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INDEPENDENCE *Gazette*



Sweeping the Floor

Stryker Soldiers search desert floor for weapons caches



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 Sgt. Doug Roles
Sgt. Brian Reger of Ellicott City, Md., 856th Engineer Co., 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, runs a metal detector over a suspected weapons cache site June 3. "Independence" Soldiers worked with Iraqi Army Soldiers to search an area northwest of Taji which has been used in the past for hiding weapons.



Mapping section Soldiers aid irrigation project

Sgt. DOUG ROLES
56th SBCT PAO NCO

Soldiers from the 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team's geospatial intelligence section are playing a role in helping Iraqi leaders prepare to expand irrigation and farming throughout Iraq. The Soldiers are teaching about 20 Iraqi technicians data processing procedures they will use in a planned inventory of all farmland and irrigation infrastructure.

Sgt. 1st Class Marvin Nichols and Pfc. Amanda Po, both of Philadelphia and both with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, presented a geospatial systems workshop to Ministry of Water Resources and Min-



istry of Agriculture officials in the International Zone. The week long course began June 21. It showed technicians how to compile data, gathered recently by field technicians, to measure canal layouts and amounts of acreage used for growing various crops.

"These processes are going to be the basis for their new GIS centers," Nichols said of centers to be developed at each ministry and linked together through a database. "Now both ministries can use this data collectively to better economic development."

Nichols explained that once information is processed it can be used to determine how many acres of crops a stretch of canal can support compared to current agriculture usage. The GPS information, Nichols said, can show Iraqi officials where there may be unregistered water pumps and can illustrate canal flow capacity. Farmers in Iraq must get a permit to pump from a canal if their usage meets a certain level.

Nichols said the training "has gone really well." After a few days of learning the processing program, the technicians began working with the actual data from Canal 42, in the Taji Irrigation District, east of Sa'ab al Bour.

Kirkman, who has worked with the Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team working with 56th SBCT – ePRT5 – said the Tatweer project utilizes the 56th Brigade's "relationship with the locals."

"The Soldiers know the local sheiks," he said.

The USAID/Tatweer program and inter-ministerial teams are working to improve survey methods to more accurately determine cropping patterns into an economic model. That model will show potential returns on crops grown if water is returned to rehabilitated canals, USAID/Tatweer reported.

Nichols and Po used an interpreter to present their model to the technicians in a brisk exchange of questions and answers. The students huddled in groups around laptop computers as the two instructors led them through the steps of turning GPS points into detailed maps.

Po, a geospatial analyst, said her involvement in the class is showing students how to set up their Excel system to utilize the GIS data. A year ago Po, a 2007 high school graduate, was a brand new Soldier with a semester of college completed. Now she's helping Iraqis build their future.

"I got on this deployment right out of AIT [advanced individual training]," Po said. "It makes me feel really good. They have the ability. They're going to go a long way."

"The benefit they get out of it is it helps them work together," Po continued. "What we're showing them ... is how they can use their water system to rebuild capacity."

Po's day-to-day work on the deployment includes doing terrain analysis and responding to requests for mapping information.



Photos by Sgt. Doug Roles
Top, center: Pfc. Amanda Po, of Philadelphia, a geospatial analyst with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, shows Ministry of Water Resources and Ministry of Agriculture technicians features of a mapping program June 21 during a conference in the International Zone. Above: Sgt. 1st Class Marvin Nichols of Philadelphia, the 56th brigade's senior geospatial intelligence engineer, explains a step in the mapping process.

istry of Agriculture officials in the International Zone. The week long course began June 21. It showed technicians how to compile data, gathered recently by field technicians, to measure canal layouts and amounts of acreage used for growing various crops.

"Basically they're looking for an accurate, fast way of processing this information," Nichols, the brigade's senior geospatial intelligence engineer, said.

Nichols explained that the ministries will use the raw data to begin cost analysis of improvement projects. Many parts of the canal system are over 30 years old and are in various states of disrepair.

The Stryker Soldiers got involved in the data-gathering effort after previously assisting the USAID/Tatweer program by preparing maps of a roughly 35-square-kilometer area, between Taji and Baghdad. That area, south of the Grand Canal, is the pilot area for the irrigation inventory.

The Tatweer program provides support to the ministries for capacity development in public management. Tatweer is an Arabic word meaning "development."

Nichols and Spc. Jessica Yates of Hatboro, Pa., another brigade geospatial analyst, developed the block of instruction after discussing the

Photo by Master Sgt. Sean Whelan
In Iraq canals make the difference between lush green fields and desert browns. The Grand Canal, north of Baghdad, feeds a network of smaller canals, such as this one between Baghdad and Taji, that farmers use for irrigation. Improving the irrigation system will lead to larger crop yields.

'Charlie Med' Soldiers take care of Camp Taji, each other

Sgt. DOUG ROLES
56th SBCT PAO NCO

Pennsylvania Army National Guard Soldiers staffing Camp Taji's main medical clinic are prepared to treat the worst of battlefield injuries but hope the bulk of their cases continues to be sprained ankles and upset stomachs. Soldiers of Company C. "Charlie Med," 328th Brigade Support Battalion, 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, operate the facility which provides basic healthcare to the thousands of Soldiers and civilians on post.

"All walks of life come in here, said Sgt. 1st Class Jeremy Strathmeyer of Lititz, Pa., the clinic's noncommissioned officer in charge. "We treat anything from a Hesco barrier getting dropped on someone's foot to head gunshot wounds. We've got the only Guard [facility] and we're the highest level of care on the FOB [forward operating base]."

The clinic's lab workers can do urine analysis and blood counts. Tests that can't be performed at the clinic are sent to a combat support hospital in Baghdad. The medical clinic supports about 10,000 Soldiers and up to another 12,000 civilians at Taji.

Strathmeyer, a medic who has been with Co. C for 10 years, said there are "a lot of different working pieces" to the facility. He explained that the level-two care clinic operates out of three buildings and provides dental care, radiology, pharmacy and physical therapy. Level one care is medical attention provided in the field and at battalion aid stations. The level two clinic here can be thought of as the step between field care and the CSH.

"We run a full pharmacy. We've written over 9,000 prescriptions since February," Strathmeyer said.

The 56th SBCT arrived in Iraq in late January and will be deployed through late summer. The BSB's Company C is headquartered in Lancaster, Pa.



Photo by Sgt. Doug Roles
Spc. Beatriz Graveley (at left), of Washington D.C., a radiology specialist, with Company C. "Charlie Med," 328th Brigade Support Battalion, 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, positions a patient's wrist for an x-ray June 13.

caster, Pa.

Strathmeyer, a York, Pa. police officer who deployed to Ramadi, Iraq in 2004 with the Pa. Guard's 2nd Brigade, 28th Infantry Division, said this tour marks the first time Co. C has deployed as an entire unit. He said his Soldiers have met the challenges of deployment and said that many of the unit's Soldiers are in the healthcare field as civilians – as emergency medical technicians or emergency room nurses.

"We have a lot of civilian experience that came with us," Strathmeyer said. "That's a level of talent that the active component normally doesn't have."

About 50 Soldiers work at the facility. The staff includes six registered nurses.

Sgt. Christopher Walker of York, Pa., a healthcare specialist, said it's "ankles, knees and wrists, sports injuries" that he sees most of

Sgt. 'D.J.' brings Ducks Unlimited to Iraq

Sgt. DOUG ROLES
56th SBCT PAO NCO

More than two dozen Soldiers "enlisted" in June in an effort to preserve state-side wetlands – for the benefit of ducks and people.

Thirty-five 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team Soldiers formed Ducks Unlimited's first chapter in Iraq with a June 13 cookout. The banquet served as the kickoff for the Camp Taji, Iraq Chapter of Ducks Unlimited. The idea for an Iraq chapter started with a longtime DU member who is serving here with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 112th Infantry.

Sgt. John Chrzanowski, 57, of Erie, Pa. said the first annual meeting of the newest DU chapter offered the camaraderie of hunters hanging out together and sharing stories while far from the nearest duck blind or deer stand.

"It took us to a happy place for a while," said Chrzanowski. "I just think it's unique to raise money for Ducks Unlimited while we're here. It's something that links us to home."

Chrzanowski, chairman of Lake Erie Chapter of Ducks Unlimited, explained that the path to an Iraq chapter began when he posted a request online for barbecue supplies because he enjoys cooking out for fellow Soldiers, a frequent morale builder in country.

Chrzanowski was inundated with supplies from DU members across the U.S. He decided to use those supplies – which included DU hats and hunting knives as well as Ducks Unlimited cooking seasonings – as gifts to new members at a charter meeting held behind the 1-112th's headquarters building.

"People just started sending me boxes

(Continued on Page 3)



Photo by Sgt. Doug Roles
Sgt. John Chrzanowski of Erie, Pa., stands next to a table of donated Ducks Unlimited merchandise. Chrzanowski founded the Camp Taji, Iraq Chapter of Ducks Unlimited, Iraq's first, with a cookout and charter meeting June 13.

ten when it comes to injuries. On the sickness side, he said, gastrointestinal issues and dehydration are most common. Walker sees patients at the clinic and, as the company's training coordinator to the Iraqi Army, works with his counterparts on the other side of post.

"We're married up with the level two on the Iraqi side," Walker said.

Part of the routine for Walker and other Soldiers is to check supplies and equipment at the start of each of the clinic's three shifts.

"Especially the trauma stuff. That's the equipment that if we need it, we need it," Walker said.

Back in Pennsylvania, Walker runs emergency medical service calls with York's White Rose Ambulance and he volunteers with his local fire company. He said his civilian experiences aid his mission here. He said he has dealt with injuries leading to death back in Pennsylvania but said there is a difference when the critically injured or deceased person is wearing the same, Army uniform.

"Fortunately it hasn't happened very much," he said, adding that there are times when healthcare workers have to accept death – something, he said, younger Soldiers in the unit have had to learn.

"They take pride in knowing they did what they could do," he said. "We provide the best care we possibly can,"

The "Charlie Med" Soldiers have reacted to several traumatic events, including the deaths of two U.S. Soldiers and a local civilian leader. Strathmeyer agreed his Soldiers conducted themselves as professionals, with senior noncommissioned officers helping junior soldiers through those difficult events.

The clinic's Soldiers have also helped usher new life into the world. Strathmeyer said several months ago third-shift workers assisted a woman in the sudden delivery of a baby girl, Camp Taji's first birth, by a contractor.

"It directly followed a U.S. Soldier who didn't make it," Strathmeyer said. "That [birth] was a blessing, more so than it normally is."

Walker said Soldiers of the unit were glad to get to their job of "taking care of soldiers" after months of train-up in the U.S. He summed up the job as keeping Soldiers in the fight and taking care of the civilians who support Soldiers at Taji, be it working in the dining hall, doing laundry or maintaining housing.

Sgt. Angela Horst of Silver Springs, Md., a physical therapy technician with Company C, helps get and keep Soldiers ready for missions

when they're dealing with injuries. Horst, who as a civilian is a physical therapy technician at Walter Reed hospital in Washington D.C., said she has treated Soldiers who would've had to "tough it out" or go home if it weren't for physical therapy being available at the clinic.

"I think we've been very effective," she said.

Horst said much of her job is explaining to patients what they have to do to help themselves. In some cases, she has to tell a patient what he or she needs to stop doing to recover.

"A lot of them don't want to stop doing what's been hurting them," she said of Soldiers who are used to challenging runs or workouts in the weight room.

"It's been very educational. All in all I think this has been a good experience," Horst said of her deployment.

While the mission of the Charlie Med Soldiers is to care for others, Strathmeyer said he advises his Soldiers to care for themselves too. He attempts to give each of his Soldiers a day off each week.

"The mental and physical health is real important, especially in the medical field," he said.

Strathmeyer said it's a pretty close-knit crew that works at the "Charlie Med." Soldiers there often take part in recreation activities together and try to stay positive on the job.

"We try to keep it as upbeat in here as we can because we do deal with the sick and injured 24/7," he said. "You are surrounded with depressing situations all the time."



Photo by Sgt. Doug Roles
Sgt. Christopher Walker of York, Pa., a healthcare specialist, with Company C. "Charlie Med," 328th Brigade Support Battalion, 56th Stryker Brigade, listens June 13 as a civilian patient talks about knee pain that has limited his mobility.

(Con't from Page 2)

of stuff," Chrzanowski said.

Known as "D.J." because he runs a disc jockey business, Chrzanowski says his schedule allows him to hunt frequently in the fall months. His duck hunting gear includes four boats "and about 4,500 decoys."

Chrzanowski has been hunting ducks since 1967 and has been a member of Ducks Unlimited since 1979. Chrzanowski said he joined DU because he didn't want-up and-coming water fowl hunters to see the sport shrink because of loss of habitat. Chrzanowski gave a brief overview of the DU organization prior to the start of the meal.

"DU uses 92 cents of every dollar they make for buying wetlands," Chrzanowski said. "Only eight cents of every dollar is used for administration."

"They buy wetlands from Canada to Mexico. Most of the members are hunters but those wetlands are available to anybody to use."

He told the new members they can work with their local DU chapter back home, upon redeployment, while retaining their Camp Taji identity.

"You can renew as a member of the Iraq chapter," Chrzanowski said. "We will always be together as a group."



Photo by Sgt. Doug Roles
Sgt. Philip Amos of Erie, Pa., with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 112th Infantry, 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, reads a copy of Ducks Unlimited magazine June 13 while waiting for the start of the inaugural meeting and cookout of the Camp Taji, Iraq Chapter of Ducks Unlimited. Amos is one of over 30 new members to join the waterfowl conservation organization either at the meeting or in the days following the kickoff event.

Joint medical expo brings healthcare to needy Iraqis

By Capt. MAGGIE WHITE
56th SBCT Public Affairs

Thanks to the combined efforts of Pennsylvania Guardsmen, the Iraqi Army, and concerned citizens, villagers had access to medical care in an area where local clinics are not accessible.

Soldiers from Company C, 1st Battalion, 112th Infantry Regiment, 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team Multi-National Division—Baghdad helped support a medical expo, June 7, at the al-Sadir secondary school in the rural area of Hor al-Bosh to see doctors and nurses, and obtain necessary medications.

Sheik Mohammed Ibrahim donated hundreds of doses of antibiotics, vaccinations, and other medications to provide to the locals who otherwise don't have regular access to medical facilities. He worked with the Soldiers of Co. C and their Iraqi Army counterparts to set up the event where families could seek medical treatment in a safe environment.

"Lots of these people have no money," Ibrahim said, "With this mission they are feeling that someone cares about the people; that the Coalition forces, along with the Iraqi Army, are for their best interests."

Two Iraqi doctors, a nurse, an Army physician's assistant and medic treated 147 people from the area. Many parents brought their children to receive antibiotics, ointments, and receive immunizations. Soldiers handed out makeshift wheelchairs along with donated toys, art supplies, and clothing sent from relatives back in the United States wishing to help out.

"This mission is to show our thanks and support our people," said Dr. Kamin Salah, a general practitioner who donated his time to come help out.

Many families said they did not have the means to see a doctor on a regular basis. They waited in line to receive medication that they might not otherwise be able to receive.

"I'm glad to see children benefit from the medication," said Staff Sgt. Eric Klemm, of Butler, Pa., a senior medic for 1st Bn., 112th inf. Regt., said. "For lots of these kids this is their only chance to see a



Photo by Capt. Maggie White

Dr. Abdul Abbas examines the throat of a young Iraqi girl at the medical expo, June 7, at Hor al-Bosh, near Taji, Iraq. Soldiers from Company C, 1st Battalion, 112th Infantry Regiment, 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, Multi-National Division—Baghdad work with the Iraqi Army and local Iraqi medical personnel to give access to doctors and medications to citizens who otherwise would not have it.

doctor, and I'm glad we can help facilitate that."

The Iraqi doctors and nurse took the lead in the expo, with the U.S. medics in a mentoring role; only stepping in to ask questions and listen to the advice the doctors gave.

"This medical expo is a good example of the IA and the U.S. military working together towards a common goal," 1st Lt. Joshua Fox, of Harrisburg, Pa., said. "We all want to improve the quality of life for the Iraqi people."

Guardsmen deliver supplies to local children

By Sgt. MICHAEL SULLIVAN
1-112, 56th SBCT

Teamwork between Pennsylvania National Guard Soldiers and three local Iraqi sheiks led to a June 4 distribution of essential supplies to two local schools, north of Baghdad.

Although philanthropy is not a part of the units' stated mission, Soldiers from the 328th Brigade Support Battalion and 1st Battalion, 112th Infantry Regiment, 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, Multi-National Division—Baghdad, managed to accumulate several boxes of supplies by appealing to private citizens and organizations back in the U.S.

Iraqi Army and police officers provided security as over 320 children received school materials and hygiene items. The American soldiers found themselves driven to help local schoolchildren.

"Every kid got something today," said Lt. Steven DeSanzo, of Ellwood City, Pa., of Company B, 1st Bn., 112th Inf. Regt.

After coordinating with Sheiks Awad, Naif, and Yasin, the U.S. troops were able to offload the supplies at the al-Bowasick and al-Boreyap schools.

The students were given handbills to assist in identifying personnel and groups wanted by regional authorities. They were also given instructions on how to inform their local police officers.

The Pennsylvania National Guard Soldiers



Photo by Sgt. Michael Sullivan

Capt. William Salisbury, of York, Pa., 328th Brigade Support Battalion, 56th SBCT, meets two students from the school at the al-Boreyap, June 4. Salisbury and Soldiers of his unit visited the students to provide school supplies and hygiene supplies to young Iraqi children.

involved in the effort said most of the children present are too young to fully comprehend the reasons behind the conflict in their nation but

said selfless acts like these will ensure that the children will have positive memories of the U.S. and its Soldiers.

Electrical course graduates will serve Tarmiyah area



Photo by Capt. Maggie White

Sheikh Saed Jassim (right) presents a diploma to a new graduate of the Ministry of Electricity's Electrical Line Refurbishment Team class in Tarmiyah, June 18. Twenty students graduated the six-week class which gave them skills needed to work on electrical infrastructure repairs in the Tarmiyah area for the ministry.

**By Capt. MAGGIE WHITE
56th SBCT Public Affairs**

The Ministry of Electricity celebrated the addition of 20 new line-men to help restore much-needed electrical services to a rural area north of Baghdad.

The Tarmiyah Electrical Line Repair Team School held its graduation ceremony in the city of Tarmiyah, June 18. The event culminated six months of training for area citizens to gain the skills necessary to

work for the ministry and help improve the electrical service in the area.

The class included three weeks of classroom instruction followed by 23 weeks of on-the-job-training. First Lt. Richard Weber, assistant engineer for 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, Multi-national Division—Baghdad, has been working with the ministry to oversee the progress of the course.

"The classes are entirely Iraqi-run and taught," said Weber, from Harrisburg, Pa. "The U.S. Government helps fund the classes by providing supplies such as the vehicles and tools to conduct training. At the end of the course, they have learned valuable skills for the Ministry of Electricity to work on their local networks."

According to Weber, after graduation, the students will go on to work in teams for the MoE. Tarmiyah is a rural area about 18 miles north of Baghdad. The graduates will be responsible for helping to restore the electrical infrastructure for much of the Tarmiyah region.

Engineer Hasham Kareem, the engineer director for the Tarmiyah and Taji areas, spoke at the graduation ceremony. Kareem helped run the course for the new graduates.

"This celebrates the end of training. This graduation is good for Iraq, the Tarmiyah [area], and the city," Kareem said. "This program is a success because of the cooperation between the U.S. and Iraqi government, and we hope the U.S. will continue to back us in the future."

The ELRT program brings attention to the rural provinces of Baghdad. The students have already proven their work to the ministry by the end of the course, so they can expect to continue working in their areas to improve the electricity situation.

"This class has been a good experience," said Ali Jassim, 26, a new graduate of the ELRT course. "The lessons we learn can be used to fix and troubleshoot all types of electrical problems. This is a way to serve the people of Iraq and the Ministry of Electricity"

Representatives dine with Stryker Soldiers

**By Sgt. DOUG ROLES
56th SBCT PAO NCO**

Col. Marc Ferraro, commander of 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, updated four U.S. representatives from Pennsylvania on the work of the "Independence" brigade during the congressional delegation's visit to Iraq June 7.

U.S. Reps. Tim Holden (D-17th District), Bill Shuster (R-9th), Charlie Dent (R-15th) and Kathy Dahlkemper (D-3rd) ate dinner with a group of 56th SBCT Soldiers in the Command Sgt. Maj. Cooke Dining Hall here prior to a briefing by Ferraro. The delegation visit comes at the midpoint of the brigade's deployment in Iraq.

"We conduct full-spectrum operations," Ferraro told the delegation. "Everything we do is through a partnership with the Iraqi Army."

Ferraro reported the brigade, at that point, had conducted over 3,000 patrols, with Soldiers finding 79 weapons caches. Additionally, 827 arrest warrants have been issued through cooperation with Iraqi Security Forces. Ferraro said that number is the highest within the 1st Cavalry Division, the division the 56th SBCT serves under in Iraq.

Ferraro explained that the June 30 effective date of the status of forces agreement would not change the brigade's footprint since the unit operates in a mostly rural area north of Baghdad. The SOFA agreement calls for U.S. forces to withdraw from cities. "Independence" Soldiers serve at Camp Taji and from nine joint security stations in the surrounding area.



Photo by Sgt. Doug Roles

Col. Marc Ferraro (center) of Cherry Hill, N.J., 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team commander, stands with a delegation of U.S. Congress representatives from Pennsylvania at the Command Sgt. Major Cooke Dining Hall June 7. The visiting representatives are, from left: Rep. Bill Shuster (R-9th), Rep. Tim Holden (D-17th), Rep. Charlie Dent (R-15th), and Rep. Kathy Dahlkemper (D-3rd). Ferraro updated the representatives on the work of the "Independence Brigade."

'Sweeping th



A metal detector operator, above, prepares to move to another search point in the desert near Nubai June 3. At left: Spc. Elam Scott of Pottstown, Pa., Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 112th Infantry, searches through loose soil. Below: Staff Sgt. Craig Stevens (center) of Pottsville, Pa., with HHC, 1-112TH, maneuvers through a cloud of dust after dismounting the departing UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter. Below, left: Elam and an Iraqi Soldier return from the mission.

Iraqi Soldiers, Guardsmen air assault into desert, check known cache sites

**By Sgt. DOUG ROLES
56th SBCT PAO NCO**

Soldiers from a Pennsylvania Army National Guard unit worked with Iraqi Army Soldiers June 3 to confirm that insurgents have not reseeded a small portion of desert, northwest of Taji, with weapons caches. The joint mission also provided IA Soldiers an opportunity to hone air assault skills as the Iraqis participated in a helicopter insertion into the search point with their 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team counterparts.

"Today's mission was a combined air assault operation. The purpose was to confirm or deny whether the area is being used by the enemy for logistics," Capt. Greg Holloway of Slippery Rock, Pa., commander of Company A, 1st Battalion, 112th Infantry, said.

Holloway said insurgents have used the location in the past for hiding weapons. Coalition and Iraqi forces periodically search such

areas to ensure insurgents don't begin using them again.

"We try to get out and search those areas," Holloway said. "Overall, we confirmed that it's not being used. Also, we were giving the Iraqi Army some general experience in using Army aircraft."

A total of nearly 50 Pennsylvania National Guard Soldiers and IA Soldiers participated in the mission. After scrambling from a pair of UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters, Soldiers divided into search teams and used metal detectors and two military working dogs to search a roughly 500-meter by 600-meter area near Nubai. The Guardsmen are from Co. A and the 1-112th's Headquarters and Headquarters Company, with Soldiers of the 56th SBCT's 856th Engineer Company also participating. The IA Soldiers are from the 2nd Battalion, 37th IA Brigade.

"This was historically a cache site. There have been some things found here in the past," said Staff Sgt. Craig Stevens of Pottsville, Pa., HHC, 1-112th.

Though the Soldiers discovered no weapons caches on this mission, Stevens said the times when weapons are found are rewarding. Stevens said anything found by Iraqi and U.S. forces is that many fewer weapons available to insurgents.

"We've found some timing devices and initiators," Stevens said of previous searches by



his squad in other areas. "It's kind of exciting when you find something."

Spc. Elam Scott of Pottstown, Pa., HHC (and attached to Co. A), operated a metal detector for one team and pinpointed that team's search locations using GPS technology. His team excavated several small areas but found only old, expended rounds and other bits of metal. Finding no new caches confirmed what areas have not been used by insurgents. Even though the searches turned up nothing, a gain was made.

"It's a good opportunity to work with the Iraqi Army," Scott said.

A team of Soldiers secured the perimeter of the area while the search teams worked. Holloway said there was very little civilian traffic in the area. He said that traffic was related to farming or related to a fuel depot in the area.

"Just people living their lives in the middle of nowhere," Holloway said.





Search for stashes is ongoing mission

Stryker infantry, engineers support Iraqi Army-led hunt for weapons

By Sgt. DOUG ROLES
56th SBCT PAO NCO

A platoon of Pennsylvania Army National Guard Soldiers played a support role in an Iraqi Army-led, battalion-level search for weapons caches near Nubai June 16. The search of several areas discovered no caches but achieved another level of success for the 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team's 1st Battalion, 111th Infantry and the unit's IA partners.

"This is actually the first time the Iraqi Army as a brigade has planned a mission and executed on a battalion level," Capt. John Mance of Norristown, Pa., commander of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1-111th, said. "This is a first for their division and their brigade."

Soldiers from the 56th SBCT's 856th Engineer Company joined the HHC, 1-111th

for the mission. Engineers and IA Soldiers together swept several large areas with metal detectors as a military working dog and handler zig-zagged across fields and along canals.

The 56th SBCT Soldiers linked up with the IA unit near Nubai, northwest of Camp Taji, in the early morning hours. IA Soldiers had already begun searching a field adjacent an IA checkpoint as the HHC Soldiers rolled up in their Strykers.

"It's a clearing operation. They are in the lead," Mance said. "Our mission is follow and support the 2-36th [2nd Battalion, 36th Brigade] IA in that clearance operation."

Mance said the purpose of the operation was to "erode insurgent resources." One Soldier said the brigades' work of searching miles of terrain day after day pays off by depriving insurgents of explosives.

"Personally I think finding weapons caches is why we haven't been messed with; we've hardly been hit," Pfc. Harry Gill, Doylestown, with the 856th, said. "I think what we're doing is really critical."

Gill, who works as a stone mason in Pennsylvania, believes efforts to examine improvised explosive devices are worthwhile. He also said use of the Handheld Interagency Identity Detection Equipment, for tracking a person's biometric information, has improved security.

At left: Pfc. Darryl Strickland (left), of Philadelphia and Staff Sgt. Joshua Bentley of York, Pa. investigate a "beep" from a metal detector as Strickland runs it across a pile of debris June 16 near Nubai. Below, right: More Soldiers from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 111th Infantry, and 856th Engineer Company, 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, enter a quarry near Nubai. Below, left: Spc. William Grimes (at left) of Montoursville, Pa. and Spc. Gregory Garcia (second from left) of Norristown, Pa. both with HHC, 1-111th Inf., head back to Stryker vehicles at the end of a mission, June 16. They searched for weapons caches in the desert near Nubai.

Staff Sgt. Joshua Bentley of York, a squad leader with the 856th said engineers routinely link up with the brigade's infantry units to provide sensitive metal detectors for searches — a job Soldiers refer to as "sweeping the floor."

Bentley, a communications and sign language interpretation major at Bloomsburg University, deployed to Iraq with the 28th Infantry Division's Taskforce Dragoon in 2004-05. In that tour he was attached to a Pa. Guard infantry company as an engineer to assist with route clearance operations and mortar firing. This time around, he's showing younger Soldiers the importance of conducting searches for caches despite most searches turning up no explosives.

"It's a lot quieter now. With all the new agreements, it's different," Bentley said of months of decreased violence and a partnership with an improving Iraqi security force.



Pa. Guard gives to Iraqi youth center

By Sgt. PHILIP SCHRATWIESER
2-112th, 56th SBCT

Iraqi kids in the Abu Ghraib area of western Baghdad are just like youngsters everywhere. If you don't give them something fun to do, who knows what they'll get into.

Government officials of Abu Ghraib partnered together with the Iraqi Army and Coalition Forces to provide a place of safety and involvement for local youth.

Soldiers from Company B, 2nd Battalion, 112th Infantry Regiment "Paxton Rangers," 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team (currently attached to 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division) Multi-National Division—Baghdad visited an Iraqi Youth Center, here June 11, to help get kids off the streets.

Inside a walled compound alongside local government buildings are soccer fields and other play areas for the children to enjoy.

What they didn't have is sports equipment to use on the fields.

The fact that Iraqis call soccer balls "foot-balls" became a humorous point in a meeting between Capt. Jason Hoffman, from York, Pa., and Hasen, the Abu Ghraib Youth Center's director, when Hasen presented a list of requested supplies at the behest of Hoffman.

As Hoffman saw footballs on the list he felt surprise and excitement that the Iraqis were getting interested in American football.

Once the correction was made, the director was given a surprise gift of 50 soccer balls.

Hasen, a man in his late 40's, quickly picked up a ball and began dribbling it in the air and bouncing it off his head like a professional.

Soldiers passed out stuffed animals, school and art supplies, and several bottles of bubbles, gifts from the Keystone state, which the children took to immediately.

With a warning not to drink the soapy liquid, they began running around blowing bubbles to the pretend annoyance of some of the



Photo by Sgt. Philip Schratwieser
Sp. John Wayne Ringer, from Waynesburg, Pa., of Company B, 2nd Battalion, 112th Infantry Regiment "Paxton Rangers," 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, teaches a child to blow bubbles at a youth center in the Abu Ghraib district west of Baghdad during a supply drop, June 11. The Soldiers visited the center to better the partnership between the Soldiers and the population of Abu Ghraib.

adults who began swatting at the bubbles.

Projects like this are increasingly being carried out through the offices of local Iraqi Army units to demonstrate better coordination with the local government and involve themselves on a local level.

"One of our strong lines of effort is reconciliation," said Hoffman. "Reconciliation, not only at the adult level through tribal alliances, but also to reconcile the youth so that in future years we can see the dividends of the youth working together in places such as the youth center."

Many of the children and Iraqi Soldiers expressed their appreciation of their growing friendship.

"Capt. Hoffman and his fellow Soldiers are some of the best I have worked with," said Lt. Sadam, an operations officer from the 3rd Battalion, 24th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, who work in concert with the Paxton Rangers in security operations.

Hasen praised the professionalism he has seen in U.S. Soldiers and again expressed his gratitude for their humanitarian efforts.

Gym dedicated to fallen Independence Soldier

By Capt. MAGGIE WHITE
56th SBCT Public Affairs

Soldiers from 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team "Independence", Multi-National Division—Baghdad paid tribute to a fallen Soldier by naming a gym in his honor.

The Baum Fitness Center was dedicated June 5. It's named after Staff Sgt. Mark Baum, of Quakertown, Pa., who was killed in action Feb. 21, 2009.

Baum was fatally shot near Mushada, just north of Camp Taji, when members of his platoon responded to attack by small-arms fire. This deployment was his third combat deployment and second to Iraq.

Soldiers from 3rd Platoon, Company B, 1st Battalion, 111th Infantry Regiment stood under the 112 degree sun to watch the ceremony for a Soldier they considered a brother, friend, and mentor.

"Staff Sgt. Baum led from the front and showed men how to behave," said Capt.



Photo by Capt. Ed Shank
Lt. Col Mark O'Hanlon, of Wallingford Pa., 1st Battalion, 111th Infantry Regiment commander, stands in front of the plaque at the Baum Fitness Center shortly after it was unveiled. The gym was named after Staff Sgt. Mark C. Baum, 3rd Platoon, Company B, 1-111th, who was killed in action on Feb. 21, 2009.

Passero, Co. B commander, from Bristow, Va. "His Soldiers are his legacy; they will remember the lessons he taught for the rest of their lives."

"Staff Sgt. Baum's conduct and dedication is mirrored in his Soldiers," said Lt. Col. Mark O'Hanlon, commander of 1st Bn., 111th Inf. Regt., from Wallingford, Pa. "His service and dedication will continue on in this fitness center."

The newly christened Baum Fitness Center is located across from the 56th SBCT headquarters on Camp Taji. After a benediction Soldiers unveiled the plaque above the entrance bearing Baum's name and a picture of the Purple Heart he was posthumously awarded.

"The dedication of this building is a reminder of Staff Sgt. Baum's dedication to his country," Passero said, "He embodied all of the Army values every day."

Cavalry Troopers fall out for stable call

By Maj. GARY SMITH
2-104th Cav., 56th SBCT

Every other week on the "Cav. Footprint" at Camp Taji, the Troopers from the Reading, Pa.-based 2nd Squadron, 104th Cavalry Regiment look forward to a time-honored tradition in the US Army Cavalry. "Stable Call" is their opportunity to unwind, don their Stetsons, and enjoy the camaraderie that goes with an open air grill and some ice-cold beverages.

While their families at home are enjoying the summer weather and holding their own outdoor activities, the men and women of the Ghost Rider Squadron are able to enjoy a similar one here while deployed as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"Stable Call" dates back to the earliest days of the US Cavalry. Depending upon the Cavalry unit, the time for stable call was often quite early in the morning. It was signaled by the unit's bugler, and served as notice for the Troopers to head to the stables to feed, water and groom the horses they rode into battle.

The Cav. Troopers here at Taji use this time to establish some of their own traditions. Squadron Commander Lt. Col. Shawn Reger of Palmyra, Pa. authorizes his unit to wear the traditional Cavalry Stetson and a Hawaiian shirt of their choice, which often clashes notably with the Army Combat Uniform currently worn in theater. Inevitably, the evening becomes somewhat of a smoker as well, with Troopers breaking out all types of cigars, pipes, and the occasional hookah, a favorite among the local populace here in Iraq. In addition to the ice cold non-alcoholic beverages available, there is always an abundance of open air grilled fare to please the palate.

"A lot of hard work and effort go into making the Stable Call a success." Sgt. 1st Class Vane Gunn of Hershey, Pa. quickly pointed out.

Gunn is the squadron's liaison officer to the 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, and assumes the additional duties of "Grill Sergeant". He and Sgt. 1st Class Chad Rhoads of Fredericksburg, Pa. ensure that no one walks away from the gathering hungry. On a typical Stable Call evening, Gunn and Rhoads will grill large amounts of steaks, ribs, hamburgers, sausages and chicken for the ravenous appetites of all the cavalry and brigade Soldiers who are normally in attendance.

The two senior non-commissioned officers begin their prep work in the early part of the afternoon, and it becomes a concerted team effort from there.

There are a few other Troopers, such as Spc. Phillip Grant of Wyomissing, Pa. and Pvt. 1st Class Thomas Bossard of Philadelphia, who are there from the off-loading of the food to the last chair being folded and stored away and the last bit of trash discarded. The Troopers who work so hard behind the scenes and behind the grill sacrifice much of what little personal time they have to continue what's become a big boost to Squadron morale.

"Along with the meat we cook, we also make potatoes. Spc. Grant is our dessert guy.



Photo by 1st Lt. Duncan C MacQueen

The cooks of Stable Call, hard at work, are from left, Sgt. 1st Class Vane Gunn of Hershey, Pa., Pvt. 1st Class Thomas Bossard of Philadelphia, and Sgt. 1st Class Chad Rhoads of Fredericksburg, Pa. The three Troopers, along with Spc. Phillip Grant (in the background) from Wyomissing, Pa. are predominantly responsible for the success of stable calls every other week. All of the troopers are in Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 2nd Squadron, 104th Cavalry, 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 28th Infantry Division.

He will bring cheese cakes, watermelon and dozens of cookies. Captain Diaz makes all this happen by coordinating the draw of all the rations from the BSB," said Rhoads, the squadron's fires and effects NCO.

The self-appointed Officer-in-Charge of the biweekly festivities is Captain Shaun Myers of Reading, Pa. He is also the Squadron's chaplain, charged with monitoring and ministering to the spiritual needs of personnel assigned to the squadron. He was also the principal architect of the newly constructed deck, which was planned, laid out and erected in the span of about 24 hours.

"Quite a feat in this environment where materials are difficult to get!" remarked Myers. Each week Myers improves upon that as well, most recently adding camouflage netting for shade and some hand-built benches.

"My goal for the stable calls has been to create an environment and an event where our Troopers can disconnect from their stressful jobs for a couple hours," Myers said. "We've also worked to have a cookout that is done right so that the commander can invite people from other units to see how the cavalry takes care of its Soldiers."

In the weeks ahead, the goal is to improve the grill area and to add more details to the deck, including a bar. One thing is certain: While their tour here in Iraq has not been without its share of stressful and challenging times, the Troopers of 2nd Squadron will long remember the good times and fellowship here on Camp Taji. They will look forward to reuniting with family and friends and holding their own outdoor activities in the comfort of their own homes around this time next year.

IA, Stryker Troopers on patrol

Photo by 1st Lt. Matthew Swartzell,
Troopers from B Troop, 2nd Squadron, 104th Cavalry, 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 28th Infantry Division, out of Easton Pa., conduct a combined patrol with Iraqi Security Forces in Sa'ab al Bour May 29.



Legally speaking ...

Deployed Soldiers have right to be reemployed at the 'same spot on the escalator'

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

Before long we will be heading home for some well deserved quality time with family and friends. We should all take some time to reconnect and rest with loved ones before we start the next chapter of our lives. For some it will be returning to college, but for most it will be returning to our previous employers. I am sure that most employers will be glad to have us return to our positions but some soldiers may encounter problems. The main problem that could arise is that you may be denied reemployment by your civilian employer.

USERRA is the law that was enacted to protect your rights to be reemployed in your civilian position if you left that position to service in the military. In or-

der to be able to invoke this law you must have fulfilled certain requirements prior to deploying. Namely, you provided your employer with advance notice of your service, written or verbal; you have less than five years of cumulative service in the military with that specific employer; you return to work in a timely manner after you are off of orders (90 days after completion of 181 plus days of service); you have not been disqualified from this protection as a result of the characterization of your discharge (dishonorable discharge or under other than honorable conditions).

Provided that you are eligible to be reemployed, you should, in most cases, receive the same job and benefits that you would have achieved had you not been called to serve your country. This is often called the escalator

principal, you should step back on the escalator at the same point that you would have been on had you never stepped off the escalator. If your peers who never left received a raise, you should be entitled to that raise when you return to your employer.

If you experience a problem where you believe that your rights have been violated, you can contact the US Department of Labor, Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS) at 1-800-4-USA-DOL or www.dol.gov/vets or Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve at 1-800-336-4590 or www.esgr.org.

This article contains general information on the Act and is not specific legal guidance for any problem that you may encounter. The specific facts of any alleged incident would need to be investigated to determine if you were



discriminated against on the basis of your military service and the outcome of each particular situation will vary.

There is help out there if you feel that your rights have been violated and do not fail to seek out the assistance you deserve, if needed.

The MiTT Experience

PA NCOs Take the Lead in Training Iraqi Army NCOs

**By Lt. Col. Bill Bohman
34th Bde MiTT Chief**

The 56th is partnered with several brigades of the Iraqi Army to include their 34th Armored Brigade here at Camp Taji. Each of these Iraqi brigades has an embedded team of U.S. advisors called a MiTT. The MiTTs are generally nine to twelve Soldiers strong led by a Major or Lieutenant Colonel. Mission dependant, the 56th augments these teams with a security detachment, commonly called a PSD, which enables them to operate off the FOB with their Iraqi counterparts. This is where our story begins.

The PSD assigned to the 34th Bde MiTT is led by Staff Sgt. Mike Mason, Export, Pa., from 1-112th Infantry. His team lives and works on the Iraqi side of Camp Taji in the 34th Brigade Headquarters. They interact with the Iraqi Officers, NCOs, and Soldiers each and every day. Although their mission is narrowly defined as protecting the MiTT, Mason and his team have taken the catch phrase of "By, With, and Through the Iraqi Army" to heart. They took the initiative to become advisors to the Iraqi Brigade Commander's PSD and to the 34th Brigade's NCOs as a whole.

Part of the MiTT's effort to help build

the Iraqi Army is advising them how they can professionalize their NCO corps. Mason and his team (Sgt. Adams, Sgt. Davenport, Sgt. Cook, Spc. Henderson, Spc. Rastelli, and Pfc. Bakhish) recently trained a group of 34th Bde NCOs on range operations. The three day training event included preliminary marksmanship instruction and two days of M16 rifle qualification live fire on a local range. The days were long and hot but packed with great training culminating on the third day with the Iraqi NCOs running a live fire qualification range for their Soldiers.

In the past, this kind of training was conducted by Iraqi Officers without the assistance of their NCOs. The Iraqi Officers of the 34th Brigade took great interest in the training, not believing their NCOs could handle such responsibility. By the end of the 3rd day, the Independence NCOs proved them wrong and converted them into true believers in the capabilities of their NCOs. When it comes to the new Iraqi Army, the opportunities to work "By, With, and Through" abound for aggressive Soldiers willing to take the initiative to help them succeed. They are a capable Army, willing to learn and improving their performance constantly.



Submitted photo
Staff Sgt. Michael Mason of Greensburg, Pa., deployed with Company B., 1-112th, checks an Iraqi Soldier's M16 qualification range target.

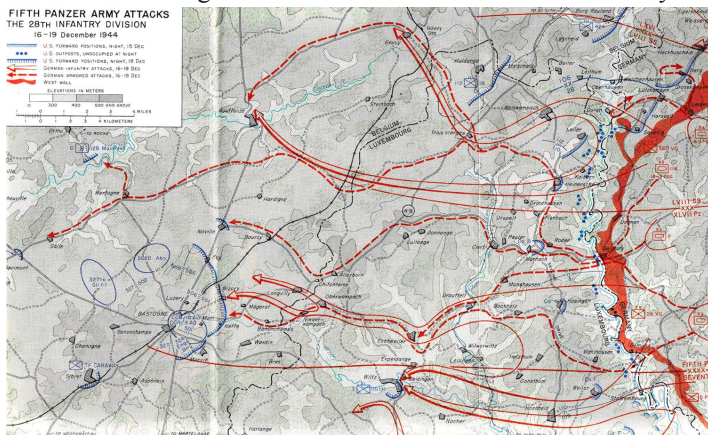
Additional columns by 56th SBCT Soldiers are available online:
www.dvidshub.net/units/56SBCT-28ID

Did you know?

**On 16 December 1944 110th Infantry Regiment was involved
in a historic defense along the Our River**

On 16 Dec 1944 the 110th was attacked by 3 Divisions from the 47th Armored Corps. The three divisions were the 2nd Panzer Division, Panzer Lehr Division and the 26th Infantry Division. The veteran 2nd Panzer division had a 120 tanks and assault Guns, and the Panzer Lehr had 104 tanks and assault guns for the attack. The 110th Infantry Regiment was defending on a 10 mile

continuous line across the 9- to 10-mile regimental front was beyond the strength of the 1st and 3d Battalions. As a substitute, a system of village strongpoints—each manned in about rifle company strength—was set up on the ridge line separating the Our and Clerf Rivers, which here is traced by the excellent north-south highway connecting St. Vith and Diekirch. This highway (known to the Americans as the Skyline



Fifth Panzer Army Attacks the 28th Infantry Division

front behind the Our River with two battalions on line; with the remaining battalion 2-110IN the division reserve at Donnange.

COL Fuller the Commander of the 110th Infantry Regiment had spent the month prior to the German attack rebuilding the regiment after the high losses from the Hurtgen battle. "Fuller had only two battalions at his disposal because the 2d Battalion, located at Donnange, constituted the division reserve. Anything even remotely resembling a

Drive) and the garrison line paralleled the Our at a distance of one and a half to two and a half miles. Each battalion was responsible for five outposts along the west bank of the Our, but these vantage points were occupied only during daylight hours and then in squad strength.” These company size strongpoints in the villages on Skyline Drive would delay the Germans and throw off their time table and buy time for the 101st Airborne Division to get the Bastogne.



The Our River

The aggressive German Army Commander used the 26th Infantry division to infiltrate assault companies the night before the attack. "The battle plans and tactics of the Fifth Panzer Army, more than those of any other German army that took part in the Ardennes counteroffensive, bore the very strong personal imprint of its commander, General Manteuffel. As a junior officer in the prewar panzer troops, Manteuffel had made a mark as an armored specialist. His record in North Africa and Russia, where he achieved a reputation for energetic leadership and personal bravery, brought him to Hitler's attention and promotion directly from a division to an army command. Manteuffel also held strongly for infiltration tactics by small detachments, such as were conventionally employed by both opponents on the Eastern Front."

"The units of the 110th Infantry were disposed as follows to face three full German divisions. On the left of the regimental zone, the 1st Battalion (Lt. Col. Donald Paul) held the intersection of the Skyline Drive and the Dsburg-Bastogne main highway at Marnach, employing Company B and a platoon from the 630th Tank Destroyer Battalion. To the southwest, Company C and the regimental cannon company were deployed in and around Munshausen, guarding the side road which cut cross-country from Marnach to Drauffelt. Company A, at Heinerscheid, was on the extreme left flank of the 110th and so lay outside the path of the XLVII Panzer Corps attack, as did Company D at Grindhausen. The 3d Battalion (Maj. Harold F. Milton) formed the regimental right, with its companies on both sides of the ridge line. Company K, reinforced by Company B, 103d Engineer Combat Battalion, garrisoned Hosingen, a village on the Skyline Drive overlooking two of the four roads which wound from the Our up over the ridge. To the south Com-

pany I held Weiler-les-Putscheid, a hamlet in a knot of trails and byroads on the forward slopes of the ridge line. The 110th Antitank Company was in Hoscheid just to the west. Both of these positions lay adjacent to the prospective boundary between the XLVII and LXXXV Corps. West of the ridge, Company L in Holzthum and the headquarters company and Company M in Consthum barred a direct approach to the Clerf crossing site at Wilwerwiltz.”

The 110th Infantry was attacked across the entire front by the assault companies of the 17,000 strong 26th Infantry Division at 0530. "Between Holzthum and Buchholz, Battery C of the 109th Field Artillery was hit hard but held its positions, firing the 105-mm. howitzers with one- and two-second fuzes. The battery commander and fifteen gunners were casualties of the close-range fight before help arrived." All across the front the 110th repulsed the initial attacks and the 28th Division counter attacked with A and B company of 707th Tank Battalion. By the early winter evening ammunition was running low and most companies were surrounded in their strong points.

By the end of the second day most strong points were overwhelmed. "On the Wahlhausen road the 3d Battalion observation post, defended by the Company I platoon, called for ammunition and was told that tanks were being sent with resupply. At Weiler the rest of the company and the antitank platoon, their supply of ammunition dwindling, also awaited the tanks. For some reason the tank platoon sent from the 707th had not reached the Company I area when night fell. About 1830 troops at the battalion observation post reported that enemy vehicles were attacking with multiple 20-mm. guns and asked for American artillery fire on their own positions. This was the end. Only one man escaped."

(Continued on Page 13)

Chaplain's reflection

The Spirit of Independence

On July 4th our nation will celebrate Independence Day and we will remember the commitment that our Founding Fathers accepted in establishing a nation in which all people would be considered equal and share in the God given rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Certainly throughout the majority of its history our country and its people have tried to safeguard these rights and insure that all would benefit from them, however we must also remember that these do not exist without hard work, sense of duty and at times sacrifice.

For those of us serving in the military this day has particular meaning. As we spend the day in the country of Iraq, which in a way is working out its own identity in the face of freedom, we cannot help but reflect on the

sacrifices made by so many in the past. From the Revolutionary War to the present Global War on Terrorism men and women have offered to serve amidst hardship and separation, trials and tribulations, risk of injury and even death to not only keep our nation secure, but to also help other lands and peoples achieve peace, justice and freedom.

Sometimes it is hard for us to imagine the impact that we have on the lives of others and even on a people as a whole. A combat patrol is done, a mission or operation is conducted a meeting or engagement is held and we don't see the second, third or fourth order of effects that occur. The security that we provide for a village or neighborhood will enable people to live that day with purpose, dignity and a quality of life that will not only benefit them in

the present but also lay down a foundation for the future.

We celebrate our independence, but we must keep in mind that we are very much dependent on others. In the military it might be easier for us to see this as relating to our mission. If we don't get the necessary supplies, if we don't receive the support then the mission will not succeed. If we don't look out for our "buddy" then we are letting him and the unit down. Only by working together will we achieve success.

Finally it is good for us to remember that although our Founding Fathers desired to be independent of foreign powers they realized that they would never, nor should they desire, to be independent of their relationship with their God and creator. "In God We Trust," and if we keep our national motto in our



minds and hearts then we should never fear in taking for granted the spirit of independence and the freedom that we live, the happiness that we pursue and the security and justice that we provide as members of the armed forces of the United States.

CH (COL) Bert Kozen
"Independence Spirit"

Safety notes ...

Pack up and go home, safely

It is that time in the deployment when units start packing up. It is also that time in the deployment when, traditionally, units start seeing more accidents. Many accidents are caused by soldiers losing focus and taking



short cuts or rushing to get a task done. Tasks as simple as loading a CONEX container can lead to serious injury if basic safety techniques are ignored for the sake of "get er' done."

Lifting and moving heavy objects can cause serious shoulder and back injuries. Before lifting an object check to see how heavy it is and determine if it is going

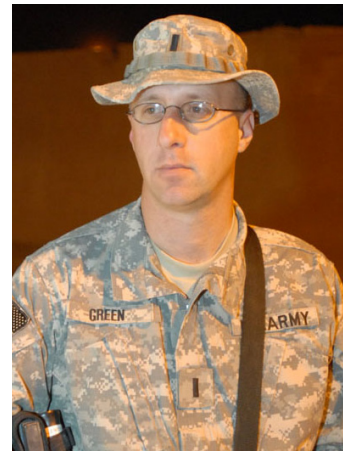
to be awkward for one person to carry. If the load is too difficult, get some help or use a dolly or hand cart. Once you are ready to pick up the load make sure you use good lifting technique. Use the power zone when lifting and carrying objects. This is the area between your mid chest and mid thigh and very similar to the strike zone in baseball. Keep loads close to your body in this zone for safer lifts.

When lifting objects, get as close to the object as you can so your arms are at your sides. The farther the load is away from your body the more your back and shoulder muscles have to strain to move the load. Get a firm grip, keep your back straight, and use your legs to straighten up. Don't lift while twisted at the trunk or bent over a load. This puts a lot of strain on your lower back mus-

cles and leads to back injuries.

Improper handling can cause crushed fingers and other injuries when loads shift or fall. Make sure you have a good hand-hold on loads to prevent dropping them and causing injury from the impact. Wear gloves to protect your hands but remember even the best gloves won't protect your hands if they are between two heavy objects when they are pushed together.

Carrying a large load makes it harder to see where you are walking and easier to lose your balance if you trip over something. Check your route before picking up the load and make sure anything that can make you slip, trip or fall is removed. The other thing to watch out for when carrying a load is vehicles such as forklifts that may be moving loads as well.



Vehicles operating around a shipping yard or helping to load heavy pallets can be deadly if pedestrians are not kept clear of the vehicle work area. Every year Soldiers are seriously injured by forklifts when they are hit by a backing vehicle or crushed from a falling pallet. Use ground guides to direct the forklift operator and keep pedestrians out of the forklift's path. And never put body parts between the load and some hard immovable object like a CONEX wall or the ground.

As you pack up to head home remember it is important that everyone goes home healthy and in one piece. So to avoid accidents; Stay Focused and Stay Safe.

By 1st Lt. Michael Green
56th SBCT Safety Officer

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Commander's Corner

PA's eyes are on the Stryker Brigade

People back home have taken a big interest in what you all are doing in Iraq. Many of our hometown media have visited the brigade public affairs Web page. Newspapers, radio and TV stations have downloaded photos, stories and video of your operations. The web page has had more than 4,000 downloads from national and international media and communities across Pennsylvania.

The brigade has done more than 10 interviews by satellite reaching hundreds of thousands of people in Pennsylvania. WGAL in Lancaster did a week long special on the Soldiers of the brigade. After the interviews were completed, TV reporter Barbra Barr said, "They are incredible people."

Barbra is right, you are incredible people. That's why there is

so much interest back home in everything you do. That's why this brigade has been visited by news media representatives from; PBS, Harrisburg's Patriot News, National Public Radio, Reuters, Stars & Stripes and others with more than 60 days of embedded media with the brigade.

What you do is important and the people back home want to know about your mission and what you do. You are all making history every day. The days may blur together and it may seem like Groundhog Day to you. Being the Soldier on the ground doing the job day in and day out may not seem dramatic; but it is. You are at the tip of the spear, doing what others will not do, defending America. You are making a big difference not only in Iraq, but for the Army as a whole. You are part of the proud history of

the brigade and the 28th Infantry Division.

I encourage you all to talk about your mission and be proud of the part you play. There will continue to be more and more interest in what the brigade has accomplished here as our time draws to a close. You all represent the best and brightest of our nation. You have become part of the next "Greatest Generation." You have all earned the right and the people back home are proud of what you are doing.

As operations for us draw to a close you still need to remain vigilant. There is still an enemy out there. Our focus needs to be on the mission every day, every minute. Lives count it. Remain focused, maintain an offensive mindset, and do what you do best, be a Soldier. The time and place will come to focus on go-



ing home and your leaders will let you know when that is, until that time stay at the tip of the spear and lead the way as the Infantry always has.

"Strength Through Honor"

Marc Ferraro
Colonel, Infantry
Commanding
"Independence 6"

Soldier to Soldier ...

Play by the rules, play to win, fight hard

I would like to offer the following words to the Soldiers of the 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team. I vhave found them beneficial and they have helped guide me in both coaching and in more than 30 years in the Army. I offer them to you in the hopes that they will help guide you in life as well as in service:

What It Takes To Be Number One VINCE LOMBARDI

Winning is not a sometime thing; it's an all the time thing. You don't win once in a while; you don't do things right once in a while; you do them right all the time. Winning is a habit. Unfortunately, so is losing.

There is no room for second place. There is only one place in my game, and that's first place. I have finished second twice in my time at Green Bay, and I don't ever want to finish second again. There is a second place bowl game, but it is a game for losers played by losers. It is and always has been an American zeal to be first in anything we do, and to win, and to win, and to win.

Every time a football player goes to ply his trade he's got to play from the ground up - from the soles of his feet right up to his head. Every inch of him has to play. Some guys play with their heads. That's OK. You've got to be smart to be number one in any business. But more importantly, you've got to play with your heart, with every fiber of your body. If you're lucky enough to find a gu with a lot of head and a lot of heart, he's never going to come off the field second.

Running a football team is no different than running any other kind of organization - an army, a political party or a business. The principles are the same. The object is to win - to beat the other guy. Maybe that sounds hard or cruel. I don't think it is.

It is a reality of life that men are competitive and the most competitive games draw the most competitive men. That's why they are there - to compete. To know the rules and objectives when they get in the game. The object is to win fairly, squarely, by the rules - but to win.

And in truth, I've never known



a man worth his salt who in the long run, deep down in his heart, didn't appreciate the grind, the discipline. There is something in good men that really yearns for discipline and the harsh reality of head to head combat.

I didn't say these things because I believe in the "brute" nature of man or that men must be brutalized to be combative. I believe in God, and I believe in human decency. But I firmly believe that any man's finest hour - his greatest fulfillment to all he holds dear - is that moment when he has to work his heart out in a good cause and he's exhausted on the field of battle - victorious.

John E. Jones
Command Sergeant Major
56th SBCT

Our River

(Con't from Page 11)

To the north the Germans had bridged the Our River and were pouring their heavy armor across the river. "In the 1st Battalion sector, late in the afternoon, two tank platoons arrived in Munshausen to support Company C, already on its way north to relieve Company B in Marnach. Company C had been driven off the road, and the tanks, missing the infantry entirely, rolled into Marnach. One tank platoon remained there to bolster the defense, while the other turned back to the south, picked up Company C, and, on orders, returned with the infantry to Munshausen. About dusk the Marnach garrison radioed that half-tracks could be heard moving toward the village. This was the last word from Marnach."

On the back cover

Spc. Shawna Teer (at left) of Dallas, Pa., and Spc. Kyle Adamski of Duryea, Pa., both with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, perform maintenance to a radio antenna June 4 at Camp Taji.

Teamwork makes the dream work!

