

May 2009

Call of the WOLF



Greetings to the Soldiers of the Arctic Wolves and Team Diyala. We are now in our eighth month of deployment and find ourselves at a critical transition point in the history of Iraq. The Force Commander, General Odierno, has provided

us with guidance for achieving what he refers to as Sustainable Stability in Iraq. I have summarized many of his key points and ask that each of you take a few minutes to read this and reflect on how you will do your part to help our Force Commander meet his intent.

Security conditions in Iraq have improved,

have always been an important element of our COIN strategy, they must now assume greater importance within our campaign. The following guidelines must shape our operations:

Understand all aspects of the environment – Lead, think, and adapt: Diyala, Iraq is a complex and ever-changing environment. Strive to understand local, civil, tribal, provincial and governmental relationships and institutions. Leaders must teach their teams to respond to changing conditions. Always update TTPs to meet emerging challenges. Stay alert and avoid complacency by maintaining our professional standards, and recognize that every action by a member of the Coalition could have strategic implications. Our enemies will continue to respond

people – regardless of ethnicity or sect. When the Iraqi people truly believe that their future – and their children's future – will be better because of the GoI, we know we are achieving success.

Focus on institutions, not individuals: The key to sustainable stability in Iraq is strong, transparent, and effective institutions – political, economic, diplomatic, and rule of law. Avoid temporary, “quick fixes” to problems if the solution undermines the long-term viability of the institution.

Develop a comprehensive approach: We must bring to bear all the resources and expertise of the USG, the UN, international organizations, and private sector entities to achieve unity of effort. The full integration of military, civilian, and international

“Big jobs usually go to the men and women who prove their ability to outgrow small ones.”

- Theodore Roosevelt

but remain fragile and reversible. We are now in a period of transition as the GOI undertakes political change and our forces adjust their footprint across the country. Despite changes to our operating environment, however, our mission remains the same – we and our Iraqi partners continue to

conduct full spectrum operations. The COIN principles that we have followed and that are successful are unchanged, and we must continue to practice them by, with, and through our Iraqi partners. While stability operations

to our successes, and we must always be ahead of their reactions. This struggle is ultimately the Iraqis' to win, so we must empower them to accomplish the tasks that we have traditionally accomplished and assist them to become more agile and adaptive.

Foster GoI legitimacy: We must become completely transparent and coordinate at all levels of our partnership. The long-term viability of Iraq depends on the Iraqi people believing that their interests are best served by their elected officials in accordance with the Iraqi Constitution. We must continue to help build competent, capable, and professional police forces and armed services that merit the faith and confidence of the Iraqi

capabilities, both US and Iraqi, is vital to achieving stability in Iraq.

Promote accommodation and set the stage for reconciliation: Unresolved political and territorial disputes and the lack of a unified national vision by Iraq's leaders continue to undermine the long-term stability of Iraq. These issues are difficult and complex, and they cannot be solved overnight. Encourage accommodation and help Iraqis take the first steps toward reconciliation.

Balance tactical and operational risk: We will stay partnered with the ISF while we ‘thin’ our presence on the ground. Continue to assess risk to ensure every operation is focused on specific, achievable, and relevant objectives. We must establish

strong relationships with our partners and be transparent regarding all operations.

Empower subordinates: Every member of every team can and must contribute to mission success. Assign tasks to the junior members of teams and provide them the resources to accomplish the mission. Build flexibility and agility into units of all sizes by cross-training members and effectively engage our Iraqi partners and the people.

Uphold moral and ethical standards: The personal example that each of us sets is a powerful

force multiplier. We must positively represent our nation and our fellow citizens back home. Respect each other and our Iraqi hosts equally, and let our deeds demonstrate the highest virtues of free citizens serving in Iraq.

Stay focused on the population: The people of Diyala remain the decisive “terrain” in our campaign. Maintain the focus on their security, their needs, and their well-being, and continue to treat them with the utmost honor and respect. By continuing to help build a GoI that is just, representative, honors and

upholds basic human rights and fundamental freedoms, and is accountable to its people’s needs; we can make the choice of the people of Iraq to support their government an easy one.

I thank you all for your hard work and continued dedication as we strive to build a bright and prosperous future for a sovereign, stable, and self-reliant Diyala, Iraq. Stay safe, take care of each other, fight hard and always serve with honor!

The Wolf, Col. Burt Thompson

Arctic Wolves, Black Knights, Family members and Friends,

Greetings from Diyala Province, Iraq. May is a special month and we all have a responsibility to our mothers. Happy Belated Mother’s Day to all mothers that are currently deployed and those back home. You have our utmost respect; thank you for what you are doing here in Iraq or back home in support of our continued effort in making the world a safer place. Mothers are just like a Battle Buddy that always provides the best advice and if you are ever in doubt just ask Mom.

We are on our eighth month of deployment and you continue to make America proud with great success in all aspects of the deployment. This month I would like to focus on the Army theme, “I am Strong. I AM ARMY STRONG.” The Army is using this theme to get at what we, the Arctic Wolves, do every day in Garrison and here in Iraq (Battle Buddy Concept). Being Army Strong is taking care of each other. We stand strong and are members of a band of brothers and sisters, sharing a sense of



duty and loyalty to each other unlike no other. Our willingness to sacrifice for each other, to never leave a fallen comrade, and even lay our life for each other is what makes us strong on and off the battlefield. Any time you see unsafe, substandard behavior, behavior not conducive to good order and discipline, and/or behavior that jeopardizes the trust and confidence of our team; as Soldiers our core values demand that we act, there are no passive bystanders, we must protect our team members, and it is the duty of each team member to intervene and act to protect each other. Be motivated to do

what’s right and live the Warrior Ethos - every team member counts, and can make a difference.

We must continue to uphold the Army Values and ethical standards, the personal example that each one of us sets through our daily conduct is a powerful force multiplier. Know that in all that we do, our actions reflect our moral values. We must positively represent the Arctic Wolves, the Army and our nation (our fellow citizens back home). Serve with dignity and return with honor.

Leaders - continue to enforce the Battle Buddy Concept, educate Soldiers on dignity and respect for each other, the consequence of compromising our Army Values, and the consequence of compromising the trust and confidence of our team. I challenge each one of you to be strong and intervene to protect each other.

Col Thompson and I continue to find opportunities to boast of all your accomplishments. Continue to be safe, take care, enforce the Battle Buddy concept and may God bless all of you and your Loved ones.



Wolf 7

U.S. Army Sgt. Steven Mason from Oneger Platoon, 1st Battalion, 24th Infantry Regiment, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division provides overwatch during a presence patrol at the Hamrin Dam reservoir near Albu Sawwat, Iraq on April 3, 2009. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communications Specialist 2nd Class Walter J. Pels)



On the Cover

Staff Sgt. Kenneth Logan, Company A, 1st Battalion, 2nd Infantry Regiment, Task Force 3-66, hands out candy to children in the village of 30th Tamuz during a three day patrol of the Balad Ruz area of Diyala from April 18 to 20. The purpose of the patrol was to clear a section of the Sawa Canal and to maintain a visible presence in the area. (U.S. Army Photo by Spc. Anthony Jones, 145th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)





Contents

The Wolf's Howl.....	Page 2	Patrol in South Balad Ruz.....	Page 14
Top Dog of Re-enlistment.....	Page 6	On the Prowl.....	Page 16
Retran.....	Page 7	COP Closures.....	Page 17
Tactical Operations Center.....	Page 8	Homefront.....	Page 18
Taking out Cell Members.....	Page 9	Air Assault.....	Page 20
In Search of Caches.....	Page 10	Medical Clinic.....	Page 22
Buhriz Water Pump.....	Page 12	Chaplain's Corner.....	Page 23



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25th Brigade Support Battalion is "Top Dog" in Re-enlistments

Story by
Spc. Christopher Bruce
145th MPAD

The 25th Brigade Support Battalion, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division has accomplished their re-enlistment mission for the year and is the number one contender for the 1-25th SBCT's coveted "Top Dog" award according to Brigade Senior Career Counselor Master Sgt. Lawrence Burke.

that are coming our way. We just let the Soldier make the best decision for them and their families, based off the information that we give them," Hart said.

One major benefit to re-enlisting is the large tax-free bonuses Soldiers can receive if they reenlist while deployed. These bonuses can go a long way for Soldiers who wish to pay off debt or purchase a needed item for themselves or their family.

Though bonuses do play a part in the re-enlistment process, Hart said that they are not the only

'station of choice' re-enlistment option to be closer to his family and ensure employment in the struggling economy.

"I re-enlisted because I just had a newborn son. The economy is not so great right now so I wanted a little job security and wanted benefits to take care of my son. I also wanted to be closer to home, so I chose Fort Sill," Sheridan said.

While many find that they can choose different benefits during their period of re-enlistment, many others look toward the future and the sustained benefits they receive for serving in the Army.

Chaplain's Assistant Sgt. Yahaira Tavales-Cadiz is from Puerto Rico and says she joined the Army to give something back to the country.

Tavales-Cadiz has been in the Army for 12 years and just re-enlisted for another six years. She has three daughters; one has special needs. The Army is completely caring for her daughter in the terms of health care.

"The Army paid for her visits to the evaluation doctor every month, or two times a month. Plus, she got speech classes and therapy. They gave her occupational therapy and asthma classes as well as all the medicine she needed. That is a lot of money if I hadn't been in the Army," Tavales-Cadiz said.

In the BSB there are an ample number of reasons why the 164 Soldiers raised their right hands and swore to continue to defend this great nation. Each choice may have been different but in the end they are all staying "Army Strong". For these Soldiers the guidance and information given to them by the BSB retention program was crucial in continuing their careers as Soldiers.



Spc. Craig Johnson of the 25th Brigade Support Battalion raises his right hand and cites the oath of enlistment as he re-enlist into the Army. (Photo by Sgt. Jeremy Pitcher)

Burke said the battalion has re-enlisted 164 soldiers in just five months, crushing the initial goal of 116 soldiers.

25th Brigade Support Battalion Career Counselor Sgt. 1st Class Susan Hart is in charge of the battalion's re-enlistments and said she does her best to educate Soldiers and let them decide the best course of action.

"We let them know the facts that are out there and the changes

determining factor in a Soldier's re-enlistment. During a reenlistment Soldiers may have the option of choosing a new duty station, a new military occupational skill or going on to additional schools.

For many, the choice comes down to what is important to them at that particular time of their lives, with many outside influences affecting what they choose to do.

Specialist Kyle Sheridan, a mechanic with the BSB, chose the

Retran Keeps Soldiers Talking on the Battlefield

Story and Photo by
Sgt. Jeremy Pitcher
145th MPAD

Communications on the battlefield are a crucial necessity which can be easily overlooked by the average Soldier conducting their day-to-day business. The ability to pick up a microphone and talk to another person or leadership may seem as simplistic as just a push of the button; in reality it is anything but.

For Soldiers of the 176th Signal Company, Brigade Troops Battalion, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division the mission to keep communications working throughout the Diyala province is a daunting task.

Their response: go mobile.

With three retransmitting teams, the 176th has established two locations in strategic regions of the province and additionally have a mobile asset that can travel to the battlefield to keep the eight different communication networks going.

A “Retran” team is equipped with a set of four antennas. They move to a location and setup the antennas to receive incoming signals. These signals are then relayed from the site to their desired location. Without the retransmission, these signals would fall short of their desired recipient and would not be heard.

The real ingenuity came in making the whole system mobile. Staff Sgt. Brian Gentile of the 176th believes their construction of mounting four antennas on each of the unit’s two Stryker vehicles in order to allow for near instant repositioning may be a first for the Army.

“Before, if we were told to go somewhere it was a long task, now it is like ‘ok you want us there’, and we’re gone,” said Gentile.

This added mobility also adds to the ground troops’ ability to conduct missions. “Since we can resend communications a long way it extends the battlespace for the troops. It allows them to move where they are needed,” said Specialist

Harvey Watson of the 176th.

With these capabilities, the 176th has the ability to move out and around the battlefield, giving them a capability which distinguishes them from the rest of the communications unit.

“We are the only ones who go out with the infantryman. What we do affects them directly,” said Gentile.

In the end, the technology utilized by the military would never meet its potential without dedicated, hard-working Soldiers that have a passion for their jobs behind the wheel.

“It is all about the Soldier. Without the Soldier none of this would be possible,” said Sgt. Shane Smith of the 176th.

With the ever-evolving role of U.S. military forces in Diyala and throughout Iraq, staying flexible and mobile is crucial to taking the fight to the enemy. The Soldiers of the 176th Signal Company are doing just that, while making intricate complexities as simple as pushing a button.



Specialist Conan Shuman and Spc. Whitney Blaise of 176th Signal Company, Brigade Troops Battalion, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, raise an antenna mounted to the top of a Stryker combat vehicle on April 17.

Tactical Operation Center keeps the battle going

Story by
Sgt. Jeremy Pitcher
145th MPAD

The battlefield is a complex place. Having to account for all of the moving pieces and the threats that may hinder those pieces can sometimes be an arduous task.

The job of the tactical operation center for the 2nd Battalion, 8th Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division is to understand this battlefield and those elements that go into it in order to succeed in security and stabilization.

For the Soldiers that man this TOC, the mission often differs from other operations centers. Because the battalion is field artillery there are fewer Soldiers available for staffing. This aspect,

along with the exchange of one of their FA batteries for an infantry company early on in the unit's deployment, puts an additional twist into the operations field.

"The duel mission requires two separate frames of mind," said the 2-8 Battalion Operations Officer Major Jon Sowards.

The TOC uses these mindsets to oversee three different areas around the Diyala Province where howitzers fire from, along with two different combat out posts that are manned by 2-8 Soldiers.

"At any given time we have 13 platoons moving around in our sector. We are also the only battalion that shares boundaries with every other battalion in the brigade," said Sowards.

Specialist Josh Burton, a Fire Directions Coordinator for the TOC, has manned the office for longer than any other lower enlisted for the Battalion. He

says his training has prepared him to accomplish his mission under high pressure situations.

"You have to be calm, collective and confident in this job. The TOC has to run smoothly...or nothing else will," said Burton.

Working at the TOC also allows younger Soldiers to gain experience that they may not receive if they were not at the operation center.

"Being here at the TOC, I see more operations and have a better understanding of our battalion; it is a great atmosphere to work in," said Specialist Christopher Streton.

While gaining experience, these Soldiers are often placed in positions where they must be responsible for extremely serious events. Whether it is synchronizing with explosive ordnance disposal or coordinating a medical evacuation of injured personnel, the Soldiers must be at the top of their game around the clock to ensure safety.

"We are like a safety valve. We get a mission from brigade and we need to make sure all of the pieces are in place to make the mission work. We need to know where everyone and everything is at," said Streton.

For the Soldiers of the 2-8 the demanding pace that can come from life in the TOC is all too necessary when dealing with the controlled chaos outside the wire. These Soldiers often do not receive the credit for their work but without their work, no operation would be possible.

The 2-8 TOC keeps in constant coordination with Soldiers on the battlefield to ensure missions can be successfully executed. (Photo by Navy MC2 Walter Pels)



RECON PLATOON TAKING CELL MEMBERS OFF THE STREET

Story by
Sgt. Jeremy Pitcher
145th MPAD

Being able to locate and detain those who wish to do harm to innocent people is frequently a difficult task. The ability to strike at a moment's notice must be mastered in order to effectively complete this task.

Recon Platoon, 1st Battalion, 5th Infantry Regiment, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division specializes in time-sensitive-targeting in Baqubah. The roughly 30-man platoon must be ready around the clock for the moment when they are given the order to strike.

These 'TST' missions are often source-driven raids and can range from a high value target to targets that are felt to pose an imminent threat to the population or to security forces.

The Recon platoon trains and executes missions with their Iraqi counter-part, a Police Emergency Response Force. Recon trains the ERF on advanced tactics that allow the two to function as one entity while conducting raids.

"We have taught them discipline and respect for leadership that they don't usually have in the ranks. The Iraqis understand the seriousness of the mission and they work to do a great

job," said Sergeant Austin Combest of Recon Platoon.

Austin also said that the Iraqis play a valuable part when interacting with the locals. "They can talk to the people of an area and find out what is really going on. Even our interpreters can't get the information that the Iraqis can, because this is their country and they know the people and what to look for."

The two teams' hard work and training has produced great results thus far. Their missions have captured multiple targets wanted by Iraqi Security Forces and Coalition Forces.

"Over the past 90 days we have detained over 30 personnel suspected of being linked to local RKG-3 cells," said Recon Platoon Sergeant Sgt. 1st Class Joseph Velasquez.

These detentions are important due to the RKG-3 attacks that have occurred not only in Diyala but in all of Iraq against Coalition Forces. The hand-thrown grenades have become a serious risk in the past 18 months to Coalition Soldiers and are responsible for many injuries and deaths. The detention of RKG-3 cell members has led to a decrease in these attacks recently.

"It feels really good when you get the guys that you know hurt your fellow Soldiers. Those are the most rewarding missions," said Staff Sergeant Joseph Head, Senior Team

Leader for Recon Platoon. When getting ready to enter a target area to capture a wanted suspect many things go through the heads of the Recon Soldiers.

"It gets your heart going real fast as we stack up to clear a house. It's an adrenaline rush. It feels good at the time. I don't have to worry about if everyone knows their job or what to do. I know we are the best and I wouldn't want to go out with anyone else," said Specialist Khalid Jurdi of Recon Platoon.

For the Soldiers of the recon platoon just getting the job was a challenge.

"Every guy in the platoon was hand-selected. We put them through various tests to measure their skills and physical ability. Only the best were selected for the platoon," said Velasquez.

The seriousness of the mission the platoon undergoes everyday has formed them into a close-knit group that enjoys each other's company.

"We have fun together. Everyone here watches the back of the guy next to them. We can trust each other," said Specialist Logan Robbins of Recon Platoon.

For the Soldiers of Recon Platoon, success is eliminating the threat to other Soldiers and innocent people in the city of Baqubah. Their safety is the only reward desired.

In Search of Caches

Story and Photos by
Spc. Anthony Jones
145 MPAD

Under the late afternoon sun, Soldiers of 2nd Platoon, Company C, 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, work in close coordination with the Iraqi Police's Emergency Response Force, April 9.

"The ERF is the best Iraqi force that we've come across," said Sgt. 1st Class Mitchell R. Hanson, 1st

Platoon's Platoon Sergeant. "They are more than willing to go on any patrol and they share information with us."

Both the ERF and 2nd Platoon spent the afternoon and late into the evening searching for weapons caches hidden by Al Qaeda or other anti-Coalition groups in the Effa desert.

"The enemy runs a decentralized supply operations; which would be caches," said Hanson. "The checkpoints the Iraqi Army, the IP's and the Sons of Iraq have up and down the Muqdadiyah area

have pretty much denied [the enemy] freedom of movement. With taking their supplies away and already having their freedom of movement [taken], they're pretty much hurting."

To find caches, which could be hidden underground, in a wall or alongside a building, the ERF and Coalition Soldiers use a specialized metal detector that picks up traces of metal of varying sizes, and based on the sound the detector emits, Soldiers can tell if enough metal is present to warrant further searching.



A Soldier with 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry walks alongside a wall searching for any traces of metal with a specialized metal detector during a patrol April 9.

If the metal detector finds a large enough amount of metal to warrant a search Soldiers use shovels and other tools to dig up dirt or break open walls.

During the search, Coalition Soldiers used the patrol to teach members of the ERF how to operate the metal detector and what type of areas to search.

After hours of searching multiple sites, no weapons caches were found, which according to Hanson isn't out of the ordinary.

"Some weeks you'll find one every time you go looking. We probably look three to four times a week and usually average finding one a week," said Hanson.

After searching, the Soldiers and the ERF made a stop at a local sheik's house for a key leader's engagement. Following the engagement, Coalition Soldiers returned the ERF to their station and returned to FOB Normandy.



(Above) Spc. Douglas Green, of Las Vegas, Nevada, instructs two members of the Iraqi Police's Emergency Readiness Force how to operate a metal detector and shows them what kind of areas they should search in order to locate hidden caches, during a patrol April 9.

(Right) Spc. Patrick Revels, of Maxton, N.C., digs where, Bradenton Fla. native, Staff Sgt. Matthew Jeanneret's metal detector picked up a possible cache site alongside a wall in an area of abandoned buildings in the desert.



Fixing the Buhriz Pump Station

Q&A with Staff Sergeant John Crepeau, Team Sergeant, Alpha Company, 448th Civil Affairs Battalion working with 2nd Battalion, 8th Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division.



What is your team's involvement with the Buhriz water pump?

While working with the 2-8 FA and Iraqi engineers from the pump station, determined that the inlet pipes for the facility needed screens to keep out debris. Flexible fittings for the pumps also need to be installed to reduce wear on the pumps.

Why is this pump important?

According to local Iraqi law, water in Diyala for agricultural use can only come from the Diyala River. South Buhriz is primarily an agricultural area; irrigation water is one of their main concerns. Additionally, this pump station also supplies water to the municipality of Buhriz.

How is this project going to help the people of Buhriz and the surrounding area?

The refurbished pump could help up to several hundred people. The population in South Buhriz is in flux with the movement of formerly displaced persons.

Once these improvements to the pump station are made it will increase the amount of water supplied to South Buhriz. Once people see that there is water flowing in canals next to their village it will prompt them to return.



What other projects are being worked on?

There are 22 essential service projects currently; we have some involvement with most of these projects. Seven of the projects that 2-8FA is working on we have more direct involvement with. These include the Buhriz pump station, 2 electrical projects, repair of a bridge and road, trash removal for Kanan and an irrigation project. We also have assisted with a myriad of micro grants for the area.



What do you like most about working in the Civil Affairs field in Iraq?

Seeing construction or repairs being made to the infrastructure or a new business opening. There are many things broken in Iraq, but every completed project or new business is another step towards a more fully functioning country that will rely less and less upon CF.



Anything else you would like to add?

Projects are not the only course of action; engaging key leaders in government is also a big focus for us. Encouraging local leaders to communicate with government levels above and below them is an ongoing mission. Having the local population request and receive more from their local government, and less from Coalition Forces is the frame work that we operate in.

A patrol in So

Story and Photos by
Spc. Anthony Jones
145 MPAD

In the previously volatile South Balad Ruz area of Diyala, units of Task Force 3rd Battalion, 66th Armor Regiment are continually patrolling the area, bringing safety and stability to the region.

One such unit is 3rd Platoon, Company A, 1st Battalion, 2nd Infantry Regiment, Task Force 3-66. Approved by the regional Iraqi Army, the operation was just one part of a series of combined patrols designed to bring stability to the region. The platoon spent three days clearing a section of the Sawa Canal and patrolling routes near the villages of 30th Tamuz, Shanana and Tawilla from April 18 to 20.

"The canals give the insurgents a quick avenue of approach in and out of the area," said Sgt. 1st Class David Jones, platoon sergeant, 3rd Platoon. "They also use canals that size to store weapons and as hiding places."

Jones, of Warwick, R.I., said the platoon cleared approximately 11,000 meters of canal in two days. In order to cover as much ground as possible the platoon broke into 4 elements to clear the canal. Most of the Soldiers dismounted and walked along



Soldiers of 3rd Platoon, Company A, 1st Battalion, 2nd Infantry Regiment, Task Force 3-66 pass out candy to children of 30th Tamuz during a three day patrol of the Balad Ruz area of Diyala, April 19.

the far side, center and left side of the canal maintaining the high ground while their vehicles, including two Bradley Fighting Vehicles, provided overwatch on the far left flank.

After each day of clearing the canal the Soldiers would conduct mounted patrols in the area.

"The night patrols let the enemy know we are still in the area, and prevents them from moving around," said 1st Lt. Christopher Champlin, 3rd Platoon Leader, and graduate of Northern Michigan University.

According to Champlin, the Iraqi Army has recently been increasing their presence in the region. Most recently, the Iraqi Army began setting up a camp in the area, moving in an additional

700 Soldiers to add an even greater ISF presence to the security of South Balad Ruz.

The morning of April 19 the platoon completed clearing the canal and began mounted patrols of routes through villages in the area of operations. While visiting the villages the Soldiers took time to pass out candy to children.

Jones said he has seen improvements in the villager's opinion of Coalition forces during this deployment and attributes them to the Soldiers kindness to the Iraqi people.

"When we come now it's like a parade; we always try to bring candy for the kids," said Jones. "Sometimes we'll have little kids who have a boo-boo and our medic will clean them up and give them a band-aid."

South Balad Ruz

He added it's not just children who are recipients of the kindness of his Soldiers, "Some of the men will have a headache and we'll give him an aspirin. It seems like a small thing but those small things show we aren't here to harm them or take things from them. We are here to help them out."

Throughout the three day patrol the Soldiers did not find any hidden caches or insurgents. "This patrol was fairly uneventful," said Champlin

"We've accomplished a great deal in a short amount of time,"

added Jones talking about how the action in South Balad Ruz is not as kinetic as when Task Force 3-66 arrived in the area.

The missions and daily patrols conducted by 3rd Platoon and other units of Task Force 3-66 build good relations and are bringing both security and stability to Balad Ruz. However, even with a more stable Balad Ruz, the area is still dangerous.

Recently several IA Soldiers have been killed and 3rd Platoon lost a Soldier when a house borne IED detonated on April 5.

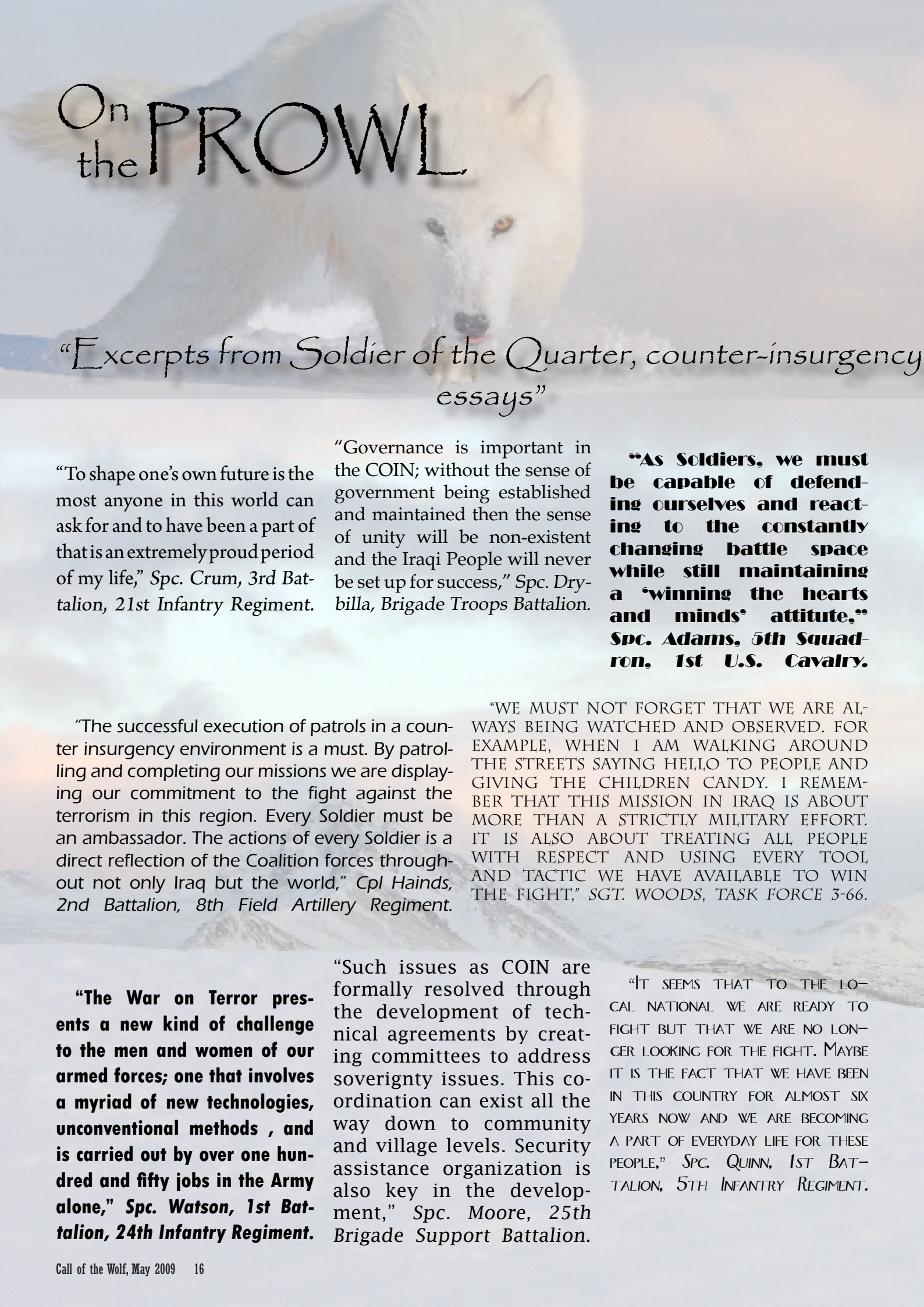
"My boys are probably the tightest platoon I've seen in my fifteen years in the Army. They're very brotherly," said Jones. "When Spc. Candelaria died it definitely took a toll on us. Our hearts go out to his family."

Jones said his Soldiers still have their heads in the game and are still focused on the mission.

"That area is 80 percent better than when we got here," Jones said. "I won't say 100 percent because we still have some problems, but it will continue to get better."

Soldiers of 3rd Platoon, Company A, 1st Battalion, 2nd Infantry Regiment, Task Force 3-66 patrol the high ground of the Sawa Canal in the South Balad Ruz area of Diyala, April 18.





On the PROWL

"Excerpts from Soldier of the Quarter, counter-insurgency essays"

"To shape one's own future is the most anyone in this world can ask for and to have been a part of that is an extremely proud period of my life," *Spc. Crum, 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment.*

"Governance is important in the COIN; without the sense of government being established and maintained then the sense of unity will be non-existent and the Iraqi People will never be set up for success," *Spc. Drybilla, Brigade Troops Battalion.*

"As Soldiers, we must be capable of defending ourselves and reacting to the constantly changing battle space while still maintaining a 'winning the hearts and minds' attitude,"
Spc. Adams, 5th Squadron, 1st U.S. Cavalry.

"The successful execution of patrols in a counter insurgency environment is a must. By patrolling and completing our missions we are displaying our commitment to the fight against the terrorism in this region. Every Soldier must be an ambassador. The actions of every Soldier is a direct reflection of the Coalition forces throughout not only Iraq but the world," *Cpl Hains, 2nd Battalion, 8th Field Artillery Regiment.*

"WE MUST NOT FORGET THAT WE ARE ALWAYS BEING WATCHED AND OBSERVED. FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN I AM WALKING AROUND THE STREETS SAYING HELLO TO PEOPLE AND GIVING THE CHILDREN CANDY. I REMEMBER THAT THIS MISSION IN IRAQ IS ABOUT MORE THAN A STRICTLY MILITARY EFFORT. IT IS ALSO ABOUT TREATING ALL PEOPLE WITH RESPECT AND USING EVERY TOOL AND TACTIC WE HAVE AVAILABLE TO WIN THE FIGHT," *SGT. WOODS, TASK FORCE 3-66.*

"The War on Terror presents a new kind of challenge to the men and women of our armed forces; one that involves a myriad of new technologies, unconventional methods , and is carried out by over one hundred and fifty jobs in the Army alone," *Spc. Watson, 1st Battalion, 24th Infantry Regiment.*

"Such issues as COIN are formally resolved through the development of technical agreements by creating committees to address sovereignty issues. This coordination can exist all the way down to community and village levels. Security assistance organization is also key in the development," *Spc. Moore, 25th Brigade Support Battalion.*

"IT SEEMS THAT TO THE LOCAL NATIONAL WE ARE READY TO FIGHT BUT THAT WE ARE NO LONGER LOOKING FOR THE FIGHT. MAYBE IT IS THE FACT THAT WE HAVE BEEN IN THIS COUNTRY FOR ALMOST SIX YEARS NOW AND WE ARE BECOMING A PART OF EVERYDAY LIFE FOR THESE PEOPLE," *Spc. Quinn, 1st Battalion, 5th Infantry Regiment.*

COP closures display security progress for Baqubah

Story by
Sgt. Jeremy Pitcher
145 MPAD

With the recent closure of three combat outposts, or COPs, in the city of Baqubah, located in Diyala province, Soldiers of the 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division are maneuvering themselves to aid in security for the region while allowing Iraqi Security Forces to take the next step in self-sufficiency.

The recent COP closures include COP Khatoon, which closed on February 9, COP Old Baqubah, which closed on February 19 and COP Tahrir, which closed on April 7. These three closures are part of the strategic repositioning resulting from the security agreement signed between the U.S. and Iraq in November 2008.

The decisions made for the closures of the COPs were a joint effort, taking into account both the strategic goals of Coalition Forces on both the Battalion and Brigade levels, along with the ability and needs of the Iraqi Security Forces.

The three closed COPs were most recently operated by members of the 1st Battalion, 5th Infantry Regiment. With the troop relocation, Khatoon and Old Baqubah were handed back to their civilian landowners while Tahrir, which was located on government land, is scheduled to be used by the United States Agency

for International Development and will serve as a Small Business Development Center.

The current security agreement allows for a drawdown of U.S. forces, while allowing ISF to continue to take the lead in their neighborhoods and conduct themselves independently of Coalition Forces. It also forces local Iraqis to work solely with their local ISF for security. This significantly aids in the partnership and trust of the locals with the ISF. Although their physical location is changing, Coalition Forces' commitment to their partnership with the ISF remains strong.

"This shows the people that the Iraqi Security Forces are in the lead. It allows us to stand in the background

and assist only if needed," said Sgt. 1st Class David Hershberger of the 1-5 Inf.

The repositioning also aids in the ability of Coalition Forces to strategically aid in places where ISF may need additional help.

"We now have more combat power due to the fact that we do not have to provide force protection for these places. We are still located very close to the city which allows us to respond very quickly if need be," said Maj. Douglas Walter, Executive Officer for the 1-5 Inf.

The closure of these three COPs marks a pivotal time in the transition of responsibility for the province, during which the Iraqi Security Forces will continue to grow their abilities and work with the people of Diyala to secure the region for all.

Adhering to the security agreement of November 2008, Coalition forces have already begun a responsible draw-down of forces in the cities. This reduction of forces will allow Iraqi Security Forces to further lead in their progression to bring safety and stability to the nation. (Photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Ali Flisek)



Operations on the Home Front

Story by
Lt. Col. Ryan Bates
Squadron XO 5-1 CAV

One Team – One Fight... and our Team spans the globe. The other half of it is back at Fort Wainwright, keeping the hearth fires burning, and sending forward the support of family and loved ones that sustain us here and give us something to look forward to coming home to. Not only does the Squadron receive support from our families on Fort Wainwright, but also from our extended families throughout the world. Extended family members have already registered for accounts and accessed the virtual Family Readiness Group via the internet at www.armyfrg.org. Staying updated on current FRG events to include pictures of the Troopers in Iraq, births in the Squadron and upcoming activities. Based on the number of site visits, the vFRG has been a tremendous success.

Our “Blackhawk Babes” Family Readiness Group spouses recently celebrated our collective “Half Way Home” milestone, coming together with good food and cheer to recognize the contribution and commitment that our families have shown to their soldiers overseas and to each other at home. Included in the wide array of fare was a large tasty ham, and 40lbs of potatoes prepared with love by the ‘Spud Squad’. During the event, awards for Volunteer of the Quarter were presented to our ladies that distinguished themselves for their efforts to



the unit and the community, as well as presenting the traditional bundle of red roses to the wives of the Troop Commanders and First Sergeants who changed-out while in theater.

The ladies have done all manners of creative activities to help their men, each other, and just pass the time until our whole team comes together again. Last October they ran several tables at the Fort Wainwright Holiday Bazaar, enjoying a little community interaction while making some money selling

holiday treats and scheming on plans for the next year’s Bazaar.

After the work was done at the Bazaar, it was a time for some fun on their own with a little Halloween costume party and wine tasting. Can’t work all the time.

During Christmas, the ladies outdid themselves in making a stuffed stocking for every Trooper in the Squadron, as well as countless care-packages to sustain their men.

For Valentine’s Day, the ladies truly showed their creativity in





both keeping their men in their good graces and finding a way to have a little fund raiser by offering us a mail order option for a rose bouquet & teddy bear that they would ensure got delivered to our respective spouses on the right day back home. Brilliant!... and the funds will go toward a Squadron Ball when the deployment is all over. Other fund raisers have included a very nice Squadron blanket, T-

shirt sales, and soon a Squadron Year Book to commemorate the lifecycle and the deployment.

Enjoyable and creative events, both formal and informal, have gone a long way to pass the winter time and get them to the halfway point. Many activities have included the quality facilities on Fort Wainwright, while others have been hosted in the gracious hospitality of their homes. Ice Skating and Bowling parties have been a hit with both the ladies and the kids, giving them a chance to show off their skills and visit.

Other events hosted at the Guard Armory and Last Frontier Center have been creative theme parties such as "1980 Bunco Nite", complete with '80s music, '80s garb and '80 hairstyles. BINGO Nite remains a favorite, and for those feeling more spunky, a little Salsa Dancing lesson.

Their key to success in getting to the halfway point

has been remaining active and involved, and as the spring thaw approaches, that recipe for success continues. The Blackhawk Babes will not limit themselves to just the indoors, nor to just the Squadron or the Fort Wainwright community. They have plans beyond that which include participation in some Fairbanks charity fund raisers. They have plans to field teams for the American Cancer Society "Relay for Life" to be hosted at the West Valley High School track on 29 May, and the March of Dimes "March for Babies" at Pioneer Park on 6 June.

Our ladies are truly the glue that binds our global team together. Through formal, informal, and even impromptu events, they provide incredible strength to their men and to each other to get through what we have all been asked to do, and to get home to what makes it all worthwhile.



It's a Jungle Out There

Story and Photos by
Sgt. Jeremy Pitcher
145 MPAD

The Iraqi Army and Coalition forces demonstrated their power to quickly move into a remote area by conducting a joint air assault operation on a small island in Diyala province, April 22.

Soldiers of the Iraqi Army, along with U.S. Soldiers from 1st Platoon, Company B, 1st Battalion, 24th Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Stryker Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, searched the island on the Tigris River for suspected weapons

caches, and questioned people about insurgent activity.

In the early morning hours, four UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters carried the Iraqi and U.S. Soldiers, explosive ordnance disposal Sailors, and a military working dog team to the island objective. This was the first air assault mission conducted by the platoon since they had come to Iraq more than six months ago.

"We practiced exactly how we would exit the birds and where we would position ourselves in order to keep all sectors covered," said 1st Lt. Jordan Weigle, platoon leader for 1st Platoon, about the days of rehearsal leading up to the

mission. "When we landed, it went off almost flawlessly."

The helicopters touched down, and the Soldiers from both forces exited the aircraft and established security positions. Each watched over his sector of fire and waited for the next move.

As the Black Hawks flew away, the platoon split in half and began their missions. Two squads began searching to the north, while the other two pushed south on the island. The loud shudder of helicopters sounded overhead as two Apaches flew into the area to watch over the ground forces.

The Soldiers pushed through thick brush and tall grass. The setting resembled an equatorial jungle, unlike what most had experienced before in Iraq.

"It was a lot thicker than we initially thought. When we started making our way, we had to work with the terrain to make sure that we cleared everything," said Weigle.

Two of the squads came across two older men working, along with a young child. The men were cooperative, explaining they worked for the



Soldiers of 1st Platoon, Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 24th Infantry Regiment, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division along with Iraqi Army Soldiers clear an island on the Tigris river on April 22. The thick brush of the island was searched with a dog team and metal detectors to find weapons caches that may have been hidden there.

Air Assaulting the Tigris



Iraqi Army Soldiers question two men on a small island on the Tigris River. The questioning was part of a clearing operation that took place on April 22. The clearing was conducted to look for weapons caches that might have been stored there.

government to clear the brush. The platoon continued to clear the dense terrain, walking through the brush with metal detectors and the dog team to ensure that they did not miss any hidden weapons.

Once the island was completely cleared, the platoon regrouped and was evacuated by the Black Hawks. Although the Iraqi and U.S. Soldiers found no weapons caches this day, the combined

air assault mission showed Iraqi Security and Coalition forces can literally drop in, quickly and unexpectedly, to places that insurgents may call their safe-havens.

Soldiers of 1st Platoon, Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 24th Infantry Regiment, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division along with Iraqi Army Soldiers clear an island on the Tigris River. The joint clearing is a small piece of the overall mission to bring security and stability to the region.



Iraqi Medical Clinic Visits Small Town; Big Turnout

Story by
Spc. Christopher Bruce
145th MPAD

In a small village south of Al Udaim, in the Diyala Province of Iraq, children, women and men lined up outside a school house with eager anticipation of receiving medical care that otherwise wouldn't be easy to obtain. As children frowned and cried from seeing the needle that would deliver vaccinations of all types, parents smiled knowing their kids were being treated with the best medical care in the area.

Over 150 patients were treated and more than 100 children were immunized at a temporary clinic in the once Al Qaeda-controlled village of Shuzayf on April 23.

Leading doctor of the clinic and Director of Al Udaim Medical Center, Dr. Omar Hashim Achmed, said the villagers were too far from Al Udaim and needed medical treatment after years of fighting with Al Qaeda.

"We came to this village to give medical care and vaccinations to the children. We are very happy to do our work here in a village for people who were exposed to terrorism for a long time," Achmed said.

The medical clinic visit included immunizations, health screenings and the administration of medicines of all types. Men and women were able to consult with several different doctors and get routine checkups. Those who had injuries were treated



Iraqis from the town of Shuzayf receive free medical care during a temporary clinic set up by the Ministry of Health Shuzayf. (Photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Ali Flisek, Combat Camera)

and received medicines. Children received routine vaccinations and got checkups as well.

At one point, a child receiving a vaccination clenched his fists and began to cry as the doctor poked a needle into his skin. Even as the needle penetrated his skin, his face lit up and he giggled and joked to his brother, amused at the lack of pain; his enthusiasm helped to persuade other children not to worry.

Iraqi doctors were in charge of setting up the clinic and the Iraqi Army (IA) pulled security. The IA checked everyone who entered the school house compound for any weapons or explosives. Soldiers with Headquarters, Headquarters Company (HHC) 1st Battalion, 24th Infantry Regiment were invited as well, but played more of an over-watch role to the entire process.

They kept out of the way and let the Iraqis take charge of the operation.

IA soldiers, working with Coalition Forces soldiers, passed out flyers the day before the event, helping add to the event's success, according to Staff Sgt. Toloai Sosene. He said the flyers were passed out to Shuzayf as well as all the neighboring villages.

"We went yesterday and passed out flyers to everyone, and had a great response immediately. Preparation is everything, and the flyers made this a great turnout," Sosene said.

The turnout that included over 65 families in the area, helped give much needed medical care and showed the villager's security has been stabilized. No fear or terror was present and nothing threatened the temporary medical clinic.

Chaplain's Corner

What Race Are You Running?

It's human nature to want to win. I can't remember anybody telling me their goal in life is to be a loser. Nobody wants to be a loser! However, winning has different meanings for different people. A couple of years ago, I was running a 5k race. As I entered the second mile, I began passing one person after another. "Wow!" I thought. "I'm really doing well!" In fact, it gave me another shot of adrenaline and I accelerated. As I came into the finish line, I won third place! I beat all those other people--I thought. Very soon after that, I learned that some were running a 5K and some were running a 10K. Unknown to me, there were two simultaneous races. Both commenced together at the same starting line. I had been passing the 10K runners! I didn't beat them after all. They were running a different race!

Each of us runs a race everyday. But are we running a personal race or a team race? Are we running a "career" race or a "calling" race? Are we running because we're trying to build our career? Or, are we running because we feel that it is our calling and purpose in life? Are we running because we feel somehow that we can have a posi-

tive impact on others, the Army, and the freedom of people?

If we're running for our own personal gain only, we've quit running the right race and started running the wrong race. I like to refer to the wrong race as the rat race because our society has labeled the over-busyness of American culture and the over-pursuit of personal gain as the rat race. Lily Tomlin once said, "The trouble with being in a rat race is that even if you win the race, you're still a rat."

I believe there's a great difference between those who compete with others and those who compete with themselves. They are also running two different races. At least five differences contrast the two:

1. Those who compete with themselves strive to do better because they're always trying to beat their last record. Those who compete with others believe they're doing well (even when they're not) because they perceive they are doing better than those around them.

2. Those who compete with themselves are usually self-critical and examine their lives often. Those who compete against others tend to be others-critical and examine others often.

3. Those who compete with themselves have to step up on their past mistakes to get



Chaplain (Maj.) Roderick Mills

to the top. Those who compete with others have to step on others to get to the top.

4. Those who compete with themselves tend to be excellence-driven. Those who compete with others tend to be ego-driven.

5. Those who compete with themselves tend to be above the rat race. Those who compete with others tend to be in the rat race.

What race are you running?

"...since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us." (Hebrews 12:1)

Fallen Wolves

SPC Heath Pickard, C Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Infantry Regiment, 18 Sept 1987 - 16 Oct 2008

PFC Cody Eggleston, C Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Infantry Regiment, 17 Sept 1987 - 24 Oct 2008

CPL Michael Mayne, A Company, 5th Squadron, 1st U.S. Cavalry Regiment, 9 Oct 1987 - 23 Feb 2009

CPL Micheal Alleman, A Company, 5th Squadron, 1st U.S. Cavalry Regiment, 19 Jan 1978 - 23 Feb 2009

CPL Zachary Nordmeyer, A Company, 5th Squadron, 1st U.S. Cavalry Regiment, 5 Aug 1987 - 23 Feb 2009

SPC Israel Candelaria Mejias, A Company, 1st Battalion, 2nd Infantry Regiment, 26 Feb 1981 - 5 April 2009

Military Working Dog, Jok, Brigade Troops Battalion, 14 Nov 2008

Call of the Wolf, May 2009 23

A wolf is shown in profile, howling with its mouth open, against a light blue sky. The wolf's fur is a mix of grey and white. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

The Arctic Warrior March

We conquer the mountains and the valleys!

We train in the winter's bitter cold!

Alaska Soldiers! Arctic Warriors!

Sentries of the North!

So pick up your weapons and your snowshoes!

We're ready to fight and to defend!

The finest Soldiers! Arctic Warriors! From the last Frontier!

The Wolf Creed

Strike fear in the enemy's hearts and minds;
I am a lethal and skilled warfighter with unmatched intestinal fortitude.

Being a disciplined, professional Soldier, I live the Army Values.

Committed to my fellow Soldiers, unit and country, I am ready to answer my nation's call -- NOW!

Tough, both physically and mentally, and instilled with warrior spirit, I can accomplish my mission. Anytime. Anywhere.

Arctic Wolves!

Arctic Tough!