape and can't climb walls in a single bound, but that has not kept twice as many people from wanting to be a crime fighter.

Killeen police received double the applications for the March test than in January. Many jobseekers are considering law enforcement for job security and solid benefits during the economic downturn, Sgt. Rick Hatfield, recruiting coordinator, said.

Approximately 155 applicants were slotted to attend KPD's civil service test at the Killeen Civic and Conference Center Saturday. In January, 76 applicants attended.

The applicants come for myriad reasons, some were laid off recently, others left overseas contracting positions hoping for job security in the U.S. or some seek a career change with higher pay.

Killeen hopes to fill 23 more slots for the June academy, double the January academy, which had 20 participants.

Hatfield filled 20 June academy slots during the January hiring phase, including four who arrived with prior experience and went straight to field training.

"The June academy could be huge," Hatfield said. "Sixteen is usually what we get after two tests."

KPD advertised in newspapers, over the radio and online, as usual, but did not expect this many jobseekers, Hatfield said.

KPD needs the applicants because one out of 10 survives the extensive hiring process.

Applicants must pass a civil service test, physical fitness tests, a personal history statement, a background check, an oral interview, a polygraph, and psychological evaluations in writing and with a doctor.

More applicants means more choices. Options are important because not all applicants will choose KPD. Killeen competes against the higher salaries and catchy allure of big-city departments, especially for Fort Hood soldiers.

Police agencies from Lubbock, Dallas, Austin, Tuscon, Ariz., and Las Vegas will recruit soldiers at job fairs. The Abilene PD posted a billboard recruiting sign on Fort Hood Street near Veterans Memorial Boulevard in February.

Temple police have not received an increase in applications, Sgt. Brad Hunt said.

LIGHTNING HERO OF THE WEEK

PV2 John King
B CO, 1-12 CAV, 1st CAV DIV
Wallinford, Texas

On the evening of 10 March 2009, PV2 King was manning Tower 3 at COP Ashura, when the COP came under rocket attack. Although this was King's first time being in the proximity of a kinetic engagement, he demonstrated his training, confidence and competence as he gave timely and accurate reports to the TOC during the attack, aiding the company commander with his battlefield assessment. King then led the COSIT element to the impact site which enabled an accurate crater analysis to be performed.

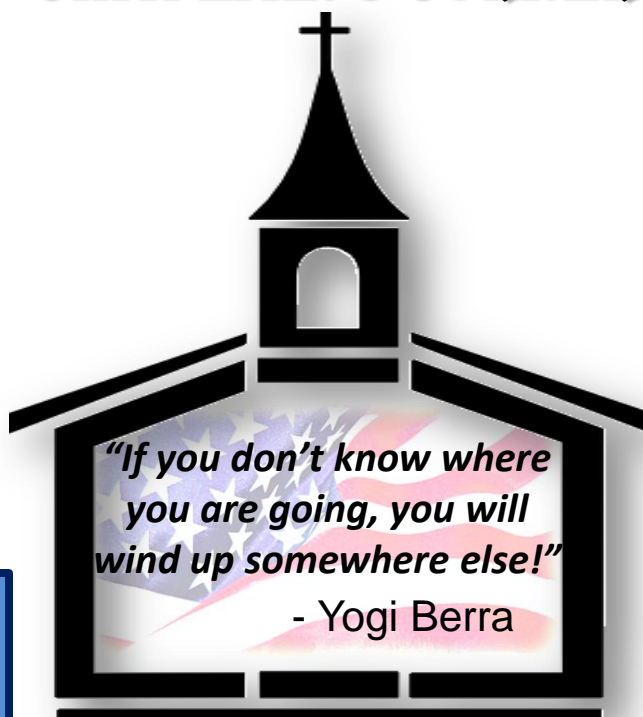


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CHAPLAIN'S CORNER





Sudan Leader Risk Arrest on War Crimes During Qatar Visit

DOHA, Qatar — Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir landed in Qatar on Sunday for an Arab League summit, a move that could put him at risk of arrest on war crimes charges leveled by a U.N. tribunal.

Al-Bashir met with Qatar's emir, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, after arriving in Doha, Qatar's capital.

Earlier this weekend, al-Thani criticized the timing of the arrest warrant issued in early March by the International Criminal Court, arguing it has undercut his government's efforts to resolve the long-running conflict in Sudan's Darfur region.

"We believe that peace and justice should go hand in hand to settle the conflict in Darfur, or for that matter, any other conflict," al-Thani told Arab League foreign ministers Saturday in remarks carried by the Qatar News Agency. "But we also believe that justice cannot be reached in the absence of peace."

The March 4 arrest warrant is the first issued for a sitting head of state by the world's only permanent war crimes tribunal, based at The Hague in the Netherlands. But the ICC has no arrest powers of its own, and depends on its 106 member states to take suspects into custody. Qatar is not a member of the tribunal.

Sudan refuses to recognize the legitimacy of the ICC, and has made no efforts to hand over two other officials indicted by the court. Al-Bashir has called the charges an attempt by Western powers to recolonize Sudan.

The court accuses al-Bashir of complicity in war crimes and crimes against humanity in his government's campaign against rebels in Darfur, in western Sudan.

The United Nations estimates that 300,000 people have been killed and 2.5 million have been forced to flee their homes because of the conflict.

Qatar had been mediating talks between Sudanese officials and re



SPORTING NEWS

North Carolina Pulls Away, Downs Oklahoma for Spot in Final Four

MEMPHIS — There was little doubt — make that no doubt — back in October. North Carolina was loaded and motivated, and the Tar Heels were unanimously expected to win college basketball's national championship. The lone question seemed to be whether they'd lose a game along the way.

Here they are, two wins removed from delivering on all that promise.

Carolina completed a four-game sweep through the NCAA tournament's South Region on Sunday, beating Oklahoma 72-60 to reach the Final Four for the second consecutive year — and 18th time overall. That's a record, moving the Tar Heels out of a tie with UCLA.

They'll meet East Regional winner Villanova in the tournament semifinals at Detroit's Ford Field on Saturday.

"I'm probably as proud of this team as any team I've ever coached."

Point guard Ty Lawson scored 19 points, all but four in the second half, Danny Green finished with 18 and North Carolina (32-4) got contributions throughout its deeply talented lineup, simply out manning the Blake Griffin-led Sooners.

It mattered little that Griffin was the decided winner of his celebrated individual matchup with Carolina forward Tyler Hansbrough. This season's likely national player of the year as a sophomore, Griffin went out with 23 points and 16 rebounds — operating constantly against double teams. "He is LeBron James-like," Carolina coach Roy Williams said. "He's got such a package of strength, explosiveness and touch."

Hansbrough, the consensus player of the year in 2008, took just four shots from the field and finished with eight points and six rebounds. It was just the ninth single-digit scoring performance of his 140-game career.

But Lawson showed why he was the Atlantic Coast Conference player of the year, finishing the Tar Heels' two games in Memphis with 38 points, 14 assists and two turnovers. He was named the region's most outstanding player. Green continued his comeback from a late-season slump, scoring 14 of his points as North Carolina took control in the first half.

Hansbrough took Griffin on defensively early and late, but 6-10 freshman Ed Davis

and 6-8 junior Deon Thompson rotated the assignment in between.

Oklahoma (30-6) gave its star precious little help. The Sooners hit just two of 19 three-point attempts, and starting guards Tony Crocker and Austin Johnson combined for just six points and four assists.

With 1:04 left and the outcome long settled — North Carolina led by as many as 21 points — a beaten Griffin walked to the bench, exchanged a brief hug with OU coach Jeff Capel, took a seat and buried his head in a towel.

"They have pros at just about every position. And they're incredibly efficient," Capel said. "That's kind of been the trademark of North Carolina's program if you look throughout the history."

"If you look at their team, they have a Hall of Fame coach and they have eight or nine (former high school) McDonald's All Americans. And they bring pros off the bench."

The Tar Heels didn't follow script in getting to Detroit, however.

Key players were lost for a total of 82 games to injury or, in one case, suspension. North Carolina stayed undefeated into January, then stumbled to an 0-2 start in the Atlantic Coast Conference. Absent Lawson, who was nursing a jammed right big toe, the Heels didn't make it out of the ACC tournament semifinals.

They weren't indomitable. But they were still plenty good. And inspired.

A year ago, practically the same team played into the Final Four, stunningly fell behind Kansas 40-12 in the first half of their semifinal in San Antonio and ultimately lost 84-66. Everyone one of the Tar Heels' top six scorers, from Hansbrough to Lawson to Thompson, came back.



North Carolina's Larry Drew II, left, Tyler Zeller and Tyler Hansbrough celebrate from the bench as the Tar Heels pulled away from Oklahoma in the first half.

TASK FORCE LIGHTNING - THROUGH THE LENS



Capt. Jason Trigger, Command Post – North Staff Judge Advocate, strums his guitar during an impromptu fireside session at CP-North, FOB Marez, Mosul, Iraq, Mar. 27.



Lt. Gen. Benjamin Mixon, USARPAC commanding general, shakes the hand of Pfc. Brian Nogues, Battery B, 3rd Battalion, 7th Field Artillery Regiment, 3rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, March 25. Nogues and his fellow Soldiers were recognized by Mixon for their outstanding duty performance during their deployment.



Maj. Katherine Krul and Maj. Neil Parks, both members of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, listen to an Iraqi judge during a judicial conference in Sulyamaniah, Iraq, March 14. Forty-eight judges from across Salah ad Din province attended the conference, which was the first off-site professional development event for them since 2003.



Spc. Christopher O'Neil, a member of the CP-North Personal Security Detachment, scans the crowd as he pulls security at the Newroz celebration in Irbil, 20 Mar.

HEROES OF THE 25TH INFANTRY DIVISION



- Private First Class Ernest E. West
- Company L, 14th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division
- Born: 2 September 1931, Russell, KY
- Entered Service: Wurtland, KY, 1952
- Place of Action: Near Sataeri, Korea
- Date of Action: 12 October 1952



Pfc. Ernest E. West

Medal of Honor Citation:

Pfc. West distinguished himself by conspicuous gallantry above and beyond the call of duty in action against the enemy. He voluntarily accompanied a contingent to locate and destroy a reported enemy outpost. Nearing the objective, the patrol was ambushed and suffered numerous casualties. Observing his wounded leader lying in an exposed position, Pfc. West ordered the troops to withdraw, then braved intense fire to reach and assist him. While attempting evacuation, he was attacked by 3 hostile soldiers employing grenades and small-arms fire. Quickly shifting his body to shelter the officer, he killed the assailants with his rifle, then carried the helpless man to safety. He was critically wounded and lost an eye in this action. but courageously returned through withering fire and bursting shells to assist the wounded. While evacuating 2 comrades, he closed with and killed 3 more of the foe. Pfc. West's indomitable spirit, consummate valor, and intrepid actions inspired all who observed him, reflect the highest credit on himself, and uphold the honored traditions of the military service.



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BAGHDAD, IRAQ
APO AE 09342


FICI-CG

March 29, 2009

MEMORANDUM FOR SEE DISTRIBUTION

SUBJECT: Farewell to Multi-National Corps – Iraq

1. To the tremendous warriors and civilians of the Multi-National Corps – Iraq, I would like to extend my sincerest thanks to each of you for your tireless service and to your loved ones for their selfless sacrifices.
2. Because of your determined efforts and dedication to our mission, the quality of life for the Iraqi people improved greatly, the Iraqi Security Forces are now much more capable of protecting the population, and the country experienced its safest free elections in their history. It is not lost on me or this command that these effects are a direct result of the courageous efforts of our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Civilians, and Coalition partners.
3. This country has a very promising future because you have given the Iraqis an opportunity to achieve their full potential. Each of you helped write Iraq's history. Take pride in knowing that you truly made a historic difference.
4. It has been my distinct honor and privilege to serve with you. Thank you for your service. May God bless you and your loved ones.



LLOYD J. AUSTIN, III
Lieutenant General, USA
Commanding

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