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INDEPENDENCE *Gazette*

Having a blast

**Stryker artillery Soldiers
make history**





INDEPENDENCE
Gazette

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Why the Independence Gazette?

The name for the 56th SBCT magazine and newsletter is derived from the unit's historic ties to Benjamin Franklin and the city of Philadelphia.

The 56th Brigade is known as the Independence Brigade because the brigade is headquartered in Philadelphia, the birthplace of American independence.

The name Gazette harks back to the "Pennsylvania Gazette," a newspaper run by Benjamin Franklin. Franklin did not start the Gazette but under his ownership the paper became the most successful in the colonies.

The legacy of Benjamin Franklin lives on with the 1-111th Infantry tracing its lineage back to 1747 when Franklin organized his Associators to defend Philadelphia from the threat of French privateers.

The Independence Gazette will chronicle the activities of the 56th in Iraq as it continues to build on the proud legacy of the Pennsylvania militia: "Citizen in peace, Soldier in war."

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On The Cover.

Photo by Capt. Ed Shank
Soldiers of Team Arrowhead (a 55th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 28th Infantry Division unit attached to 1st Battalion, 108th Field Artillery) fire high-explosive rounds in March at Camp Taji's Fire Base Mayhem, prior to departing for Joint Security Station Istiqlaal, during the battery's M777A calibration. See story Page 2.



Baghdad University gets spring cleaning

Keystone troops and Iraqi Police sweep area for unexploded ordnance

By Staff Sgt. MARK BURRELL
MND-B PAO

On the first day of spring, Baghdad University College of Agriculture in Abu Ghraib needed some cleaning. Instead of brooms and dustpans, Iraqi police and U.S. Soldiers used detection dogs, shovels and mine detectors to sweep for unexploded ordnance, improvised explosive devices and weapons caches March 21.

In preparation for University Day April 5, troops from 2nd Battalion, 112th Infantry Regiment, 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team (attached to 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division) received reports that the area needed to be cleared before it could open its doors to the public for Baghdad University's annual event.

"It's almost like a college day open house back home," said Staff Sgt. Robert Welfley, of Mifflintown, Pa. the private security detail noncommissioned officer in charge. "They think there's UXO out in the fields and we need to clear it before University Day."

The branch of Baghdad University has several large plots of land with rows of verdant crops and greenhouses surrounding the college buildings.

"It's an agricultural college so the Iraqi students might be planting something and come across a mine," said Spc. Jeff Ross, a "Strykers" battalion mortar man from Townsville, Pa. "We're trying to keep that area clear for them."

Iraqi Police officers were interspersed within the line of Stryker Soldiers as they slowly and meticulously waded through thigh-high grasses, stopping occasionally to dig out suspected items.

"They bring security and get rid of many

bad things," said Muhammad Salim, a security manager who works at the college. "The Americans and IP's have good cooperation and we feel more secure when they come."

This is one of several clearing missions in the area for which Iraqi Security Forces and the Stryker Soldiers have joined forces.

"Whenever communities see Coalition forces joined with ISF, it gives them a good sense that things are getting done," said 1st Lt. Sam Coover, a mortar platoon leader from New Oxford, Pa. "So in doing a mission like this, making that area safe, they're confident they can focus on their studies and not all the war that's going on around them and all the conflict."

Coover, a high school chemistry teacher, understands the importance of creating a safe learning environment.

"At home, I worry about things like bullying, kids picking on other kids... that they're not picked on or tormented or anything like that," he said. "So making it a safe learning environment is crucial. When students are distracted by the non-academic things it makes it very hard to learn and pick up on things."

The IP's and Stryker Soldiers were complemented by military police and working dogs from the Provost Marshall's Office, Camp Liberty K-9 section, 1st Cavalry Division.

"We're there to support them, clear the area and search for explosives," said Sgt. Christopher Jasper, a kennel master from Everett, Wash. "The sky's the limit, you never know what a dog can find and they're an extra resource on top of the metal detectors."

Sporadically throughout the day, when the metal detectors gave a high-pitched buzz, the Stryker Soldiers and IP's stopped and



Photo by Staff Sgt. Mark Burrell
New Bloomfield, Pa. resident Staff Sgt. Ronald Chunn (left), and Pvt. 1st Class Zakaria Rehawi, of New Castle, Pa., both assigned to 2nd Battalion "Strykers," 112th Infantry Regiment, 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, search for unexploded ordnance, weapons caches and improvised explosive devices in a field at the Baghdad University College of Agriculture in Abu Ghraib March 21. The 2-112th is attached to 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division.

dug deep enough holes in the grassy fields to uncover whatever metal lie beneath. The Soldiers and IP's would switch off on working the metal detectors and painstakingly unearthing buried metal under the hot sun.

"When the communities see these joint missions together, they know that we're helping to train the Iraqis and pass on a lot of our skills," added Coover. "We're also sending the message that this is a safe place you can send your students."

The IP's and Stryker Soldiers did not find anything worth throwing out in their rendition of spring cleaning, so now the students can focus on a blossoming new Iraq rather than possible dangers lurking beneath the soil.



Photos by Staff Sgt. Mark Burrell
Above: Spc. Dane Bamford (left), from Shamokin, Pa., 2-112th, 56th SBCT searches with an Iraqi policeman. At right: "Stryker" Soldiers from the 2-112th clear an area near the college.





55th Brigade's Team Arrowhead fires from new base at Istiqlaal

a National Guard artillery soldier, if you come here as an artillery guy, odds are you aren't going to be doing an artillery mission. We are very fortunate to be here doing an artillery mission, to be a part of this and to be the pioneers, if you will, for my battalion back home and the 108th [1st Battalion, 108th Field Artillery, 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team]."

From the time the unit was told of its new mission to the time that its guns were fired from the JSS was less than a month – nearly light speed movement for a mission of this magnitude. In that time, a plan was put in place to build a fire base on an installation where there was none, to calibrate the cannons that would be used, and to move an entire platoon's worth of men and equipment to the site.

"The coordination was definitely the biggest hurdle to overcome," said Grentus. "Logistically, getting all of us from Taji to Istiqlaal – along with all of our equipment – was the hardest piece."

Team Arrowhead had to pack up all equipment while simultaneously training with Battery B, 1-108th to calibrate their weapons and train on the Excalibur 155mm Precision Guided Extended Range Artillery Projectile.

"We can provide high explosives (HE), we can provide illumination at night, we also have Excalibur, which we can use for precise munitions," said Grentus. "We also have some smoke munitions too. So we come with an array of artillery pieces and artillery rounds that we can provide for the Cav."

According to Command Sgt. Maj. Mervin M. Ripley, command sergeant major for the 1-7th, the Cav.'s mission at Istiqlaal is to partner with the Iraqi Police and assist them using any enablers they have at their disposal. The illumination rounds fired March 29 were fired in direct support of coalition troops on the ground in their area of operations. Ripley said the ordinance provided by Arrowhead is a force multiplier that only field artillery can provide.

"They use illumination rounds to show the enemy that we know where you're at," said Ripley. "It tells them we know you might be planting explosives. It denies them the ability to move in the dark."

Although the accommodations at the JSS would be considered austere by anyone's standards, Staff Sgt. John Edwards, chief of section for Team Arrowhead, said the conditions are nothing unexpected.

"Out here the accommodations are a bit more limited, but it's what we expected coming over to Iraq," said Edwards. "I've been to Afghanistan and Afghanistan is way worse. The guys are getting used to it – they're adjusting. Morale is high. We're doing a good mission. Nobody's really complaining."

Grentus agrees that his guys are motivated and says it has a lot to do with the way they've been treated by their active duty hosts.

"The way we've been received by the Cav. has been outstanding," said Grentus. "They've really taken us under their wing and called us one of their own. They've given us any kind of support, any kind of guidance, any kind of supplies that they can offer us. They've been outstanding to work for."

Ripley agreed. He said: "I've worked with field artillery on several occasions – active duty, National Guard and reserve. B Battery, 1st of the 109th is very professional. My guys have pretty much adopted them. They carry themselves with pride. They have what we refer to as 'cavalry panache.' They definitely take their business seriously and they show it."

Photo by Capt. Ed Shank

Team Arrowhead Soldiers fire high-explosive rounds in March at Camp Taji's Fire Base Mayhem prior to departing for Joint Security Station Istiqlaal during the battery's M777A calibration.

**By Capt. ED SHANK
1-108 FA PAO**

From a remote station just north of Baghdad, Battery B, 1st Battalion 109th Field Artillery marked its place in history March 29 with an earth-shaking, thunderous boom – firing their home battalion's first artillery rounds in combat since World War II. There was no ticker tape parade or champagne to mark the occasion. There was only the sound of cheers from a handful of artillerymen as they cleared their M777A Howitzer to fire again.

Battery B 1-109th, a 55th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 28th Infantry Division unit attached to the 1st Battalion, 108th Field Artillery, fired four illumination rounds that night, in support of the U.S. Army's 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment. The battery fired from a fire base recently completed at Joint Security Station Istiqlaal.

Just weeks earlier Soldiers with the battery, call sign "Arrowhead," were told that they would be moving to Istiqlaal to support the mission of the 1-7th with the M777A Howitzer. Although many of the battery's soldiers have deployed to the Middle East since September 11, 2001, the new assignment marked the first time any of them had been given the opportunity to deploy as artillerymen.

"All the soldiers are very motivated to be here, pulling the lanyard and doing an artillery mission," said 1st Lt. Jason S. Grentus, Team Arrowhead platoon leader. "It doesn't matter if you're active duty or

'Associators' assist with Junior Hero Program

Pa. Guard, Iraqi Soldiers distribute supplies to children



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jeffrey Fisher
Sgt Brian Choe, a native of Tustin, Calif., an assistant team leader with the 315th Psychological Operations Company, kneels next to an Iraqi boy as he shows off the soccer ball he received from the local Iraqi Security Forces with the assistance of Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 111th Infantry, 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, during a Junior Hero Program ceremony March 19 at the Ibn Tufail Elementary School.

**By Sgt. 1st Class JEFFREY FISHER
1-111th INF**

Iraqi Security Forces, with assistance from Soldiers of 1st Battalion, 111th Infantry, "Associators," 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, Multi-National Division-Baghdad, recently delivered a safety message to young students while distributing school supplies and soccer balls. Efforts through the Junior Hero school visitation program have been successful, Soldiers said, and more school visits are in the works.

Iraqi Army and Associators Soldiers distributed over 200 backpacks, school supplies, T-shirts and 80 soccer balls to over 200 students at Ibn Tufail Elementary School in Tarmiyah March 19.

The Junior Hero Program provides the supplies to distributed to the Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police who give them to children. During the events key leaders from both the local IA and IP give a speech to the students about the importance of not talking to strangers and instruct the students to go to the local Iraqi Security Forces if they are in need of help or if they see anything suspicious.

"To be able to assist in this type of program is an honor and a privi-

lege for our Soldiers," Capt. Jason Hall, 1-111th information officer, said.

"This shows the commitment that the Iraqi Security Forces have to the local people and it solidifies the commitment of Coalition forces to support the Iraqi force. It's a win for all," said Hall, a Grand Prairie, Texas, resident activated from the Individual Ready Reserve in October 2008 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Hall said that the latest Junior Hero event was only one of many done in the past with numerous more planned in the future. These events are just one of the many building blocks for a better future for the Iraqi people and all of Iraq, Hall said.

"This shows the commitment that the Iraqi Security Forces have to the local people ... It's a win for all,"

Capt. Jason Hall, 1-111th information officer.

The soccer balls that were given to the students during the event were donations from individuals in conjunction with the program "Kicks for Nick." This program is carried out by a non-profit organization that collects donated soccer balls in memory of Pvt. 1st Class Nicholas Madaras.

Pvt. 1st Class Madaras was an avid soccer player and decided to collect soccer balls while home on leave from Iraq in July 2006 to be given to children of Iraq. He was killed in action by an IED in September 2006 before he could distribute the balls to the children. Out of this tragedy the "Kicks for Nick" crusade was started. To find out more information or to help you can go to www.kickformick.org.

The 1st Battalion, 111th Infantry, 56th SBCT is headquartered in Philadelphia and is a key unit to the stability and security of the northern Taji area of Iraq. Its mobilization includes about 750 Soldiers, from armories across Pennsylvania. The 1st Battalion, 111th Infantry, traces its lineage back to the "Associators" force raised by Ben Franklin to defend Philadelphia from French privateers.



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jeffrey Fisher
Local Iraqi Security Forces leaders speak to the students at the Ibn Tufail Elementary School during a Junior Hero Program ceremony March 19. The Iraqi Security Forces, with the assistance of Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 111th Infantry, 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, distributed backpacks and soccer balls to the students.

Card collage lifts spirits at Sa'ab al-Bour

By Staff Sgt. PETER FORD
MND-B PAO

After a long stressful day of patrolling the streets of Sab al-Bour looking for weapons and explosive devices, weary Soldiers of B Troop, 2nd Squadron, 104th Cavalry Regiment, 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team return to base anxious to fall into bed. But, as they enter their quarters, they pause for a look at the collage of greeting cards that hang around the door. The cards, a collection of well wishes from children at the Ann G. McGuinness School back in the States, seem to erase the events of the day and cause smiles to form on their weary faces.

"It just makes you feel good," said Spc. Matthew Fogarty, from Bethlehem, Pa., and a cavalry scout in B Troop.

According to Fogarty, there are many schools around the country like the Ann G. McGuinness Intermediate School from Union Endicott, N.Y., that make it a point to let Soldiers know they still care. But this is different for Fogarty and the Soldiers of B Troop. The cards of support come from one of Fogarty's childhood friends.

Amanda Aloï, an art teacher at the Ann G. McGuinness School, said she felt it was her duty to show her support for the Soldiers.

"Amanda told her students she knew a Soldier in Iraq and asked them to make some cards for the Soldiers in B Troop," said Fogarty. "The kids think the things we are doing are awesome."

Fogarty and Aloï were childhood friends who grew up in Elmira, N.Y. Fogarty is now a Soldier in the Pennsylvania National Guard.

Aloï taught her students how to create heart-



Photo by Staff Sgt. Peter Ford
Spc. Matthew Fogarty, a native of Bethlehem, Pa., and a cavalry scout in B Troop, 2nd Squadron, 104th Cavalry Regiment, 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, hangs cards from students April 12, at the Joint Security Station in Sa'ab al-Bour. Fogarty hung the cards around the doorway of the living quarters to ensure Soldiers see the hard work of the students.

warming messages and drawings that were sent to the Soldiers of B Troop and Fogarty ensured the Soldiers received the messages.

The love and support the students have for the U.S. and its Soldiers are shown in the cards they created for Soldiers of B Troop.

One student, Alaska, created a card much like her teacher's. The card reflected admiration and concern for the Soldiers and their families. "You so Rock! I hope you win the war. Your family is waiting for you," she wrote.

The cards that hang around the Joint Security Station at Sa'ab al-Bour are just a little reminder to the Soldiers that people still care.

"A little word can mean a whole lot to a Soldier when he is down," said Fogarty.

Soldiers of B Troop say the kids are very talented and the cards keep them motivated. "The cards from the kids are nice," said Spc. Tristan Grubb, a native of Mahanoy City, Pa., and a cavalry scout of B Troop. "We really appreciate the support of the kids."

Every day, Soldiers of B Troop work long, grueling hours while separated from their families and friends. These conditions can sometimes cause anxiety and frustration. On days when Soldiers are exhausted, something as simple as a card from a child can put a smile on a fatigued face.

Class of electricians to bring light to Taji

Capt. DEREK HAMMOND
2-104th CAV.

Twenty Iraqi electricians are ready to help keep power flowing to the Taji area after completing a six-month course managed by a Coalition reconstruction team.

An April 12 graduation ceremony capped off the coursework begun by students of the Taji area Electric Line Repair Team in October.

The course included three weeks of classroom instruction. Students then went out on the road for on-the-job training, where they gained valuable experience on how to repair the local power network. This team will be working directly within the Taji area and is yet another sign that conditions are improving here in Iraq.

Members of the Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team 5 attended the graduation. They are: 1st Lt. Richard Weber, from

Linglestown, Pa., the assistant brigade engineer for the 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 28th Infantry Division; Master Sgt. Daffaney Dortly, from Lake City, Fla., and Tech. Sgt. Demetri Harper of Claxton, Ga., the contracting officer representatives in the U.S. Air Force, attached to the 56th SBCT; and Capt. Derek Hammond, from Harrisburg, Pa., of the 2nd Squadron, 104th Cavalry.

"The ELRT graduates provide the manpower to ensure that the one hundred to one hundred fifty thousand residents of the Taji area will receive this electricity," said Weber. "Every time they turn on a light or use electricity, they should think of the ELRT graduates and the service they provide to get the electricity to them."

The ceremony started at 10:30 in the morning with the Iraqi National Anthem, followed by a reading of the Koran, and

messages from distinguished guests, including Abdul Sattar al Kharzraji, the assistant director general for the Iraqi Ministry of Power; Ali Boone, the local head of media for the Taji Government offices; Jassim Mohammad Salem, the engineer in charge of the new ELRT members; and Weber. The graduation certificates were then handed out to the 20-member ELRT.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, the graduates and guests moved from the courtyard to the municipal building for refreshments and then to the ELRT complex for the final salary payout. The ELRT members had various levels of background and experience and were paid accordingly. The two Iraqi engineers will receive \$300 per month, while candidates with no experience will receive a salary of \$175 per month. This is a lot of money for a country where many individuals are unemployed.

Convoy training links up BSB Soldiers, Iraqi Army logistics unit

By Sgt. DOUG ROLES
56th SBCT PAO

Moving through a haze of yellow smoke and churned up dust, the Iraqi Soldier reached the disabled Humvee. Inside he could see the driver slumped motionless at the steering wheel. In the rear seat a passenger stirred. Through the smoke he could hear another Humvee racing to the scene.

Moments earlier he'd been riding quietly in another truck as the convoy made its way up a tree-lined street. Now his world had become a swirl of Soldiers running and shouting.

First an IED "blast" had disabled one vehicle. Then, as the convoy members were responding, a second simulated IED took out another vehicle. The challenge now was to keep confusion at bay by putting the past two weeks of training to use.



As the Iraqi Army Soldiers deemed unharmed in the IED attacks at Camp Taji pulled security and provided care for the wounded, their battalion commander and trainers from a Pennsylvania Army National Guard unit observed them.

Soldiers of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 328th Brigade Support Battalion, 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, worked with an Iraqi Army commander over the first two weeks of April to conduct training on individual Soldier tasks for the Iraqi Army logistics platoon. The Guard trainers capped off



the two weeks Tuesday, April 7 and Wednesday, April 8 with convoy exercises designed to make the Iraqi Army Soldiers put those individual skills to work as a team.

"This was the culmination training for the convoy STX [situational training exercise] lanes," Capt. William Salisbury, the 328th HHC commander, said.

Salisbury explained that he and members of his Logistics Tactical Advisory Team had asked the commander of the Iraqi Army's 1st Battalion, 35th Brigade, what type of training assistance he would like from Coalition Forces for his logistics unit.

"It came up that they wanted convoy training," Salisbury said. "Overall it was a really good step for them toward moving their own convoys and to doing their logistics. It's been really rewarding to help them. I think they're very motivated."

As the convoy made passes through a training area, the Guard soldiers threw smoke grenades and flash bang grenades in the vicinity of the vehicles, designating one each pass as being hit by an IED. Iraqi Army soldiers then reacted by completing tasks such as pulling security, tending to any simulated casualties and moving the disabled vehicle to safety.

"Their work ethic is really strong and they learned quickly," said Sgt. Aaron Acevedo of Lancaster, Pa., of the Iraqi Army Soldiers.

"Show them something once and they got it. They ate it up," he said. "They did excellent. It was a relationship-building experience."

The two days of convoy training began with a briefing in the battalion commander's office then moved to a rock drill in a vacant lot in which Sgt. 1st Class Brad Eanone, of Pinegrove, Pa., used several stones to demonstrate the movement of convoy vehicles in the event of various "attacks."

"The purpose of this is so everyone knows their jobs," Eanone explained through an interpreter.



The movements of the Iraqi Army soldiers improved through the course of the training, winning the platoon praise from its commander.

An Iraqi Army sergeant major, speaking through an interpreter, said the training is important because it teaches his Soldiers how to fix problems when they arise outside the wire.

"It's very good training," he said. "Every time we work hard in training, we get better."

He added that his soldiers "are getting better step by step."

Staff Sgt. Christopher Diehl, of York, a 328th operations non-commissioned officer, said the level of chaos injected into the training scenarios increased as the event progressed.

"We beat them up there at the end," he said of the final iteration.

"My impression is they want to learn everything. They're like a sponge," Diehl said. "We tried to implement leadership development in the NCO ranks."

Photos by Sgt. Doug Roles

Top: Staff Sgt. Javier Zapata (right), of York, Pa., Headquarters Company, 328th Brigade Support Battalion, 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, looks over a sector of fire with an Iraqi Army Soldier. **Above at left:** An IA soldier waits for his "disabled" vehicle to be towed. **At left:** Sgt. 1st Class Brad Eanone, of Pinegrove, Pa., 328th BSB, prepares a vehicle tow strap. **Here:** Smoke from a simulated IED envelopes IA convoy vehicles.



Night Moves



Support unit keeps outposts stocked with fuel, food

Above: Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles, part of a 328th Brigade Support Battalion Deliberate Combat Logistics Patrol, arrive at Joint Security Station Sa'ab al Bour April 8. The resupply convoys move at night, supplying 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team outposts with food and equipment. At left: Spc. Lisa Horan of Chambersburg, Pa. watches fuel supply lines as Sgt. Elvis Hernandez of Saylorsburg, Pa. pumps fuel into a holding tank. Both Soldiers are with the BSB's Company A. Below, at right: Soldiers stationed at JSS Sa'ab al Bour unload food and drinks.

cutting time on the road while making sure loads of goods fit the needs of the receiving company at the JSS.

"The goal is to get out there in a timely fashion and an orderly manner, offload, and then get back to Camp Taji," said Sgt. Maj. Thomas Buck, of Myerstown, Pa., sergeant major of the 328th. "The less time you can spend outside the wire the better for the Soldiers."

Buck said his Soldiers have trimmed the time of an average Deliberate Combat Logistics Patrol to four to six hours, a 50 percent reduction in time in some instances. DCLP convoys normally re-supply two JSS's on each mission.

Buck said Soldiers have also scrutinized the workhorses of their mission, their Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles and up-armored flatbed trucks.

"We've improved lighting on the vehicles. We've improved the armor and we've added gunners [see story Page 4]," Buck said. "That's the key: improving your battlespace and improving your operations."

"We made the decision to travel strictly at night," he added, noting that the move means quicker, quieter trips since the convoy does not encounter as much local traffic.

Buck pointed out that during the brigade train-up in Mississippi and Louisiana, the BSB put together gun truck teams for vehicles. He said the units have kept those teams together, allowing them to work better as a team.

To supply a JSS, goods are moved from a Class 1 warehouse at Camp Taji. The storage facility is operated by cooks. Buck said missions start with the work of forward area support coordinators, Soldiers who visits JSS's to ensure orders for goods match the actual needs of the JSS.

"The FASCO validates each order," Buck said. "The load team is responsible for loading the stuff up and tying it down, making sure it's all there."

From that point the BSB's distribution team - Soldiers from Company A and the headquarters company - hit the road.

(Continued on Page 7)

A Pennsylvania National Guard unit is on a quest to find the best ways to quickly and safely move supplies of every kind to remote outposts dependent upon timely delivery of those goods.

Soldiers of the 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team's 328th Brigade Support Battalion spend their nights braving the roads of Iraq to make re-supply runs to joint security stations. In the two months since they've started their mission, they've fine tuned the process,



Above: As seen through a night vision lens, Soldiers unload a refrigeration unit at JSS Sa'ab al Bour, April 8. **At right:** Spc. Amanda Slatko of Altoona, Pa., a medic with Company C, 328th Brigade Support Battalion, 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, cleans a mirror of the MRAP vehicle she drives during nighttime supply missions. **Below, at right:** Spc. Benjamin Pohl (at left) of Delta, Pa. and Sgt. Harry Williams, of Avis, Pa., both with Company B, 328th BSB, trade tales with other Soldiers while checking communications gear in the back of an MRAP before rolling out.

*Story and photos by
Sgt. DOUG ROLES, 56th SBCT*

(Con't from Page 6)

"Everything's scripted," said Buck. "They drop the Class 1 [food-stuffs] here, water and fuel there, and then there is a detail from that JSS's company at the ready, and they help unload all that stuff."

The Soldiers go through a variety of equipment checks before rolling out of Camp Taji. Spc. Henry Hallager of Catesville, Pa., a logistics specialist, checks the radios.

"Commo is very important, very essential for our mission," he said, adding that the Soldiers of the company have come to depend on each other more and more.

"Our DCLP is together 24/7. We do everything together," he said. "It's extremely important to have a chemistry together."

Spc. Nathan White, of Dallas, Pa., with Company A, said the DCLP teams face a level of danger since they are regularly on the road. However, he said there is danger in any job and termed wearing the Army

we're constantly improving. We're doing good things," White said.

Sgt. Stephen Cassidy, of Ephrata, Pa., also with Company A, said his unit has heard positive comments from their customers, the Soldiers at the JSS's. Cassidy said for him the best part of the deployment is just being busy and doing the job.

"It's our lives. This is what we do," he said. "I think every time you leave the wire you get sweaty palms. You don't know what's going to happen but that's a good thing. We're a tight-knit group."

DCLPs supply everything from food and soda to fuel, water and equipment such as refrigeration units. Larger pieces of equipment can be off loaded by dropping the 20-foot long flatbed platform from the trucks, cutting delivery time.

"We've set a standard," Buck said, "and now the goal is to maintain it. That's the challenge. But I think we're up to it."



Winning hearts and minds, one boo-boo at a time

Sgt. RYAN NOLAN
HHT, 2-104th CAV.

From the moment our first words cross our lips, we learn to speak our mind one adjective at a time. The thought “Hey, there’s a dog!” becomes a pointed hand gesture accompanied by “woofy.”

“I want some candy,” is expressed through a very similar hand gesture but accompanied instead by “yummy.” And when there is trouble on the playground and we are left injured, our hand gestures are replaced by sobbing tears – and our words become “boo-boo” or “ouchie.” As a parent, either word coming out of the mouth of a child stops the earth from turning. Until the tears stop, the world lies dormant.

Children in Iraq are just as prone to “boo boos” and “ouchies” as American children are. However, the lack of access to health-care and proper medical facilities leave Iraqi parents, without a way to restart the earth’s rotation.

Spc. Neal Cooper, from Myerstown, Pa., is a medic assigned to A Troop, 2nd Squadron, 104th Cavalry, 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 28th Infantry Division, currently deployed to Sheik Amir, just north of Baghdad. Cooper completed Basic Training and Advanced Individual Training at Fort Sam

Photo by 1st Lt. Michael Gursky



Houston, Texas in August 2008, only one month before he was to deploy to Iraq. However, Cooper was well aware of the deployment event before he signed his enlistment papers.

“I’ve wanted to go to medical school for a long time,” Cooper said. “Being here in Iraq is just jumping through the final hoops to get there.”

The twenty two year old medic expected Iraq to be more of an active combat zone. However, the majority of his work has been based on helping the local populace.

One of Cooper’s first tasks as a medic was diagnosing what looked to be a cyst on the face of an eight year old child.

“He had a big scab on his face that had to be drained. He was really good though out the whole process, remarkably quiet,” Spc. Cooper stated. “The children’s medicine is mostly handled by the Sheik’s mother.”

The growth on the young child’s face was diagnosed as a probable Leishmaniasis (a disease caused typically by sand flies, that will fester and eventually erupt). Cooper removed the scab, treated the wound, and provided him with medicine to ease the pain.

In another case, a 14-year-old boy had been attacked by a dog, which resulted in gashes and deep marks on both of his legs. Cooper examined the injury, cleaned it, and bandaged it up. Just through these minor medi-

cal actions, he was able to make the child feel better.

Untreated, even the smallest injuries, such as minor cuts and scrapes, have the potential to become infected. Cooper is happy to help out however he can.

“They don’t have any medical care out here, so we’re serving a critical role,” Cooper said. “I just wish I could do more to help make them self-sustaining.”

The medics of the 2nd Squadron, 104th Cavalry, such as Cooper are working everyday to bandage up the “boo boos” and “ouchies” of the Iraqi children. By doing so, they are putting the kids back on the playground where they belong, and also giving their parents peace of mind, and the means to keep their world rotating.



Photo by 1st Lt. Matthew Swartzell

Pfc. Tristan Grubb of Mahoya City, Pa., a medic in 2nd Squadron, 104th Cavalry Regiment, 56th SBCT, and an interpreter provide medical care to young Iraqi children during a mission near Sa’ab al Bour March 15. Grubb was approached by a young boy who had a severe burn to his hand and stopped his mission in order to assist the child.



Photo by 1st Lt. Michael Gursky

Spc. Neal Cooper, from Myerstown, Pa., of A Troop, 2nd Squadron, 104th Cavalry, 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 28th Infantry Division, patches up leg wounds on an Iraqi child. The wounds were caused by wild dogs, a hazard in the Taji Qada. Above, Cooper treats an Iraqi child with a facial cyst.

Did you know?

In November 1944 the 28th ID was involved in a major offensive in the Hurtgen forest on German soil

By Col. ANDREW SCHAFER
56th SBCT DCO

I had an opportunity to do a 5 day staff ride of the Hurtgen Forest battle and the Battle of the Bulge and retrace foot prints of the 109th, 110th and 112th Infantry Regiments in these historic battles. The regiments of the division were supported by the 707th Tank Battalion, 107th, 108th and 109th and 229th FA battalions. This was the only allied offensive along the entire 170 mile front, allowing the Germans to mass troops for a counter attack. The 28ID had replaced the 9th Infantry Division which had lost over 4,500 casualties in the forest.

At 9 a.m. Nov. 2, 1944, the 28ID attacked into the forest after an artillery prep of over 7,000 rounds. The division main effort was the 112th; the objective was Schmidt on the other side of the Kall Trail. The Kall trail is a narrow unimproved road totally unsuitable for tanks. By Nov. 3, the 112th had taken Schmidt.

On the German side the following was happening: "At almost the same moment that the 28th Division attacked at H Hour on Nov. 2, staff officers and commanders of Army Group B, the Fifth Panzer and Seventh Armies, and several corps and divisions, including the LXXIV Corps, were convening in a castle near Cologne. There the Army Group B commander, Field Marshal Model, was to conduct a map exercise. The subject of the exercise was a theoretical American attack along the boundary of the Fifth Panzer and Seventh Armies in the vicinity of Huertgen. The meeting had been in session only a short time when a telephone call from the LXXIV Corps chief of staff told of the actual American attack. The situation, the chief of staff said, was critical: The LXXIV Corps had not enough men even to plug the gaps already opened; Seventh Army would have to send reserves. When the map exercise broke up, the Seventh Army commander, General Brandenberger, returned to his headquarters. There he learned in the early evening of the 112th Infantry's conquest of Schmidt. Because he now controlled the 116th Panzer Division, he was able to order the commander, Generalmajor Siegfried von Waldenburg, to reroute tanks of his 16th Panzer Regiment from Huertgen to Harscheidt. At dawn on Nov. 4 this tank regiment and the 89th Division's 1055th Regiment were to counterattack at both Schmidt and Kommerscheidt."

The German combined arms counter attack was able to push the defenders out of Schmidt. They were stopped at Kommerscheidt after elements of the 707th Tank Battalion were able to cross the Kall trail after great difficulty and help the defenders.

"The day might have been lost save for the fact that Maj. Hazlett had an ace which Col.

Flood had not had in Schmidt. He had Lieutenant Fleig's three tanks. From right to left of the position Fleig and his tanks maneuvered fearlessly. Spotting a Mark V Panther over-running positions in an orchard on the eastern fringe of Kommerscheidt, Lt. Fleig directed his driver there. Although the lieutenant got in the first shots, his high explosive ammunition bounced off the Panther's tough hide. All his armor piercing rounds, Fleig discovered, were outside in the sponson rack. When Fleig turned his turret to get at these rounds, the Panther opened fire. The first shot missed. Working feverishly, the lieutenant and his crew thrust one of the armor piercing rounds into the chamber. The first shot cut the barrel of the German gun. Three more in quick succession tore open the left side of the Panther's hull and set the tank afire."

After several more days of fighting the Germans were finally able to halt the 28ID attack and push them back over the Kall trail.

The 28ID lost over 6,000 casualties. The

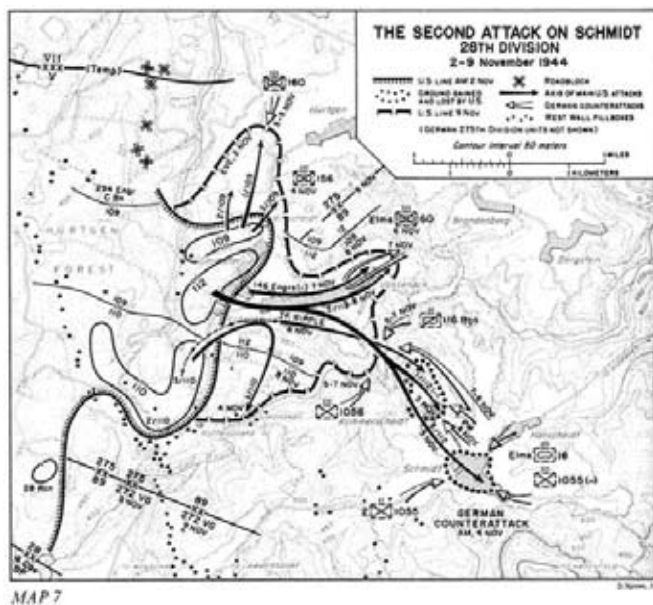
28ID was followed by the 4th ID which lost over 4,750 casualties.

For info on the battle and 28ID go to <http://www.history.army.mil/books/wwii/Siegfried/Siegfried%20Line/siegfried-ch15.htm>



Information compiled
by Col. Andrew Schafer,
deputy commanding
officer, 56th SBCT

Above , at right: The Kall Trail was much fought over during the Hurtgen Forest Campaign. The map at right depicts actions by the 112th Infantry Regiment, 28th Infantry Division. The maps below show the Hurtgen Forest in relation to the Belgium/Germany border.



Today's Soldier an individual in a group

Our nation's security and prosperity depend on our ability to develop and employ the talents of our diverse population. Equal opportunity is not just the right thing to do; it is also a military and economic necessity.

— Les Aspin Secretary of Defense, 1994

Twenty years ago, when our fathers led the military, there was less of a need to understand or care about effective ways of dealing with diversity. Back then the Soldier was young, single, white, and male without a high school diploma. Due to this makeup, our fathers' military wasn't concerned with issues like sexual harassment, equal opportunity, family problems, and cultural sensitivity.

Today's military is culturally diverse. Cultural diversity

is our differences in age, ethnic heritage, gender, national origin, marital status, physical ability/qualities, race, religion, and education.

Today, each Soldier wants to maintain his or her own ethnic and cultural uniqueness and to be an individual within the group. Each is asking to be respected for the value they bring as a diverse people.

Today, a Soldier's ability to do more with less has allowed him or her to take on the responsibility that had, in the past, been held by senior ranks a generation ago. To explain simply, in our fathers' military, a task that required two E-4s with four years of experience each with an E-6 supervising can today be done with a mature E-5 with six years of experience supervising himself.

Today's diverse and culturally aware Soldiers provide the military the necessary tools to create benefits and outcomes that would be greater than those benefits achieved by a "we are all green" or "we are color blind" type of Army. Working together is all about taking different parts (age, ethnic heritage, gender, national origin, marital status, physical ability/qualities, race, religion, and education.) and putting them together to create something greater than could be created alone.

The key to making diversity work requires the involvement of every Soldier of every rank. Just as Sexual Harassment or Sexual Assault is not tolerated, nor should the ignorance of each Soldier's value be tolerated.



**By Sgt. 1st Class Gino Burns
56th SBCT EO NCO**

Information excerpted from "Ensuring 'Diversity' is not just another buzzword," by Todd K. Varvel, LCDR, USN

Legally speaking ...

SOFA represents progress in Iraq

On November 17, 2008 the United States and Iraq entered into what is commonly referred to as the Security Agreement (SA) or Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) but the official title of the agreement is the "Agreement Between the Republic of Iraq and the United States of America On the Withdrawal of United States Forces from Iraq and the Organization of Their Activities during Their Temporary Presence in Iraq." This SA contains twenty-nine (29) articles that govern the obligations, responsibilities, duties of each party during our remaining time in Iraq. The SA is significant because it recognizes the fact that Iraq has made substantial positive progress since our initial arrival in country in 2003 and is ready to take the lead in more aspects of the daily functions of running their country. On December 31, 2008 the UN Security Council resolution mandating and authorizing multinational forces expired. On January 1, 2009 the SA became effective and it has dramatically changed the way we operate in Iraq. All operations are now joint operations with Iraqi Security Forces. We no longer plan, execute or engage in operations unless they are jointly coordinated with our Iraqi counterparts.

The SA states that all US Forces will leave Iraq by December 31, 2011. However, President Obama has recently stated that all US combat forces will be out of Iraq by August 2010 with a smaller contingent of 35,000 to 50,000 US Forces remaining through December 31, 2011. Specifically, how does the Agreement affect the soldiers of the 56th Stryker Brigade operating in and around the Taji area of operations (AO)? This article

will look at the aspects of the Agreement that affect our soldiers most directly to include but not limited to the following: 1.) Missions, 2.) Laws and jurisdiction, and 3.) Detention of known or suspected terrorists.

First and foremost, with regard to military missions all missions/operations are now coordinated and executed in coordination with Iraqi counterparts, more particularly, the Joint Military Operations Coordination Committee (JMOC). The main military focus remains supporting the Iraqi Security Forces in maintaining security and stability operations. In addition, our soldiers are actively assisting their Iraqi counterparts in routing out terrorists and al-Qaeda Iraq members. Moreover, a certain segment of soldiers in the Brigade are training, equipping, and helping to improve the Iraqi logistical systems for the Iraqi Security Forces. These operations are critical in order for Iraq to continue to improve its national economy because without security in Iraq it is difficult to repair and rebuild the economic infrastructure. Notwithstanding all that is mentioned above, our soldiers' inherent right of self-defense is protected by this Agreement. The final noteworthy point is that, per the SA, all combat forces are to be withdrawn from cities and villages by June 30, 2009. Some soldiers within the Brigade are operating out of Joint Security Stations (JSS's) and per the Agreement they are supposed to be returned to "agreed facilities," (Art 6) such as Camp Taji, by the above mentioned date. However, it is important to realize that we are in a very dynamic and fluid situation on the ground here and it remains to be seen if this holds true in all situations, it

may depend on the security situation of that particular area.

All soldiers must respect Iraqi laws and customs while conducting their military operations. The USA retains primary legal jurisdiction over soldiers for matters that would arise inside Camp Taji or a JSS or during duty hours outside of these areas. However, Iraq has primary jurisdiction over soldiers for "grave premeditated felonies" (Art 12, 1.) if the crime would be committed outside a base and off duty status. Importantly, our soldiers are on duty twenty four (24) hours a day, seven (7) days per week.

Another major change in operations has to do with detaining known or suspected terrorists or al-Qaeda Iraq members. Pre (SA) soldiers could detain a terrorist or al-Qaeda Iraq individual based on credible information that we had that he was a nefarious individual. However, under the SA no arrest or detention can be conducted unless an Iraqi arrest or detention warrant is issued. If our soldiers do see someone committing a bad act, i.e., planting an improvised explosive device (IED) on the side of the road, they are authorized to detain him. But within 24 hours of detaining an individual they must obtain a valid warrant from an appropriate Iraqi judge. They can obtain this warrant by showing the evidence that they captured when they detained the individual in question. If US forces are not able to obtain a valid warrant within 24 hours the individual must be released. This is all part of the process of assisting the Iraqis to take full control of all aspects of their sovereign and independent country. As of January 1, 2009

(Continued on Page 10)



Post 9/11 Yellow Ribbon Program provides additional funding for education



What is the Yellow Ribbon Program?

The Yellow Ribbon G.I. Education Enhancement Program (Yellow Ribbon Program) is a provision of the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008. This program allows institutions of higher learning in the United States to voluntarily enter into an agreement with Department of Veterans Affairs to fund tuition expenses that exceed the highest public in-state undergraduate tuition rate. The institution can waive up to 50% of those expenses and VA will match the same amount as the institution.

How does the Yellow Ribbon Program benefit you?

The Post-9/11 GI Bill pays up to the highest public in-state undergraduate tuition. The students' tuition and fees may exceed that amount if they are attending a private institution, graduate school or attending in an out-of-state status. If they are enrolled at a Yellow Ribbon participating institution and the tuition and fees exceed the highest public in-state undergraduate tuition, additional funds may be available for their education program without an additional charge to their entitlement.

Institutions that voluntarily enter into a Yellow Ribbon Agreement with VA choose the amount of tuition and fees that will be waived. VA will match that amount and issue payment directly to the institution.

Who is eligible?

Only service members who are currently entitled to the maximum benefit rate (based on service requirements) may receive this funding. Therefore, they may be eligible if:

- They served an aggregate period of active duty after September 10, 2001, of at least 36 months;
- They were honorably discharged from active duty for a service connected disability and they served 30 continuous days after September 10, 2001;

• They are a dependent eligible for Transfer of Entitlement under the Post-9/11 GI Bill based on a veteran's service under the eligibility criteria listed above.

How will you know if a school is participating in the program?

Students may search for approved programs on the VA Web site or by contacting the 56th SBCT Education Officer after June 1, 2009. Benefits are payable for training pursued on or after August 1, 2009. No payments can be made under this program for training pursued before that date.

How much money is payable under this program?

Example:

Question: What portion of tuition and fees charges will be considered under the Yellow Ribbon Program?

Answer: The difference of the amount charged to the student and what has been paid by VA as educational assistance.

The following steps are provided to determine the difference for one student:

Step 1: Student's enrolled credit hours reported by the institution to the VA x Max Credit Hour Charge for the State = Maximum Tuition Payable

Step 2: Compare the Maximum Tuition Payable with the amount charged the student and VA will pay the institution the lesser amount

Step 3: Compare the Maximum Single Term Fees for your State with what you have charged the student. VA will pay the institution the lesser amount.

Step 4: Add what VA has paid for tuition and fees and compare with total amount charged to the student. Institution charges that exceed what as already been paid by VA are the difference that could be applied to the Yellow Ribbon Program.

Step 5: Determine how much of the difference, up to one-half of that amount, that the institution will agree to cover with funds of

the institution and the VA will match that amount.

Example: The student is enrolled in 12 credit hours during the fall term and the institution charged the student \$5,000 for tuition and \$1,200 in fees. The Maximum Per Credit Hour for the state = \$250 and Maximum Fees for a single term = \$1,000:

Steps 1 and 2: 12 credit hours x \$250 = \$3,000, so VA will pay \$3,000 of the \$5,000 tuition charged

Step 3: VA will pay \$1,000 of the \$1,200 fees charged

Step 4: VA has paid \$4,000 of the \$6,200 charged the student. Here, \$2,200 could be applied to the Yellow Ribbon Program

Step 5: Your institution can choose to contribute up to \$1,100 of this amount and VA will match that contribution.

(The amounts used in the above examples do not relate to any specific State)

Veterans Service Organizations and Scholarships for Veterans

Visit the VA Veterans Service Organizations page at: <http://www1.va.gov/VSO/> for more information and a complete listing of Web sites and scholarship information. Please contact the 56 SBCT Education Officer for more information.

In next month's issue: Steps to apply for the new G.I. Bill, FTA, and EAP upon redeployment CONUS.

Interested in learning more about your education benefits upon redeployment, transferability of benefits to dependents, or having an education briefing for you unit? Contact 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team Education Officer 1st Lt. Robert Prah at robert.prah@iraq.centcom.mil or Education NCOIC Sgt. Warren Wolfe at warren.wolfe@iraq.centcom.mil for more information.

**By 1st Lt. ROBERT PRAH
56th SBCT Education Officer**

SOFA

(Con't from Page 10)

the US is here at the request of the Iraq government for "temporary assistance." (Art. 4, 1.)

There are many other articles in the SA that deal with various different topics including but not limited to contracting procedures, property ownership, positioning and storage of Defense Equipment, environmental concerns, import/export issues, taxes, licenses and permits, and currency and foreign exchange. For example, there should be a preference for contracting with Iraqi suppliers to the extent that they submit competitive bids and can provide quality goods. US bases are and will remain Iraqi property, including any improvements that the US has made to the various properties. US Forces and equipment are not subject to an import/export taxes. There are no entry/exit taxes for US aircraft entering or leaving Iraq. US drivers' licenses are valid in

Iraq and accepted by Iraqi authorities, our soldiers do not have to pass an Iraqi driver's test for licensing.

The SA goes into much more detail on all of the above mentioned issues. In addition, there has been much more written on the procedures on how to execute some of the more important Articles in the SA. This synopsis is meant to be a concise summary of the SA and to highlight some of the major changes in our operations as a result of this Security Agreement.

The views and opinions expressed are those of Maj. Frank McGovern and Sgt. Bill Knappenberger and not the Pennsylvania Army National Guard or the US Army.

**By Frank J. McGovern Maj., JA
Claims, Contract and Fiscal Law
Attorney 56th SBCT**

Chaplain's reflection

Spring traditions offer key life lessons

In my own life there were always two events that marked the arrival of Spring- the beginning of Trout Season and the opening of the Baseball Season. At first it might appear that these two "seasons" have little if anything in common, but I believe if you look closely you can see many similarities. First, both mark the end of a rather long dormant period- Winter- during which both activities could not be done, at least not in the Northeast. Second, the return of both are marked with solemn, secular "rituals"- in the case of Trout Season the opening day crowds, meeting with friends, fishing camp; while in the case of Baseball the opening day first game.

Third, both are usually accompanied by social gatherings and the sharing of food- in the case of Trout Season an early breakfast and perhaps lunch or dinner with the day's catch, and for baseball the traditional ballpark hotdog. Finally, both require a sense of patience on the part of the participant. For the fisherman, waiting for the right current, spot on the stream, time of day, bait to use will impact on success. For the baseball player, waiting for the right pitch or the right time to run or move will mark the difference between the average, good and great player.

If we find ourselves missing these and similar "rites of spring" it is for good reason for they

speak to us about life and these events are meant to be shared. Even though we are away from home, loved ones and comfortable surroundings we can still participate in these things. If baseball and Trout fishing can teach us anything it is important to note that the similarities noted above are also true of our lives in general. There are moments in our lives when we look with great expectation for the return of something that we have done without. Our lives are also filled with ritual- both sacred and secular- that helps mark the passing of our days. Social events are very important for us; after all we are social beings by nature.

And finally, we can never un-



derestimate the need nor the importance of developing patience in our lives and in how we deal with others.

By Col. (Chaplain) Bert Kozen
56th SBCT Chaplain

Soldier to Soldier ...

Guard against stress here, thank those supporting us from the home front

We have reached the halfway point for boots on the ground. You have all done many good things yet there are plenty of challenges that lie ahead. We need to remind each other to look out for our battle buddies. Stress is something that everyone is susceptible to and you, and your buddy, need to do the right things to handle it.

First, take care of your body and that will help take care of your mind. Make the time to work out regularly and watch what you eat and drink. Eat a balanced meal and drink plenty of water. Some of you enjoy caffeine and drink soda, coffee and "rip it's;" that's fine, but do it in moderation. Many of you who like to work out take supplements. Remember, that doesn't replace a regular meal. This will not only help with stress but it will help with the increase in temperatures that is just around the corner. We also need to remind each other to keep hydrated as the temperatures start to climb up and over 100 degrees.

Second, seek out help if you feel that stress is getting to you. This could be as simple as talking with a friend and blowing off steam over what's bothering you. If you need a little extra help, remember that the chaplain is always available just to sit and talk. Leaders and soldiers should always keep in mind that just talking to your battle buddy may relieve some stress. It's important that we look out for each other and help one another deal with stress in a healthy way.

Finally, keep in touch with your family. They face their own stresses back home and may have to share that with you but communication is important. Keeping in touch will help you deal with your stress as they deal with theirs. We need support from back home. Let them know their support is appreciated.

I receive care packages on a regular basis from people in the states for the soldiers and they are be-

ing distributed to the joint security stations on my battlefield circulation. When you get a chance write the people sending packages and let them know that it makes a difference. Even if it's only bubble gum, playing cards or razors that they send, it's the thought that counts and the fact that they are thinking about you.

As the summer approaches let us remember all the good things happening back home like baseball games, planting the garden, graduations, proms, parades and mowing grass. Yes, mowing grass. I would say most wouldn't mind mowing their grass. For the hunter and fisherman comes spring gobbler and trout seasons. These are just a few of the many things our family and friends have the opportunity to enjoy due to the hard work we do here every day as Soldiers to insure their safety and welfare. With that being said, let us not forget Memorial Day which commemorates U.S. men and women who died while in military service to their country. We also need to remember the 28th Infantry Division's Annual Memorial Service that will be conducted at the Division Shrine in Boalsburg, Pennsylvania, on Sunday, May 17, 2009.

See you on the battlefield,



John E. Jones
Command Sergeant Major
56th SBCT

Safety notes ...

Drink water: Heat can kill

The heat is here to stay!! Iraqi summers can reach temperatures of 120 degrees in the shade and soldiers in body armor can experience relevant temperatures 10 to 20 degrees higher before they do any work. In these conditions heat injuries, including heat stroke, can occur quickly. Heat injury prevention is important to maintaining combat power and completing missions!

Heat casualties can be a thing of the past if a good plan is used to keep Soldier in the fight and not at the battalion aid station. Utilize the five step Composite Risk Management process to identify mission tasks that may have a higher probability of causing heat injuries and putting Soldiers at a high risk of becoming heat casualties. Soldiers at high risk include not only those who have previously been heat casualties, but also Soldiers who may be ill or those who spend most of the mission out in the sun carrying the heaviest equipment. Leaders must review every mission to identify potential risk for heat injury.

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Commander's Corner

1747 — 2009, Pa. Guard writes history

During the early days of the colonies, there was no National Guard among George Washington's tattered continental troops. During their storied winter at Valley Forge, these self motivated volunteer provincials turned into something akin to the Guardsmen of today. Before Valley Forge, they were undisciplined, temperamental backwoodsmen - ideal guerrilla fighters, but most history books apologetically report that they were not too dependable, were inclined to do as they pleased, and all too likely to wander back to the farm for the haying.

Amid the squalor, misery and death-dealing cold of that horrible winter, a gruff German militarist hammered discipline and order into the starving, faltering Army. Schooled by Baron Frederick Wilhelm von Steuben, these early citizen Soldiers emerged from their winter crucible to batter the British at Yorktown.

The militia of Philadelphia was first organized in 1747 by, who else, but Benjamin Franklin. French and Spanish war vessels were sailing boldly up the lower Delaware, posing a threat to the fledgling colony. The Quaker fathers, dominating the Assembly, vetoed any formal effort to provide armed resistance. In characteristic pragmatic fashion, Franklin took the matter in hand, and soon he had a committee at work, assembling organized companies and even regiments. Soon 10,000 men were in the ranks of Franklin's voluntary association, built around his Voluntary Associators in the town fire brigades. This first regiment was known

as the Associated Regiment of Foot. From Franklin's Associators sprung regiments, troops and other elements which today jealously trace their ancestry back to him. With pride, Philadelphia's 111th Infantry finds its Continental heritage in a battalion of the Associators commanded by the John Nixon whom the Congress selected to read aloud the Declaration of Independence to an assemblage of his fellow townsmen.

Pennsylvania militiamen, progenitors of today's Pennsylvania Army National Guard, turned up in the War of 1812 to help Captain Oliver Hazard Perry in the capture of the British fleet on Lake Erie - a victory described in undying words: "We have met the enemy," Perry wrote the Congress, "and they are ours."

In the Civil War, less than 50 years later, the rebel threat to Washington threw Philadelphia into a turmoil of patriotism. The city seethed with amateur military outfits clamoring for action. Many were of dubious military value, but even so, they formed a starting point for mobilization. It was in the Civil War that the nation's amateur - professional soldiers covered themselves with never-to-be-forgotten glory — and of none was it truer than the men from Pennsylvania.

They buried their dead on the battlefields whose names constitute a blood-bathed history of a new nation's supreme testing — Gettysburg, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville and the Virginias, Spotsylvania, Cold Harbor, Petersburg, the defense of Washington and the Battle of the Wil-

derness — blazing stars in a firmament of gallantry.

Pennsylvania's Guard took on a cohesive organizational look in the years that followed the war. Guard members were called to federal service in the Spanish-American War; one Pennsylvania outfit went to the Philippines before hostilities ended. The Third and Sixth Regiments of Pennsylvania saw duty on the Mexican border in 1916 and when the United States entered World War I, Pennsylvania's National Guard Division went with it, bearing for the first time its designation as the 28th Division, the Army's oldest continuously serving division.

In 1941, the 28th Division and the citizen soldiers of Pennsylvania were once again called to arms to fight from the shores of the Pacific to the Hurtgen in Europe. The soldiers of the 111th and 112th Regiments once again wrote history for the United States.

Today, the members of these regiments as well as the all of the soldiers of the 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team once again make history. We not only make history for the National Guard, but for the United States Army. As the Army's only Reserve Component Stryker Brigade, we are at the tip of the spear in transformation and technology. We have made history every step of the way. We have achieved every benchmark set in front of us. Today, each and every one of you is making history. Not only have we done so with transformation, but we have done so with our deployment.

We are the largest National



Guard combat formation from Pennsylvania to be mobilized since World War II. We are the first National Guard unit and only the 3rd unit in the army to fire the M777A1 howitzer. Today we are making history in Iraq as we partner with the Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police. We partner with the ePRT (embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team) to assist local Iraqis in a better life. You all continue to set the standard and make history no matter what the challenge is or where it may be.

You should all be proud of your achievements and understand that today, just as our forefathers of yesterday, we continue to make history. There is no doubt in my mind that you all are part of the new Greatest Generation. Your contributions, dedication to duty and sacrifices are unmatched. I am proud to serve as your commander and salute your efforts every day. You are what makes this brigade great. Keep up the great work; everyone is noticing.

**STRENGTH THROUGH
HONOR**

**Marc Ferraro
COL, IN
Commanding
"Independence 6"**

Safety

(Con't from Page 12)

As Soldiers there are things we can do to lower our chance of becoming a heat casualty. Begin to hydrate long before the mission. Drink water and avoid caffeinated beverages like soda and "Rip Its." Eat regular meals and avoid supplements that force water out of your system. Just prior to mission, use the bathroom and check your urine color. If it's dark you need to drink water. Be careful that you don't over-hydrate. That can send you to the medics as well.

Another thing we can do as Soldiers is look

out for each other. Use the buddy system. If you're not feeling normal or start to feel a little ill, let your buddy know so he or she can keep an eye on you. Check on each other. Ask each other, "When was the last time you drank water?" If your buddy seems confused or has some of the symptoms for heat injury, get that Soldier looked at by the medics and inform your leadership.

Leaders, at every level, play a key role in heat injury prevention. Leaders should plan the mission around ways to reduce the effects of heat.

Leaders, brief your Soldiers on the mission risks related to heat injury and coordinate controls to reduce those risks. Leaders enforce the standards.

Heat is here to stay! For more information on heat injury prevention contact your unit safety officer or look on the Independence Portal under "Special Staff" and "Safety." And remember to DRINK WATER.

**By 1st Lt. Michael Green
56th SBCT safety officer**

THINK!

Weapons Safety

TREAT every weapon as if it is loaded.

HANDLE every weapon with care.

IDENTIFY the target before you fire.

NEVER point the muzzle at anything you don't intend to shoot.

KEEP the weapon on safe and your finger off the trigger until you intend to fire.

