

# Lightning Strikes

Volume 1, Issue 1  
January 2009

## LIGHTNING STRIKES TWICE

Families in Samarra receive gifts

Arctic Wolves heat up Diyala

3d ACR reflects on  
redeployment







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

4 December 2008

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

Today, the Government of Iraq (GoI) approved an historic agreement establishing the foundation for a long-term, comprehensive, strategic partnership between the United States and Iraq. This important agreement, which will take effect on January 1, 2009, demonstrates the United States' continued commitment to Iraq, its people, and stability throughout the region. It also reflects a maturing relationship between two sovereign nations and a greater degree of cooperation between two partners.

Over the course of this campaign, you have shown enormous courage, unwavering determination, and boundless ingenuity, and together with our Iraqi partners, we have achieved significant progress. The new agreement is a result of our shared progress, and at the invitation of the GoI, we will continue to build upon these hard-earned gains. Not long ago, Iraq was a society burdened by a seemingly endless cycle of violence and destruction. Today, it is buoyed by a tremendous sense of hope in a bright and prosperous future. With the approval of the Security Agreement – along with the broader Strategic Framework Agreement – we will help our Iraqi partners to shape that future, not only in the security realm, but also in the areas of education, culture, economics, technology, health, and the rule of law.

As we prepare for operations under the new agreement, we do so with an understanding that our mission, objectives, and commitment to the Iraqi people remain unchanged. The new environment, though, will require a subtle shift in how we plan, coordinate, and execute missions throughout Iraq. For example, US Forces will continue to be authorized to engage in combat operations; however, under the terms of the new agreement, we will coordinate and execute those operations with the approval of the GoI, and we will conduct all operations by, with, and through the Iraqi Security Forces. Similarly, we will continue to focus on combating al-Qaeda and other extremist groups, but we must do so with respect for the Iraqi Constitution and laws, and we must continue to treat all Iraqi citizens with the utmost dignity and honor. New Rules of Engagement (ROE) will be issued, but there will not be any reduction in our fundamental ability to protect ourselves and the force. As we work with the GoI to determine specific implementation procedures in other areas, we will publish refined Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures (TTPs) for operationalizing the provisions of the agreement.

Despite some adjustments to the way we conduct operations, the agreement simply reinforces transitions that are already underway, and I want to emphasize that our overarching principles remain the same. While we must remain adaptive and steadily reduce our visibility, we must also maintain our effectiveness in accomplishing our objectives. We will continue to build Iraqi capacity to exercise full sovereignty and achieve sustainable stability, and we will continue to help Iraq progress from a fragile state to one that is secure, stable, and committed to good governance and regional stability. We will implement the agreement through phased, deliberate steps that preserve security gains, and we will complete our mission with honor and success.

As we move into 2009, I am confident that you will continue to exhibit the gallantry, adaptability, and initiative that have been your hallmark throughout this campaign. You have made – and continue to make – your countrymen proud, and it remains the greatest of privileges to soldier with you in this historic time as we continue to build a secure, stable, and prosperous Iraq.

With pride and determination,

Raymond T. Odierno  
General, US Army  
Commanding



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# Our "Warrior Trust" and the year ahead



To all the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines Coast Guardsmen and civilians that comprise Task Force Lightning, it is truly an incredible privilege to be a part of this organization and witness the tremendous talent and dedication that goes into each mission, every day. I'll never be able to fully describe the appreciation I have for what you do, not only for this nation and the people of Iraq, but to protect our Nation, so that terrorism never again sees its borders or shores. Welcome to our team.

Before this headquarters left Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, I had an opportunity to gather many of the leaders together, and develop what we described in Hawaiian as, "Na Koa Pono" or the "Warrior Trust." It defines a common vision for how we conduct ourselves as members of this Task Force and is based on five core standards: integrity, commitment, empowerment, adaptability, and trust itself.

Integrity is our armor. We are honest and transparent in word and deed. We are true to ourselves and others. We tell the truth regardless of consequences or position, and we maintain our spiritual center.

Commitment is a unity of effort. We are totally committed to our team, the accomplishment of our mission, the values of our organization and the development of a united and strong Iraq.

Leaders, at all levels, are empowered to make decisions. We make decisions in accordance with the Commander's Intent, and provide authority commensurate with responsibility. Through empowerment, we underwrite risk in order to encourage innovation and initiative.

We are an adaptive team. We rapidly anticipate

changing conditions and impending challenges. We develop innovative solutions, exploit opportunities, and execute with agility, collaboration, and teamwork.

Finally, our trust is a matter of integrity and personal relationships. Trust is the foundation of all of our relationships. We earn each other's trust through words and deeds. We respect the competency of others and they respect ours.

These standards, along with the Army values, define our actions and our way ahead.

We are also continuing to build and define our team. As the 3rd Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division begin its transition with the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment – Brave Rifles, we recognize Col. Michael Bills, Cmd. Sgt. Maj. William Burns and the Cavalry Troopers, who have performed heroically over the past 15 months in Mosul. Partnered with the Iraqi Security Forces, they have reduced the level of violence to its lowest level in the past two years. The Brave Rifles' accomplishments are too numerous to mention here, but we wish them safe travels as they return to Fort Hood, Texas, to family and friends, and with the knowledge of a job well done.

As the rest of the team continues the mission, we find ourselves in the northern provinces of Iraq, a familiar territory that many of us have been in before. However, even though we may be in familiar surroundings, a lot has changed, and continues to change; making the environment largely unrecognizable, but the enemy force remains determined and dangerous.

We are now at a crossroads in the history of Iraq, witnesses to great happenings that are going to allow this country to prosper in ways that were unthinkable only a few short years ago. Our steadfast resolve is critical in achieving long lasting stability here in Iraq.

As we enter into a new year, we turn another page of the long struggle that we are all a part of, and that is a page that finds the Iraqis firmly in the lead with Task Force Lightning, and other units in theater, existing in a supporting, yet highly visible role.

The implementation of the Security Agreement will highlight the sovereignty and democracy that Iraq has sought so hard to achieve. This agreement, placing the Iraqis in the lead, does not hinder our mission. The mission itself had not changed, merely the way we accomplish it.

Regardless of what happens over the next several months, it is important to remember our resolve has not changed. Our mission remains unchanged, and together, with our Iraqi partners, we will enjoy success.

I look forward to serving with each and every one of you in the months to come, and I eagerly anticipate the many great accomplishments that we will achieve together as we remain united and strong.

Tropic Lightning!

Maj. Gen. Robert R. Caslen Jr.  
 Commanding General  
 Task Force Lightning  
 Multi-National Division - North

# Conditions change, standards do not



**F**irst, allow me to welcome everyone into the Multi-National Division - North and Task Force Lightning. It's amazing how the Division is comprised to accomplish the mission at hand with all Services represented: Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines and Coast Guardsmen, along with our National Guard and Reserve.

There are three key focus areas I have for everyone in the Task Force: standards and discipline, training, and physical fitness.

We as a fighting force have the ability to bring special talents to the fight with capabilities such as Strykers, Light Fighters, Engineers, Armor and our Aviation brothers.

This is done through everyone's involvement and understanding of the ever changing Operational Environment. However, as the Operational Environment changes, it is important to understand that our standards and discipline do not.

Many have often heard me state that conditions change, which they do, but standards do not. This mindset is imperative as we transition to a more prevalent partnership with the Iraqi Security Forces during this deployment. Our Soldiers must continue to hold the high standards that we have instilled in them during our deployment preparation.

Discipline has often been described as, "doing the right thing when no one is around." As I travel throughout the TF Lightning Area of Responsibility, it is clear that leaders at all levels are enforcing the standards and discipline in each and every unit. These two factors will play a big role in developing our partnership with the ISF as they learn by watching us and how we adhere to a standards and discipline-based approach.

I am confident that no matter where the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsmen of TF Lightning are sent, they will uphold the standards and discipline to accomplish any mission set before them.

Set the Standard; Enforce Discipline!

Training is an essential part of our daily task as we develop and introduce new Tactics, Techniques and Procedures, best practices and continue to enforce Standard Operational Procedures within TF Lightning. We must ensure that cross leveling of communications, information and training is effective to assist all units within TF Lightning. This will allow units to be well verse in new TTP's, best practices and developed SOPs so that any unit can fight with any other one throughout our TF Lightning AOR.

Train the basics so that every Soldier is capable of executing fundamental tasks such as vehicle rollover drills, down driver drills, and medical evacuation. Escalation of Force procedures are also essential to every organization within

TF Lightning. Rely on your previous training and experience and expose your subordinates to that knowledge.

Do not limit this to just our Soldiers. Every day our ISF counterparts take on more of the fight and they will benefit from your experience as well.

Train to Lead!

Physical fitness is the cornerstone of combat readiness; this is an individual responsibility that needs to be conducted in different forms daily. We may never know or predict when one of us, at any given time, will be required to conduct a medical extraction from a vehicle or aircraft that will require the physical exertion to assist a fellow member of TF Lightning, an ISF member, or even ourselves. Be prepared to save a life. Stay fit to fight!

Tropic Lightning!

Command Sgt. Maj. Frank Leota  
Command Sergeant Major  
Task Force Lightning  
Multi-National Division - North

Command Sgt. Maj. Update





Spc. Carlos Rivera, a cavalry scout in 3rd Platoon, Killer Troop, 3rd Squadron, 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment from Fort Hood, Texas, pulls security while patrolling through a busy market in the Al Dawasa market in Mosul, Iraq, Feb. 9.



# 3d ACR reflects on deployment

*After 15 months and more than 27,000 combat patrols, the commander for the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment knows what it means to take the fight to the enemy*

By Col. Michael Bills  
3d ACR Commander

As the 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment prepares to redeploy back to Fort Hood, Texas, the Troopers can look back at a successful and historic combat tour in Mosul and Ninewa Province.

The regiment executed a flawless deployment to Iraq, Operation Iraqi Freedom, OIF, 07-09.

Upon our arrival in Kuwait we received a FRAGO directing the regiment to send Sabre Squadron (-) to Diyala Province with the headquarters and headquarters troop, two cavalry troops, and a howitzer battery. Longknife Squadron was sent to Baghdad to support 4th Infantry Division, while King Battery, 1st Squadron, 3d ACR, was sent to Forward Operating Base Warhorse to support 4th Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division. Sabre Squadron was given the largest area in Iraq for a combat unit its size. Its mission was to clear and hold one of the most volatile areas in the country, which included the Iranian border. The squadron conducted 14,600 patrols and seven air assaults in Diyala Province. Sabre rejoined the regi-

ment in October and immediately started combat operations in south and to the west of the city of Mosul. The squadron had an immediate impact on insurgent captures and cache finds that were used to influence the fight in Mosul.

Longknife Squadron was responsible for the CAP over Baghdad and later, while supporting 10th Mountain Division, the Iranian border to Al Kut and Tallil. They did this while maintaining an operational readiness maintenance rate that was the envy of other aviation units in theater. The operations completed, the insurgents

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## In Ninewa Province we faced a city under siege

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killed or captured, and the air and ground integration were critical to the success in lessening the violence both inside and on the outer bands of Baghdad. Longknife flew the highest monthly AH hours of any AH unit in Iraq - 3,040 with an operational readiness rate of 85 percent.

King Battery fired more rounds in sup-

port of combat operations than any field artillery unit in the history of OIF, just short of 8,000 rounds.

In Ninewa Province we faced a city under siege. Mosul had insurgents embedded in neighborhoods, along with commuter terrorists who traveled from across the province to plan and fight in the city. Ninewa Province was split between three different units; Thunder Squadron from west Mosul to the Syrian border, Eagle Battalion had east Mosul, and Tiger Squadron was responsible for the area south of Mosul along the Tigris River Valley, TRV, to the Zaab Triangle. All units took it to the enemy by conducting 934 company-level operations, more than 27,626 combat patrols, clearing more than 104,379 kilometers of roads, finding and reducing 1,058 IEDs, 37 VBIEDs, discovering 350 cache sites, building or repairing 39 combat out posts, emplacing more than 70 check points to restrict the movement of insurgents in the cities, and building a 35 mile berm around the city of Mosul forcing the enemy to use the 11 major roads that enter and exit Mosul. We destroyed terrorist cell networks by capturing 3,488 insurgents, killed more than

147 hardcore insurgents and reduced the foreign fighter flow into Mosul from the Tigris River Valley and the Syrian border. We reduced the attacks in Ninewa Province from 35-40 a day from December to April to 18-20 a day from May to September, and to the current state of single digit attacks from October to December. This was an incredible accomplishment and performance by our Troopers, all combat multipliers, and true integration as one team.

We could not have accomplished this without Muleskinner Squadron and the tremendous support they provided over a battle space the size of Maryland. They conducted well over 675 Combat Logistics Patrols with more than 500,000 miles traveled that allowed the momentum and fight to continue against a resilient insurgency.

The statistics demonstrate the readiness and tremendous effort of our regimental supporters: 1,863,640 gallons of JP8 and 213,409 gallons of MOGAS delivered, 4,892 maintenance job orders completed, and 139,453 Parts Received/Delivered to date. The combat fleet operational readiness rate of 97 percent was maintained for more than 14 months, with quick returns of non-mission capable vehicles to the warfighter, scout, tanker, or infantryman. This was a herculean effort by the great Troopers of Muleskinner Squadron as well as all of the squadron-level support personnel.



Pfc. Jared Bottorff and Sgt. Robert Johnson, both assigned to Lightning Troop, 3rd Squadron, 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment, track a sniper as he moves from rooftop to rooftop in western Mosul, Iraq April 10.

As a regiment, we recruited 35,000 Iraqi Security Forces across Ninewa Province this past year. This bolstered the security forces to more than 70,000 Iraqi Army, Police, and Border Patrol to protect the Iraqi people in the province. Together, we partnered with the ISF, standing shoulder to shoulder through many combined operations throughout the province. More than 85 percent of these operations were combined CF and Iraqi. This built confidence in their ability to lead from the front

as well as the confidence of the people of Ninewa Province in their abilities to protect them.

As a regiment, we also played an integral part in assisting the local Iraqi Government with rebuilding its infrastructure and re-establishing its essential services. We have done this through countless troop level, low cost, big impact projects throughout the province. These were bolstered by 117 Iraqi Commanders Emergency Response and Commanders Emergency Response Funds projects totaling more than \$27.34 million. The Provincial Reconstruction Teams and Civil Affairs teams completed or are still working 854 projects totaling \$99,787, improving the livelihood of the Iraqi people throughout Ninewa Province.

Tiger Squadron started the first literacy program that became the standard for all of Iraq. Although there is much more work to be done with reconstruction, governance and employment, the regiment has made a tremendous impact on security and set the conditions for the way ahead.

All these successes have not come without a price, the ultimate sacrifice of 39 Soldiers and 197 Soldiers wounded in action to date. They believed in what they were doing and selflessly offered up everything they had to in order to accomplish the mission and protect their fellow Troopers. Their sacrifices have been woven into the fabric of this great regiment and nation. They will never be forgotten.



Sgt. Kyle Whalen with Lightning Troop, 3rd Squadron, 3d ACR, talks to an Iraqi child during a patrol in Mosul. Whalen is from Stevens Point, Wis.



# STAY SAFE WHILE DEPLOYED

## ELECTRICAL FIRES

Recently the 25th ID Safety Office received a statistical roll-up from TF SAFE. The data clearly showed that electrical fires were the number one accident and that they are most likely to occur in CHUs, hard-stands, and conex units. These units are commonly used for billeting and offices. The incident most likely to happen was from light fixtures and assembly failure. There have been a number of fluorescent and ballast fires in both MND-N and Iraq.

## INDICATORS

Indications of faulty fluorescent lights and ballasts are:

- \* Audible noise from a fluorescent light is likely due to loose or faulty ballast.
- \* Poor contact between the pins and the ends of a tube and the tube holders.
- \* Worn or damaged wiring.
- \* Worn or wrong size starters.

These fixtures should be grounded. However, if the fixture is ungrounded, excessive amperage may cause the ballast to overheat. This may cause premature failure of the ballast and fires. To inspect for this problem do the following:

- 1) Turn off the power.
- 2) Remove the lens cover from the fluorescent light fixture.
- 3) Remove the metal hood that covers the center where the ballast is located.
- 4) Look at the ballast for heat damage. Brown discolored areas indicate overheating, black discolored areas are also an indicator of excessive heat.

If you see any of these situations, contact a certified professional electrician to conduct a more thorough inspection of the ballast, light fixture, wiring and ground. These Ballasts can get very hot. Use caution when removing the metal cover.

## HOW TO REPLACE BALLAST FOR FLUORESCENT LIGHT FIXTURES

- 1) Turn off the power at the light switch and on the circuit breaker.
- 2) Remove the fluorescent bulbs: turn the bulb a quarter turn or so while pulling gently on it.
- 3) Remove the metal reflector that also hides all the wiring and the ballast.
- 4) Follow the wires from the ballast; the number of wires depends on the type of ballast. If you see wire nuts, remove them. If you don't see a wire nut on a particular wire, cut it about 3 or 4 inches from the ballast.
- 5) After all the wires are cut off the wire nuts are undone (so the ballast is not connected to the fixture by any wires), remove the ballast by unscrewing the one or two nut(s) that holds the ballast to the fixture. The ballast can be quite heavy, so make sure you don't drop it on your head.
- 6) Now inspect the loose wires. Usually new replacement ballasts come with the wires pre-stripped. Make sure the ends are not damaged.

For the wires on the fixture:

- \* if they were unwound from the wire nut, it is best to just nip off the parts that were in the wire nut, straighten the line out, and strip off a ½ inch.
- \* if they were cut, then just strip off a half inch.



# Father, son reunite in Iraq during the holiday

Story by Sgt. 1st Class Manuel Torres-Cortes  
Task Force Lightning Public Affairs  
Photos courtesy of Sgt. Maj. Raymond Rodriguez

As three young boys begin to tear apart the Christmas wrapping paper around their gifts, they smile and laugh with unrestrained joy, finally free to discover what “Santa Claus” had put under the tree the night before.

Sgt. Maj. Raymond Rodriguez Jr., Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Special Troops Battalion, 25th Infantry Division Task Force Lightning, carries this holiday memory



Jeremy Rodriguez, at age five, later followed in his father’s footsteps, into the Army and is currently serving in the 25th Inf. Div.

from some 15 years ago with him in Iraq. But he admits he’s missed plenty of other precious holiday moments. Rodriguez, with more than 20 years in the Army, remembers many occasions when “Dad” wasn’t home.

Like many deployed fathers, Rodriguez will again reminisce about moments of family togetherness far away from home. But this holiday season, there’s a special twist.

Spc. Jeremy Rodriguez, is serving in Iraq over the holidays just like his father. The supply specialist with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment, 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, is now in the waning months of a 15-month tour.

The two Soldiers met briefly near Contingency Operating Base Warhorse for Thanksgiving. They traded hugs and had a few laughs before duty called, and Sgt. Maj. Rodriguez had to continue on to another base.

“When I got to see my father out here, it was like I wasn’t

**“When I got to see my father out here, it was like I wasn’t in Iraq anymore. It’s so much easier over here when you get to see a loved one. Fifteen months is a long time without family, and knowing that he is here, serving here too, makes it a lot easier.”**

in Iraq anymore,” said the younger Rodriguez. “It’s so much easier over here when you get to see a loved one. Fifteen months is a long time without family, and knowing that he is here serving here too, makes it a lot easier.”

The father in uniform says he’s very proud his son chose to wear the same.

“As any young kid growing up, he did not understand why the Army had me gone a lot of the time, but it did not stop him from joining the Army Team,” said Sgt. Maj. Rodriguez. “He saw what kind of life he had growing up and wanted to have the same for him and his wife.”

With memories from youth still fresh in his mind, Spc. Rodriguez knows how he arrived at this point. As a boy, he used to walk around the house wearing Army jump boots, gloves and helmet when his father was home.

“When I got older, I would wear his uniform while I went paintballing with my friends,” said Spc. Rodriguez. “I always wanted to be an Airborne Ranger, and still do.”

Like his father, Spc. Rodriguez now recognizes the commitment a person must make in order to become a great Soldier. And he now endures the difficult times away from his loved ones the same way his father did years ago.

“I guess when I was younger, I just took everything for granted,” said Spc. Rodriguez. “Being over here makes you appreciate everything you have.”

With both Soldiers deployed to Iraq, a patient and loving family member awaits their return back home.

“I could not be more proud of my husband or my son, or my entire family for that matter. I am not sure if they know just how proud I am of them,” said Lori Rodriguez. “They both are definitely my heroes. Our other two sons miss them, but fully understand what they do.”

Only a handful of Soldiers can say they spent Christmas with their family in Iraq. Sgt. Major and Spc. Rodriguez will have that distinction when they meet up during the holidays and spend some time together as they did more than 15 years ago in their house near the Christmas tree.

“The reason I joined the Army is because I aspired to do as well as he did, and try to become an adult and be successful,” said Spc. Rodriguez. “However, even though he’s only like four feet tall, I’ve got some pretty big shoes to fill.”



Spc. Jeremy Rodriguez (left) and his father Sgt. Maj. Raymond Rodriguez, met up briefly near COB Warhorse. The two Soldiers are serving in separate locations within Multi-National Corps-Iraq.



# I WANT YOU

TO GET WHAT YOU CAN OUT OF THE ARMY!

Serving as a Soldier is being a part of a legacy of service to the Nation. As we continue to fight the war on terrorism, one fact arises and that is we are in a protracted campaign with an All Volunteer Force.

The Army needs Soldiers who are experienced, knowledgeable and who understand what the "Call to Freedom" is all about. At only one other point in our Nation's history did we fight a more prolonged campaign - Two-hundred thirty years ago during the Revolutionary War.

"You have done all I asked and more than could be reasonably expected, but your country is at stake.... You have worn yourself out with fatigues and hardships, but we know not how to spare you. If you consent to stay one more month you will render that service to the cause of liberty and to your country which probably never can do under any other circumstances, we are facing... the crisis which is to decide our destiny." - General George Washington

## RE-ENLIST, STAY ARMY!

Contact your Unit Career Counselor for more information on staying Army.

**Q: "I've just deployed what can I reenlist for in the first 90 days?"**

A: (1) Regular Army in accordance with the needs of the Army; (2) Stabilization up to 12 months, (3) Very limited assignments, and (4) \$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$

**Q: "I'm at 91 days in country; NOW what can I reenlist for?"**

A: (1) Regular Army in accordance with the needs of the Army, (2) Stabilization up to 12 months, (3) Retraining for new MOS (if within 12 months of DEROS, and qualified for new MOS) (4) Any available assignment (if within 12 months of DEROS), and (5) \$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$

If you are not within 12 months of DEROS then the "first 90 days" rules apply.

**ANNOUNCEMENT:** Sgt. 1st Class Steven Schack of 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Inf. Div. has been declared the winner of the FY2008 MNC-I Career Counselor of the Year Board and will represent MND-N and MNC-I this year in Washington D.C.

# Message of a unified Mosul

By Pfc. Adam Blazak  
11th Public Affairs Det.

U.S. Soldiers from the 552nd Military Police Company teamed up with Iraq's Emergency Response Battalion 2 to help spread the message of unity in Mosul, Iraq.

Armed with 50 posters stating "Trust the Iraqi security forces for a better Iraq" and 40 large "Unity - One Iraq" stickers, the two armies convoyed throughout the eastside of the city, stopping at various fortified checkpoints to hang the signs.

"This was the first time going out and putting up posters," said Sioux Falls, S.D. native Sgt. 1st Class Fineson Trueblood, 2nd platoon squad leader, 552nd MP Company adding the importance "to have a positive respect for the ISF."

Previously, the company distributed leaflets in the area but wanted to reach a broader base of people by placing the extra large signs at bustling checkpoints. This time around, the large stickers and posters should remain in place due to the ERB 2 properly securing the posters at each checkpoint, said San Antonio native, 1st Lt. Daniel Shalchi, platoon leader, 552nd MP Company.

"The ISF is here," said Trueblood. "They are in charge, and the people of Mosul can trust them."

**"They are in charge, and the people of Mosul can trust them."**

Not only did the mission benefit the people of Mosul, it also helped bring a stronger bond between the ERB 2 and the Iraqi police who guard each checkpoint.

The security forces are changing the history and security of Iraq, said Shalchi, adding that the posters are a good way of continuing to provide the people of Mosul with a positive message about the ISF.

Having the ERB 2 place the posters and stickers, which came from Baghdad, throughout Mosul demonstrates the improved security situation within their area of operation. The significant activity reports throughout Mosul have dropped since the beginning of the year, said Schalchi.

Shalchi elaborated on the reports saying that at the start of his deployment last fall, it wouldn't be unusual to receive more than 30 SIGACTS daily, and currently they average less than 15 on any given day. With hard work and cooperative effort, the days of continual attack by the insurgency seems to have faded away.



Giving each other a helping hand, two members of Iraq's Emergency Response Battalion 2 secure a poster stating "Trust the Iraqi security forces for a better Iraq" alongside a Hesco barrier at a checkpoint during a joint mission with the U.S. Army's 552nd Military Police Company, Oct 30, 2008.



# Falcons take flight in Northern Iraq

Story and Photos by  
Sgt. Stephanie Van Geete  
Task Force Falcon PAO

The 10th Combat Aviation Brigade's Task Force Falcon took command of the skies of Multi National Division – North November 26, in support of the 25th Infantry Division, Task Force Lightning, and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Col. Erik Peterson, Task Force Falcon commander, took authority for the air mission here from Col. Jesse Farrington, whose 1st Combat Aviation Brigade, 1st Infantry Division returns to Fort Riley, Kan, after a 15-month tour. With members of each unit standing witness outside the headquarters building, Peterson and Command Sgt. Maj. Kenneth Patton, Task Force Falcon senior enlisted advisor, completed the transfer of authority by unfurling the Brigade colors.

In his farewell speech, Farrington said he was confident to be leaving control of the MND-N area of operations to Peterson.

“Erik – your Soldiers are awesome, but I expect that from the Climb to Glory Division,” Farrington said. “I am confident that you will meet every challenge, and be part of the history that finishes the job here.

“I’d be lying if I told you I wish I was staying, though!” he joked.

Peterson thanked Farrington and the troops of the 1st CAB for helping make the transition a smooth one.

“I’m humbled by the unwavering professionalism you and Soldiers have demonstrated during not only the past few weeks of (Relief In Place), but also during the preceding months as we looked over your shoulders virtually, learning about our mission and MND-N.

“You and your team selflessly shared every conceivable lesson, tip and bit of advice that may give us an edge. We will build upon your investment and achievements.”

Now, Peterson said, he and his troops are ready for the task ahead of them.

“I’m honored to be leading the 10th Combat Aviation Brigade and Task Force Falcon as we enthusiastically undertake our mission of supporting Brigade Combat Teams and helping to set the conditions for

transition to a stable and self-reliant Iraq,” Peterson told the assembled troops.

The Brigade ceremony culminated a week of Battalion transfers of authority, which began Nov. 21 with the 1-10 Attack Reconnaissance Battalion. Lt. Col. Michael Slocum, 1-10 ARB commander, took authority from Lt. Col. Michael Mahony, 1-1 ARB commander, in an early-morning ceremony in front of their command post.

The 277th Aviation Support Battalion’s Lt. Col. Pogue took command from the 601st ASB’s Lt. Col. Donald Nitti the morning of Nov. 22; later that afternoon, Lt. Col. Brian Serota, 6-6 Cavalry Regiment commander, took responsibility for Kiowa scout missions in and around FOB Warrior, near Kirkuk, from Lt. Col. Gary Cunningham of the 1-6 CAV.

On Nov. 24, the 2-10 Aviation Battalion’s Lt. Col. William Shepherd relieved 3-1 AVN’s Lt. Col. James Bradley of his OIF mission in a ceremony on the flightline here.

The 3-10 General Support Aviation Battalion’s Lt. Col. Joseph Orrechio took authority from 2-1 GSAB’s Lt. Col. Michael Tetu Nov. 25.

This is the 10th CAB’s fourth deployment in support of the War on Terror since the attacks of September 11th, 2001, but its first to Iraq. The unit deployed to Afghanistan three times in support of Operations Enduring Freedom I, IV and VII.

Although the theater of operations has changed, the mission – defeating terrorist threats in order to help the country build



Col. Erik Peterson, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade commander (right) and Command Sgt. Maj. Kenneth Patton, senior enlisted advisor, unfurl the Brigade colors November 25 during a transformation of authority ceremony outside the unit headquarters building here. The 10th CAB’s Task Force Falcon took control of the Multi-National Division-North air mission from the 1st Combat Aviation Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, of Fort Riley, Kan.

its sovereignty and create a safer environment, both here and worldwide – has not. While here, Task Force Falcon will provide logistical and aviation support for coalition forces throughout MND-North, including MEDEVAC and air-traffic service operations, and conduct tactical maneuvers and security and attack operations as needed to secure the population and transition to a stable and self-reliant Iraq.

This deployment also marks the first time the Brigade has deployed as a medium CAB, complete with an Apache battalion, Pathfinder company and Unmanned-Aerial Vehicle company.

“Our Soldiers and leaders are focused, ready and eminently capable,” Peterson said. “In concert with the Multi-National Division – North team, we will prevail.”

*The 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Inf. Div. assumed responsibility for Diyala in late October; since then, they've been steadily changing the face of the province.*

# Arctic Wolves

Firebombs burn the underbrush of a section of palm grove to expose or detonate booby traps, improvised explosive devices and weapons caches hindering local attempts to farm areas formerly held by al-Qaida. U.S. Soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 8th Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Inf. Div. and Iraqi soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 19th Brigade, 5th Division, conducted the joint clearing operation as part of Operation Archangel Pursuit III, Dec. 22. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communications Specialist 2nd Class Walt Pels)



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**Story by**  
**Pfc. Alisha Nye**  
**14th Public Affairs Detachment**

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Where once the 2<sup>nd</sup> Stryker Cavalry Regiment, Dragoons, operated out of the Diyala Province of Iraq, the 1<sup>st</sup> Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division Arctic Wolves have taken over the mission.

Within the first two months of assuming responsibility of Diyala, the Arctic Wolves have made significant strides in building sustainable security, clearing palm groves of hidden explosives and weapons caches, and exceeding the expectations from the day they first uncased their guidon.

During the transfer of authority Oct. 27, Maj. Gen. Mark Hertling, then commander of Multi-National Division - North, spoke about the impact the brigade would have in kinetic operations, but more so the reconstruction and economic improvement that the province needs.

“It’s very important that the Arctic Wolves are coming in – a very good organization,” said Hertling, commander, 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division. “They’re coming at a very historic time in Diyala. There’s still a lot of clearing-out of enemies to do, but, more than that, they’re going to be forced to meet the big challenge of reconstruction, improvement of economic capabilities and the assistance of the government in a time where we’re about to head into elections.”

According to Hertling, he’d seen Col. Burt Thompson,



Col. Burt Thompson (left) and Command Sgt. Maj. Gabriel Cervantes, commander and command sergeant major of the 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, uncased the brigade colors during a transition of authority ceremony Oct. 27. (U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Alisha Nye)

commander of 1<sup>st</sup> SBCT, 25<sup>th</sup> Inf. Div., and his Arctic Wolves rise to the challenge of taking over the battlespace.

“From what I’ve seen so far, they have come right into the province and have really taken charge from the first day,” said Hertling.

The biggest thing Hertling hoped the Arctic Wolves would accomplish is setting the conditions for the Diyala provincial elections.

“What that’s going to take is continued economic improvements because the governor has very distinct plans for what he wants to do for agriculture, infrastructure and



# olves heat up Diyala

**“The purpose of all our missions here is to provide a safe and secure environment for the citizens in Diyala for which other things can come out of... governance, economics and other essential services.”**

helping people of the province,” Hertling said.

This is a mission Thompson believes he and his Soldiers have been successful in facilitating so far.

“We’ve done like most brigade combat teams have done here in Iraq,” Thompson said. “We’ve tried to quickly get on the ground and establish ourselves and establish our partnerships and relationships with the Iraqi Army, the Iraqi Police, the governance, the [Provincial Reconstruction Team] – everybody who is part of the effort here in Diyala. We work



A Soldier with Alpha Troop, 5th Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, looks down from the hatch of a Stryker while on a routine patrol of the local Iraqi Police checkpoints located in Diyala, Iraq, Nov. 19. (U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Alisha Nye)

with our partners and counterparts and figure out how much we can influence their fight. We’ve been pretty aggressive at getting that done.”

The fight in Diyala is an undertaking that requires many different units completing their missions at once, Thompson explained.

“The purpose of all our missions here is to provide a safe and secure environment for the citizens in Diyala for which other things can come out of,” Thompson said. “For example: governance, economics and other essential services.”

In order for these things to come about, however, security in the province must first be handled.

“If you don’t have that critical enabler of security, none of those other things matter,” Thompson said. “All of the kinetic operations that we do, like Archangel Pursuit, for example, on the surface, when you see pictures in the news and all that, it just looks like a fireball. But, what it’s getting at is clearance of a palm grove area that has fruit trees in order for it to be used to generate revenue for the particular village that we’re doing it in. Everything kinetic we do has the critical purpose of enabling security so we can succeed in our whole mission.”

Thompson said the mission for 1<sup>st</sup> SBCT, 25<sup>th</sup> Inf. Div., can be quite simply put: establish a safe and secure environment so governance can take hold.

“We want to get at making Diyala a better place for the citizens in the province, but also we want to get at establishing security as a primary line of effort for us and we are doing that,” said Thompson. “We want to improve economics, prosperity for the people of Diyala. All of this together – this is our mission here. It’s to fight a counter-insurgency fight and propel Iraq, Diyala for us specifically, forward.”



Soldiers with the 25th Brigade Support Battalion, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Inf. Div. maintain security, while local Iraqi government leaders, tribal leaders and Coalition force leaders conduct a meeting geared toward ending any and all disputed between the local tribes at a refugee camp in Diyala, Iraq, Nov 16. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Opal Vaughn)

# LIGHTNING ST

*The 25th Infantry Division, Tropic Lightning, redeployed to Hawaii in October*

Story and Photos by  
Task Force Lightning Public Affairs Office



Maj. Gen. Robert L. Caslen, Jr. (left), Task Force Lightning commanding general and Cmd. Sgt. Maj. Frank M. Leota, command sergeant major of Task Force Lightning, uncase the unit's colors, marking the beginning of the Tropic Lightning Division's deployment to Iraq.

The event on stage at Contingency Operating Base Speicher's main gym must have looked very familiar to many Iraqi and U.S. leaders, military members and civilians in attendance. Only this time the team roles were reversed.

The 25th Infantry Division officially took charge of Multi-National Division – North from the 1st Armored Division during a ceremony Dec. 9. The proverbial passing of the baton between these two distinguished U.S. Army divisions was a reversal of roles, as the 1AD, “Iron Soldiers,” began their deployment in Northern Iraq in 2007 by replacing the “Tropic Lightning” warfighters of the 25th ID.

“This Transition of Authority, like all TOAs, is about the departing unit handing off the relay baton while at full speed. No drops of mission, or tasks,” said Lt. Gen. Lloyd J. Austin III, commanding general, Multi-National Corps – Iraq.

“The teamwork both division headquarters displayed during this transition is indicative of the race we are all in together, the race towards a stable and prosperous Iraq,” said Austin.

Maj. Gen Robert L. Caslen, Jr., the 25th ID commanding general and incoming commander of Task Force Lightning readily accepted the baton to continue the ongoing partnership with the Iraqi government and Iraqi security forces towards a stable and lasting democracy.

“It is my distinct honor to answer the call of duty, as well as to serve alongside the great Iraqi and United States patriots, civil and military alike, in this just and noble cause,” said Caslen, after uncasing the 25th ID colors and officially marking the return of Task Force Lightning to Northern Iraq.

Caslen stood before a crowd of more than 200 and described the mission ahead to all the service members under his command.

**“You can count on each one of us to do our part to ensure Iraq and her citizens are secure, living within the rule of law, and where each has a hope for the future, for themselves, and for their loved ones.”**

“Our mission is simple, yet tough,” Caslen continued. “It is to defeat [Al Qaeda in Iraq] and other anti-coalition and Iraq government elements, to protect and secure the Iraqi people, and to build capacity in the Iraqi security forces and the Iraqi gov-



Maj. Gen. Robert L. Caslen, Jr., Task Force Lightning commanding general and incoming commander of Task Force Lightning, speaks to a crowd of service members and Iraqi government, army and police leaders during the ceremony at Contingency Operating Base Speicher, Iraq, Dec. 9.



# TRIKES TWICE

ber 2007; they now return to northern Iraq, and gear up for an historic year



Maj. Gen. Robert L. Caslen, Jr., Task Force Lightning commanding general, speaks at the Transition of Authority ceremony where authority for MND-N was transferred from Task Force Iron to Task Force Lightning.

ing commander, addresses senior commanders from Multi-National Forces - Iraq during the Transfer of Authority Ceremony held at Contingency Operating Base Spe-

ernment in order to establish a secure, stable, and growing Iraqi government and economy.”

The 25th ID takes responsibility during a critical time in Iraq’s history with Iraq at the crossroads of sustained security and democratic rule of law.

“At stake is whether freedom, opportunity, and decency will remain here in Iraq, or whether the darkness of terror, oppression and extremism will blot them out,” said Caslen. “At stake is whether those who treasure the rights of free individuals will stand firm against the ruthless and pitiless men who wantonly slay the defenseless.”

“You can count on each one of us to do our part to ensure Iraq and her citizens are secure, living within the rule of law, and where each has a hope for the future, for themselves, and for their loved ones,” continued Caslen.

Caslen assumed the title of commanding general of MND – North, from Maj. Gen. Mark P. Hertling, commanding general, 1st Armored Division, who returns with the unit colors and headquarters to Wiesbaden, Germany.

Hertling addressed the civilian and military leaders attending the ceremony from all four Iraqi provinces, Salah ad Din, Diyala, Kirkuk and Ninewa that comprise the operational environment of MND-N. “Together,” Hertling said about the legacy of Task

Force Iron, “Arabs, Kurds, Shia, Sunni, coalitions forces - we have served the future with liberty for all people of Iraq.”

“Today, my good friend General Caslen will take this position, and he is as dedicated to future of Iraq as all of us were.” Hertling said. “If you give him the great support and friendship you all gave me; together, there is no goal for the future of Iraq which we cannot reach.”

The 25th ID, from Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, leads other U.S. units in Northern Iraq as the headquarters of Task Force Lightning. Major units in TFL include 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th ID (Fort Wainwright, Alaska); 3rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 25th ID (Schofield Barracks, Hawaii); 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment (Fort Hood, Texas) and the 10th Combat Aviation Brigade (Fort Drum, N.Y.).

A little history about the 25th...

The 25th Infantry Division was formed on October 1st, 1941 at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. Barely two months old on 7 December 1941, the 25th Infantry Division received its baptism by fire when Japanese forces attacked military facilities on the island of Oahu. The division continued its role as guardian of Oahu until November 1942, when they were ordered into action against the Japanese in the Solomon Islands. It was due to their superior performance during this operation the 25th Infantry Division earned its nickname: “Tropic Lightning.”



# MND-N HEROES DEMONSTRATE ARMY VALUES



SPC Justin Hix, A Troop, 3-4 CAV  
Topsail, North Carolina

In the absence of the Fire Support Officer and NCO, SPC Hix (RTO) meritoriously upheld the lofty standards of performance established by the Company Intelligence Support Team. SPC Hix conducted patrol debriefs and single-handedly performed mission critical analysis of events surrounding daily patrols.



SPC Roberto Flores, 66th MI Company  
San Antonio, Texas

SPC Flores has cross-trained as both a generator and wheeled vehicle mechanic to compensate for critical personnel shortages. His constant dedication and hard work have contributed to the Company's 99% maintenance readiness and successful logistical support operations throughout Ninewa province and Salah ad Din.



SPC Douglas Jury, A Troop, 5-1CAV  
Corona, California

SPC Jury maintained mission focus after the lead vehicle in the platoon was struck by an anti-tank mine. He helped secure the blast site and assisted in the evacuation of a fellow Soldiers. SPC Jury has continued to check on his Soldiers as a team leader and consistently shows genuine concern for their welfare.



SPC Kyle Pennington, HHC, 3/3 ACR  
Cincinnati, Ohio

SPC Pennington has been responsible for coordinating Squadron level surveillance assets in support of combined, multi-Troop operations. He has also performed essential coordination during Squadron level operations, and performs duties normally assigned to a senior Non-commissioned officer or field grade officer.



PVT Crista Reed, HHT, 6-6 CAV  
Daytona, Florida

As a TOC RTO for 6-6 CAV, PVT Reed executed radio transmissions that were paramount to re-tasking Scout Weapon Teams following an indirect fire attack. Her ability to transmit information quickly and clearly led to the identification of a fleeing vehicle, and aiding the Iraqi Police in arresting four individuals.



PV2 Daniel Sizemore, 1st Plt, 523rd En Co  
Canton, Georgia

PV2 Sizemore Daniel learned to operate the FBCB2 on short notice and quickly put the system into operation. He now teaches other Soldiers how to operate system, and is unquestionably a dependable RTO for the platoon, and he always ensures the necessary distribution of information to higher.



SPC Bryan Drawdy, A Co., 1-5 IN  
Crystal River, Florida

While conducting security during a mission, SPC Drawdy rendered immediate first aid, after a fellow Soldier stepped on a buried IED. Every medic and doctor throughout the Soldier's recovery stated that if it wasn't for the actions of SPC Drawdy, that Soldier would not be here with us today.



SPC James Ortiz Jr., HHC, 25th STB  
Lacey, Washington

During a meal in the South DFAC on COB Speicher, SPC Ortiz noticed a Soldier next to him giving the universal sign for choking. SPC Ortiz immediately performed the Heimlich maneuver on Soldier, clearing his airway and enabling the Soldier to breath. SPC Ortiz's actions and quick thinking saved the Soldier's life.



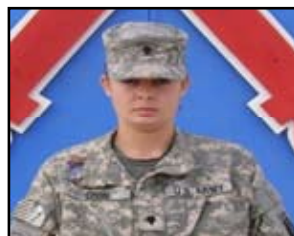
SFC David Keener III, A Trp, 1/3 ACR  
Finchburg, Massachusetts

While returning from the Ash Shura IP Station, SFC Keener noticed a 2 year old Iraqi boy trapped next to a wall along a narrow street, in danger of being run over by the oncoming vehicles. SFC Keener immediately ordered his vehicle to stop, aided the small child, and returned him to the arms of his parents.



SSG Melvin Clark, A Co., 1-24 IN  
Duluth, Minnesota

SSG Clark distinguished himself by saving the lives of 10 soldiers in his platoon after a Stryker rolled into a roadside canal. Without hesitation, he immediately proceeded to the vehicle, filling with water, and opened the emergency troop door for the trapped men inside. He assisted each out before they would have drowned.



SPC Carter R. Coon, F Co., 1-10 (ATK)  
Tucker, Georgia

SPC Coon has successfully conducted air-ground integration with unmanned aerial surveillance systems and utilized various means to pass information directly to the ground forces. Through her actions, the unit developed better methods to integrate reconnaissance capabilities with ground maneuver forces.



SSG John Eckenrode, C Troop, 1/3 ACR  
Galliteen, Pennsylvania

SSG Eckenrode, a 19D, Section Sergeant, taught the Shukran IP Station all of the skills necessary to conduct thorough and expert Sensitive Sight Exploitation. By teaching the leaders, he has ensured that their future operations will be successful and the targets that they detain will be prosecuted to the fullest.



# MND-N HEROES DEMONSTRATE ARMY VALUES



SPC Brian Yates, B Troop, 3-4 CAV  
Rochester, New York

During a mission in the town of Albu Atea, SPC Yates was approached by a woman carrying a child in her arms. The girl complained of pain in her knee. Yates carried the girl into the back of the MRAP and diagnosed a torn ACL. It was a source of inspiration to the crowd and pride for the unit as their medic treated this child.



SGT Charles Shackelford, HHC, 25th STB  
Lexington, Georgia

During the recent deployment into theater, it became necessary to replace the night Battle Captain in Lightning Main. SGT Shackelford, a 19K, Armor Crewman stepped into the position without hesitation. Under his guidance, the Battle desk continues to effectively serve the Soldiers of the Tropic Lightning Division.



SPC Jeffery Lambert, 89th Chem. Co., 3d ACR  
Fort Wayne, Indiana

SPC Lambert, a Chemical Operations Specialist, works in a unit detention facility. He completed training as an evidence custodian, normally associated with Military Police. He successfully served as the Evidence NCOIC, and the facility's evidence room has received numerous accolades during Corps and Division level inspections.



SPC Trinity Dierck, FSC, 2-27 IN, 31BCT  
Santa Rosa, California

SPC Dierck, works outside of his trained MOS as the unit's master carpenter. Using skills learned prior to his military service, he single-handedly built four roadside sunshades and benches to be utilized by the Sons of Iraq at their checkpoints. The mayor of Bayji himself inspected the work and was extremely impressed.



SPC Jium Ren Wang, HHT, 1/3d ACR  
Birmingham, Alabama

SPC Wang has distinguished himself as a creative and hard-working food-service specialist at three different COPs, most recently at Fort Apache. He provides a world-class hot breakfast and dinner to Soldiers, and manages to allow time to prepare an additional 1,000 hot lunch meals as an alternative to MREs each week.



PFC Kelly Viers, 25th BSB, 1/25th SBCT  
Virginia Beach, Virginia

PFC Viers is a Combat Medic and voluntarily participates in the BSB "Red Diamond" Iraqi Police partnership program. She used a dual language training packet and interpreters to communicate with ten IP trainees. She's also taught the IPs how to use several types of bandages and other supplies needed to treat casualties.



PFC Kenneth Venable, HHC, 2-35 IN, 25th ID  
Whitehouse, Texas

In December, Patrol Base Olsen Aid Station received three patients with severe gunshot wounds. PFC Venable treated all three patients as his first trauma experience. He relied on his training and presented a calm, collected, professional demeanor while treating the casualties, which directly resulted in saving their lives.



SGT Adam Tatusko, RSS, 3d ACR  
Rochester, New York

SGT Tatusko works in the Squadron Operations Center for the Regimental Support Squadron (RSS). He performs a multitude of duties including CBRN NCO, Day Battle NCO, and Squadron Schools NCO. He performs all assigned duties at an exceptional level of competency, never failing at any assigned task.



SPC Duenne Brandon, F-FSC, 204th BSB  
West Harrison, Indiana

SPC Duenne endures long hours in the motor pool to ensure the Furian fleet of vehicles are always fully mission capable. His knowledge of his MOS precedes his rank. While conducting maintenance at FOB Warrior, SPC Duenne is part of a gun truck team that is always on a 24 hour standby recovery mission and QRF.



SPC Jeremy Jackson, HHC, 1-24 IN  
Pendleton, South Carolina

In December, SPC Jackson encountered a distraught Soldier contemplating suicide. He calmly addressed the Soldier, ensured the Soldier's safety and informed the Chain of Command. SPC Jackson's actions exemplified the true meaning of selfless service and commitment to his fellow Soldier in need.



SPC Vernon Wesley, 5-1 CAV, 1/25 SBCT  
Las Vegas, Nevada

After his vehicle hit an IED, SPC Wesley took immediate action to aid the driver of the vehicle. He quickly performed all the steps of casualty evaluation, talked to the driver, determined he was not paralyzed and was safe to move. He then pulled the driver through the vehicle and continued to evaluate his injuries.



SSG Michael Borr, 1-8 IN BN, 3d ACR  
Fennville, Michigan

SSG Borr is task oriented, detail minded, and has served honorably as a Bradley Section Leader throughout our deployment to Mosul in support of OIF 07-09. He has led his Section on more than 200 combat operations and has trained 80 Iraqi Army soldiers on close quarters marksmanship and advanced marksmanship.

# Broncos take the reins in Iraq

**Story and Photos by  
Staff Sgt Timothy Meyers  
3rd BCT, 25ID PAO**

The 1st Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), transferred the mission of assisting Iraqis in Salah ad Din province with security, governance, economics and essential services to the 3rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, in a transfer of authority ceremony.

“The leaders and the people of this province have spoken over the past 14 months and they say: ‘This is our province, this is our home, and we are here to protect it and to build it,’” said Col. Scott McBride, commander 1st BCT, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault).

McBride thanked Iraqi military, civilian and Sons of Iraq leaders for their cooperation in working towards peace and stability in the province during the Bastogne Brigade’s 14-month deployment. “Leaders across this province -- leaders of courage -- stood up in the face of danger and extended a hand to the people of this province,” he continued.

“The brave men of the Iraqi security forces, the Sons of Iraq and the brigade task force acted. Their blood, sweat and tears are forever in the soil of this ground, which is now sacred ground, and we must carry forward to make their sacrifices matter,” he continued.

During their deployment the number of attacks in the province decreased by 70 percent, signifying an increase in security for Iraqis here. Fewer threats mean a safer province, resulting in increased economic activity due to improved freedom of movement.

During the ceremony Col. Scott McBride, commander, and Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Wright, brigade command sergeant major, of the 1st BCT, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), cased the brigade and regimental colors, signifying that the 1st BCT’s mission here was accomplished and passed to the 3rd IBCT.

Col. Walter Piatt, commander, and Command Sgt. Maj. Anthony Marrero, brigade command sergeant major, of the 3rd IBCT, 25th Infantry Division, uncased the brigade colors, signifying that the 3rd IBCT accepted the mission.

Piatt said the at he would continue the tremendous success the 101st Airborne Division had in working with the Iraqis of Salah ad Din province.

“Your rendezvous with destiny is secure,” he said, referring to the completion of the Bastogne Brigade’s mission here.

“The Broncos have come to serve – I pledge my full cooperation on our journey towards peace. And most important – to the people of Iraq – Long live Iraq!” said Piatt.

The 1st BCT, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), based in Ft. Campbell, Ky., was deployed to Iraq for 14 months. This was their third tour in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The 3rd IBCT, 25th Infantry Division is based in Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. The Bronco Brigade deployed to Afghanistan in 2004, and their first deployment to Iraq was in 2006.



Col. Walter E. Piatt, brigade commander of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division (right), and Cmd. Sgt. Maj. Anthony Marrero, command sergeant major, 3rd Bde., 25th Inf., unfurl the unit colors, signifying their official assumption of responsibility for Iraq’s Salah ad Din province. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Jazz Burney)



From left to right, Col. Scott McBride, brigade commander of the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air-Assault), Col. Walter E. Piatt, brigade commander of the 3rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, Maj.Gen. Mark Hertling, Multi-National Division-North commander and Command Sgt. Maj. Roger Blackwood, Multi-National Division-North command sergeant major, stand at the position of attention prior to the playing of the 25th Infantry Division Song, "The Tropic Lightning March" during a transfer of authority ceremony, Nov. 22. (U.S. Army photo by Maj. J.P. Arnold)



# HEY DOC?

*Answers on life, love and the wound that never healed*

**Q: Hey Doc! We found a great puppy. We bonded with him and named him Lightning. Lightning is friendly and really helps morale. My squad leader says we have to get rid of him because of rabies. He looks perfectly healthy. What's the real deal? R.C., Marez.**

A: Your squad leader is absolutely right. Lightning may be a handful of tropic fun but you have no idea what diseases he has or what he has been exposed to. While you and your fellow Soldiers are out doing great things, Lightning could be mixing it up with his dog buddies, sniffing poo and acquiring the rabies virus. He incubates it. Now, there is a grave health threat to you and your buddies because you brought Lightning inside and let him lick you on the face. Left untreated, rabies is nearly 100% fatal. We have already had multiple rabies scares in Iraq because Soldiers couldn't resist the smile and lovable ways of a dog they found. Lightning is putting you, your battle buddies and others at risk. Think about it.

**Q: Hey Doc! Just got to Iraq and I told myself I was going to get back into shape after pre-deployment leave. I'm going to start lifting again. Any advice? E.T., Speicher.**

A: Watch out ladies, looks like we have an Adonis in the making. Physical training is a must for all active-duty military personnel to help maintain high fitness levels, mental sharpness and overall health. It's important to understand that it's not just about the hour or two spent in the fitness center. Overall health is a 24hr/day responsibility. Hydration and rest are your friends. Losing just 2 liters of water will decrease strength, concentration and endurance. This loss can occur from just 45 minutes of light sweating, so remember to get plenty of fluids throughout the day. Muscles get big while you rest, not while you lift! Try for seven or more hours of sleep each day. Now on to the diet! Eating an ample amount of calories to support your new activities probably is the most important aspect of your diet. Remember, the body will break down lean muscle for energy BEFORE fat. Increasing your overall lean protein and decreasing the fat content of your food is another way to increase lean muscle mass. Weightlifters should get about 4 to 6 grams of carbohydrate and 0.6 to 0.9 grams of protein for every pound of body weight. This equals 55-60% of your dietary calories from carbohydrates and 20-25% from protein. A protein intake above 25% is not recommended based on current research. High protein diets stress your kidneys and WILL NOT result in greater muscle gain. Other than that, the hard part is yours: working hard and living right.

**Q: Hey Doc! Settle a bet for us. My battle buddy says smoking helps him stay warm when it's cold; I think just the opposite. Who is right? We've got a couple of Ripits riding on it. J.D., Warhorse.**

A: Kudos to you. Tell your buddy he's wrong. Smoking does not help you stay warm when it is cold. In fact, it does just the opposite. It reduces blood flow to your skin and actually increases the chance of becoming a cold weather injury. Not only that, smoking decreases lung capacity and night vision. Instead of smoking, tell your buddy his best bet is to stay dry, dress in layers and make sure he eats and drinks fluids regularly to maintain his energy levels. Plus, he could quit smoking... ask him to discuss this with his unit medical provider! At \$3.60 per pack in the PX, he could save over \$1300 during this deployment alone. Just think what he could do if someone gave him that much money to spend on anything he wanted!!

**Q: Hey Doc! What is the best form of birth control in Iraq? B.T., Warrior.**

A: That's a great question! An 18-hour workday and an XBOX 360 seem to work for my staff. Barring that, I'd suggest you really try to wait this one out until you get back home. The only 100% effective form of birth control is abstinence. Multiple research studies have shown that over half of all "military pregnancies" are unplanned. Your CHU is really not the place to start a family. In addition to the real risk of pregnancy, you have to consider your odds of catching a sexually transmitted disease. If you absolutely can't wait, condoms are a must. Condoms are available free of charge from your medics at all aid stations. Female Soldiers can also consider using daily birth control pills or (every 13 weeks) Depo-provera™ shots. Both significantly reduce the chance of pregnancy. If used continuously, these will also eliminate your monthly menstrual period and make feminine hygiene MUCH easier to maintain. You already have to deal with many stressors while deployed. Make sure pregnancy or STDs aren't among them. Think about the hazards you face and plan accordingly. Ask your doc if you have further questions!!



Lt. Col. John Smyrski is a board certified Family Medicine and Aerospace Medicine physician with specialty training in Public Health, a former Army Aviator, and the Task Force Lightning and Multi-National Division-North Surgeon.



**If you've got a question you'd like to ask the Doc, e-mail [heydoc@id25.army.smil.mil](mailto:heydoc@id25.army.smil.mil) or [heydoc@25id.ds.army.mil](mailto:heydoc@25id.ds.army.mil). Hey Doc is not intended for emergency situations. If you are experiencing an emergency, seek care immediately at your supporting medical treatment facility.**

# Families in Samarra re

*The annual Eid al-Adha, “Festival of Sacrifice,” is celebrated by practioners of the Muslim faith in recognition of Abraham’s willingness and obedience to sacrifice his only son to the Lord.*

**Story and Photos by  
Sgt. Ian Terry  
2nd Bn., 35th Inf. Regt.**

Iraqi Security Forces and U.S. Army Soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division worked hand-in-hand with Iraqi community leaders to coordinate large-scale gift-giving operations in recognition of Eid al-Adha, the Festival of Sacrifice, in Samarra Dec. 8-11, 2008.

Iraqi and U.S. Soldiers handed out food, drinks, school supplies, blankets and space heaters to more than 200 needy families during Operation Abraham. Word of the Eid gift distribution spread quickly through the community, and many families were able to receive things they needed to improve their daily lives.

“Operation Abraham has provided an excellent stage for the people of Iraq to recognize and understand the goals of the Iraqi government,” said Lt. Col. Samuel Whitehurst, battalion commander, 2nd Bn., 35th Inf. Regt. “That goal,” he continued, “is to provide a higher standard of living for all of Iraq’s citizens.”

The Eid tradition finds its roots 4,000 years ago when Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son to glorify God. This sacrifice is symbolized today through animal slaughter, the meat of which is shared with those less fortunate, and gift-giving among friends and family. Few things are as contagious as goodwill, and this creates a common ground for all people. As varied and contentious as religions can sometimes be, common ground is found with Abraham. The Jewish,



Lt. Col. Samuel Whitehurst, commander, 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry Regiment, helps Iraqi Adha (Festival of Sacrifice) in Samarra, Iraq.

Christian and Muslim faiths alike all recognize Abraham in similar light, and honor his willingness to sacrifice for something greater than himself.

“This kind of operation is what we live for over here,” said Pfc. Noah Suiter, rifleman, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Bn., 35th Inf. Regt. “Most Soldiers won’t say it out loud because it doesn’t sound tough, but if we can make it through Iraq without ever firing a shot, we have definitely succeeded.”

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*“This kind of operation is what we live for over here,”*

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“The people of Samarra are finally beginning to really see we are on their side,” said Mayor Mahmood Khala Ahmed, the mayor of Samarra. “This trust is an essential piece in our great vision for our country.”

“We may have helped provide the gifts and food, but this operation and its execution was wholly owned by you and your efforts,” Whitehurst responded.





# receive gifts



community leaders distribute food and supplies to the needy local families during Eid al-



A young girl smiles as she receives juice boxes, food and school supplies distributed by Iraqi community leaders to the needy during Eid al-Adha (Festival of Sacrifice).

One Iraq  
United and Strong



*One Iraq - united and Strong is the current theme and goal shared between Iraqi Security Forces, Iraqi government leaders, and Coalition Forces in the northern region of Iraq, Multi-National Division - North.*

*The three words, while simple and straight-forward, carry more weight than one may imagine.*

*The united and Strong campaign celebrates the theme of unity, teamwork, and unyielding dedication toward reconstruction and reconciliation within Iraq.*

*Together, all stakeholders work toward a future filled with hope, prosperity, and security for all of Iraq and her citizens.*

Task Force Lightning Public Affairs

# TAX INFORMATION FOR DEPLOYED SOLDIERS

Soldiers serving in a Combat Zone (CZ) or Qualified Hazardous Duty Area (QHDA) are entitled to certain Federal tax benefits: tax exclusions and filing and payment extensions. A CZ is any area that the President of the United States designates by Executive Order that the US Armed Forces are engaging or have engaged in combat.

Combat Zones for income tax purposes currently include: (1) The Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, the Gulf of Oman, the part of the Arabian Sea that is north of 10 degrees north latitude and west of 68 degrees east longitude, the Gulf of Aden and the total land areas of Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (and the airspace above); (2) The Kosovo area, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), Albania, the Adriatic Sea and the Ionian Sea north of the 39th Parallel; and (3) Afghanistan.

Enlisted, Warrant Officers, and Officers may exclude: (1) Active duty pay earned in any month served in a combat zone; (2) Imminent danger/hostile fire pay and military pay earned while hospitalized as a result of wounds, disease or injury incurred in the combat zone; (3) A reenlistment bonus if the voluntary extension or reenlistment occurs in a month served in combat zone; (4) Pay received for duties as a member of the Armed Forces in clubs, messes, post and station theaters and other non-appropriated fund activities earned in a month served in a combat zone; (5) Awards received for suggestions, inventions or scientific achievements because of a submission made in a month in a combat zone; and (6) Student loan repayments that are attributable to your period of service in a combat zone (provided a full year's service is performed to earn the repayment). Commissioned Officers may not exclude any more than the highest rate of enlisted pay (plus imminent danger/hostile fire pay received) for each month. If a soldier serves just one day in a combat zone, that month's pay qualifies for the CZ exclusion.

Deployed services members are entitled to extensions for filing tax returns, paying taxes, filing claims for refund and taking other actions related to federal income tax for U.S. Armed Forces personnel serving in a combat zone. The Department of Defense and the IRS work in conjunction to ensure that all soldiers serving in a designated CZ receive an automatic extension. To ensure that a soldier receives that extension, a soldier, family member, or personal representative may contact IRS through email at [combatzone@irs.gov](mailto:combatzone@irs.gov).

Deployed soldiers may still file taxes by April 15; taxes may be filed for free online at [irs.gov](http://irs.gov). Spouses or other personal representatives may file for a deployed soldier with a Special Power of Attorney for Taxes. For more information on filing your taxes please contact the COB Speicher Legal Assistance Office at 242-1098.





# Lightning Soldiers

Sgt. Jason Rex from Manchester, Idaho, assigned to Delta Company, 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division plays with a boy from Malha, Iraq during a presence patrol, Dec. 12, 2008



Spc. Andrew Dickey from Richmond, Virginia assigned to Delta Company, 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division shows a boy American dollars in Butoma, Iraq, Dec. 20, 2008.

Spc. James Harbough from Waynesburg, Pennsylvania assigned to Alpha Company, 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division sits and talks with a man in Siniyah, Iraq during a presence patrol, Dec. 18, 2008.



*Lending a helping hand*

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# Farewell to Albania and Moldova

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Albanian Soldiers prepare to case their colors during a farewell ceremony on Forward Operating Base Marez, Mosul, Iraq, Dec. 18. The Albanian contingent in Mosul conducted numerous missions to include more than 3000 mounted and dismounted patrols in the north zone, security patrols within FOB Diamondback and Marez, and perimeter security.



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**Story and Photos BY  
Spc. Cynthia Teears  
11th Public Affairs Detachment**

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A farewell ceremony was held for the Soldiers of Albania and Moldova military forces on Forward Operating Base Marez in Mosul, Iraq, Dec. 18 as both nations prepare to withdraw all of their forces from Iraq.

“Thank you for making this area a much safer place for our service members and for the Iraqis,” said Lt. Gen. Lloyd Austin, Commander, Multi National Corps-Iraq. “These two great nations, Albania and Moldova, are two of the examples of the many nations that have given their sons and daughters to serve the Coalition for five plus years. They have committed their nation’s resources to help create a safe environment for the Iraqi people and they share our values for freedom,” said Austin.

The 12th Contingent of the Albanian Commandos conducted mounted and dismounted patrolling, security patrols within FOB Marez and quick reaction force operations. The 6th Contingent of the Moldovan Forces provided expert engineer capabilities in the form of ordnance disposal and was responsible for destroying over 7300 unexploded ordnance devices found in the southern part of FOB Marez.



Moldovan senior representatives exchange gifts with Lt. Gen. Lloyd Austin, Commander, Multi National Corps-Iraq before the farewell ceremony for Albanian and Moldovan military forces on Forward Operating Base Marez, Mosul, Iraq, Dec. 18.



# A letter from the Chaplain

When Task Force Lightning arrived here in Iraq, the 1st Armored Division was using the Campaign Slogan, “United and Strong.” Even some of the conferences being held here by the Iraqi people to address multiple concerns used this same slogan. Task Force Lightning voted to adopt the same Campaign slogan of “One Iraq, United and Strong”. It is the slogan that we use in talking to the Iraqi people since our goal is for them to become “united and strong” as a people and as a nation. I believe this campaign theme is an important one for us to consider when referring to our families in Hawaii or on the mainland, and in referring to our spiritual walk this year.



Lt. Col. Thomas Wheatley,  
Task Force Lightning Chaplain

It is important for the entire community in Hawaii to remain “united and strong.” This includes our Rear Detachment leaders, our Family Readiness Groups, our local communities, businesses and churches. As long as spouses stay connected to each other and to the unit leadership, they can stay strong. As long as they have access to the flow of information and to the support they can offer to each as a result of going through a common, shared experience, they can remain strong. As long as they keep the community informed about the challenges they are facing – and occasionally ask for help! – they will be able to stand up under the strain of the deployment.

The book of Ecclesiastes in the Bible tells us, “Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion... Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.” (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, 12)

God never really designed us to operate on our own. We were designed by God to be with others. Sometimes this takes the form of an exclusive relationship with one other person such as in dating or marriage. We are uniquely designed by God to draw strength and support from being in relationship this way, where we share intimacy, or a willingness to communicate fully our hopes, dreams, and fears with another, and we expect them to do the same. When we fully open our life up to another, we become one with them in heart and mind. This can happen in a similar way in a deep friendship with someone who can encourage us, keep us accountable, and stand by us.

It is also true in the church; Paul describes every member as part of one body, where every part of the body is as important as every other part. And when one member suffers, the others suffer, and when one rejoices, all rejoice with that one member.

In any military unit, when they are faced with a combat situation, as long as the Soldiers remain united they can remain strong. At the Battle of Thermopylae, in 480 B.C., three hundred Spartans attempted to halt the advance of hundreds of thousands of Persians at a narrow pass that controlled the only road between Thessaly and central Greece to allow their fellow Greek soldiers to retreat. They were able to succeed as long as they re-

mained united, with their shields interlocked, across the small pass. As long as soldiers remain united they can accomplish amazing results and withstand tremendous odds.

In any battle, the enemy works hard to isolate soldiers from one another since they know they can more easily defeat individual soldiers operating independently from one another. The enemy will constantly try to cut lines of communication and supply. Since we know that the enemy will use this tactic, we need to work especially hard to protect our lines of communication and supply – to make sure the lifeline stays connected.

In John chapter fifteen, Jesus tells his disciples that as long as they remain connected to Him, as branches to a vine, they would bear much fruit. “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5, NKJV) Jesus knew that the disciples needed to hear this warning and encouragement since “The Enemy” would soon try to separate or isolate them, first from Christ and then from one another.

It is important to remember in this that the vine produces the actual fruit – the branch does none of the actual production. But the branch does need to stay connected for the fruit to appear. There is an active role that the branch needs to play. In the same way, we must stay connected to our spouse, our children, our friends if we want to remain strong. The communication does not always need to be deep or meaningful – but it does need to be a conscious choice to stay in touch and the communication should be consistent. Just the effort to maintain open lines of communication says a lot in itself. Men, in general, don’t have the need to communicate as much on an average day as do women. The average man will speak about ten to twelve thousand words per day, while the average woman will speak twenty five to thirty thousand words per day. It usually is very meaningful to the wife if the husband makes a real effort to talk, even if he is all talked out for the day and does not have a real need to speak.

The idea that God will never leave us or forsake us when we seek Him or call out to him is a recurring theme in Scripture. When Joshua was getting ready to enter the land of Canaan with the Children of Israel after they had wandered in the wilderness for forty years, God knew that he needed encouragement. Moses had been the leader of this great number of people, approximately two million in number – but now there was to be a change of command and Joshua would become their new commander right as they were to begin a series of battles to secure their place in Canaan. So God spoke to Joshua very clearly and deliberately to strengthen him: “Have not I commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” (Joshua 1:9, NKJV)

And when Jesus appeared to his disciples after his crucifixion and resurrection, he gave to them what has since been called the Great Commission - to go out and make disciples of all of the nations – He encouraged them for this amazing task by adding, “And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:20, NIV)

It should be encouraging to us that God has made a covenant with us to keep strong and secure as we remain connected to Him – and to one another. So let’s stay united – and let’s stay strong!



# Into the New Year...

Two 4th Platoon, D Company, 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division, "Cacti" Soldiers patrol a marketplace in the Ishaki business district, at Ishaki, Iraq, approximately 23 miles west of Balad, Jan. 6. (U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Jesus J. Aranda)



Spc. Evan Vickrey, a small arms repairman and Everett, Wash. native with 5th Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, enjoys a friendly chat with Nobar Noori, a member of the Mandali Border Police, at the 8th Brigade of Border Police headquarters. (U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Jesus J. Aranda)

A group of 4th Platoon, D Company, 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division, "Cacti" Soldiers secure a gateway outside of a nearby marketplace near Patrol Base Love, near Balad, Iraq, Jan. 6. (U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Jesus J. Aranda)





# **Task Force Lightning's Fallen Warriors**

**We Will Never Forget Those Who Have Sacrificed**



**Sergeant John J. Savage**

**04 March 1982 – 04 December 2008**

**103rd Engineer Company  
94th Engineer Battalion  
Ft. Leonard Wood, Mo**

**Staff Sergeant Solomon T. Sam**

**25 May 1982 – 04 December 2008**

**523rd Engineer Company  
84th Engineer Battalion  
Schofield Barracks, Hawaii**



**Private 1st Class Christopher W. Lotter**

**16 March 1988 – 31 December 2008**

**Alpha Battery  
3rd Battalion, 7th Field Artillery Regiment  
Schofield Barracks, Hawaii**

