

August - September 2009

# Call of the WOLF



# The Wolf's Howl!

Greetings to the combat tested Warriors, Families and friends of the 1/25 SBCT Arctic Wolves.

By the time you read this, we will be completing the 12<sup>th</sup> month of our OIF deployment and most of our Arctic Wolves team will be back home at Fort Wainwright, Alaska.

We started this journey on September 11, 2008 with our Deployment Ceremony at Fort Wainwright. From day one of this operational deployment we started strong and we will finish our combat operations, redeployment, reintegration and lifecycle strong.

As CSM Cervantes and I reflect back on the team's time here in Diyala, Iraq, one thing has remained constant throughout this entire deployment. You all have never ceased to amaze us with your ability to accomplish any task regardless of difficulty and you exceeded every expectation. We thank you for your dedication, commitment and sacrifice.

We are also grateful to each of your families for the many sacrifices they have made on behalf of you our Army and our Nation.

Each of you had a choice, the choice to serve your Nation during a time of great need. You could have chosen



to serve somewhere else and in another capacity, perhaps less dangerous and demanding, but you did not. The fact that you chose to wear the uniform and serve our Army in combat says much about you – you are all patriots.

We are all part of an exclusive team... the Arctic Wolves... the Army. We are bound by our traditions and our core values. Throughout our lifecycle, we have all developed a lifetime of

friendships, friendships forged in the heat of battle and based on shared sacrifice and hardship in the Arctic cold of Alaska and desert heat of Iraq.

It is nearly impossible to keep up with your many accomplishments. It has been absolutely impressive to watch this Team in action performing tasks that range from combat patrols, to include Stryker company operations in Mosul, clearing palm



groves, working water irrigation projects, humanitarian assistance operations, participating in tribal reconciliation meetings, local and provisional governance councils, to overseeing countless projects throughout all of Diyala.

In the past 12 months you have executed every task from stability and support missions to full spectrum operations. You have identified, registered and transferred over 9,000 Sons of Iraq (SOIZ). You have assisted our ISF partners in the planning, preparation, synchronization and execution of Diyala wide elections in a Province with over 1.5 million citizens. You have defeated AQI in the volatile region of South Balad Ruz and throughout all of the province, negotiated and facilitate unprecedented combined ISF, Pesh Merga and Coalition Force operations in the Kurd/Arab disputed zone. Planned, prepared for and supported two major ISF led clearance operations. Prepared for and executed a relief in place and transition of authority to 3/2 Stryker Brigade setting conditions for their success in execution of a responsible drawn down of Coalition Forces and Parliamentary Elections at the national level.

Perhaps your greatest contribution has been partnering with Iraqi Security Forces, overseeing proper

governance and planting a seed of hope for the Iraqi people. With your security force partners you have established a safe and secure environment in Diyala, which will continue to serve as a catalyst for progress in this critically important Province.

In short, you have provided the citizens here in Diyala with an incredible opportunity to prosper and exercise their sovereignty. Although the Iraqis face many challenges, because of your tireless efforts there is a strong undercurrent of hope and optimism for the future of Diyala and her citizens. We thank you for your dedication to the cause.

We would ask that every Soldier and Leader in our combat team continue to strive to master your individual skills, take care of your battle buddy and you must continue to hold each other accountable. We challenge leaders at every level to lead, to set the right example and continue to stay focused on discipline, respect and maintaining standards. Discipline is the glue that bonds together the leader and led commitment and discipline is developed by maintaining high standards and demanding Soldierly habits.

If *discipline* is the "glue" that bonds the leader and the led, then it is *respect* that is the "cement" that holds the team together. We must respect our

traditions and military values, our diversity and most importantly each other. Each of us is accountable for our actions, for our mission, for each other and for our Nation's treasures. Let's not compromise on our commitment to discipline, respect, accountability and teamwork. We have all worked too hard during this lifecycle and deployment to lose focus and momentum.

We ask that all of you continue to keep our wounded Warriors and their Families in your thoughts and prayers, many of them continue to have a long and tough road to recovery and need your prayers and support. Drop them a note or better yet, give them call, as they need and deserve our continued support – we must never forget our wounded and fallen comrades!

Again, CSM Cervantes and I thank you all for what you have done on behalf of Diyala, Iraq, the Arctic Wolves, the U.S. Army and our Nation. It has been our honor to lead and serve with our Nation's most precious resource – her sons and daughters.

You must stay safe, remain true to each other, serve with honor and – ***FINISH STRONG!***



THE WOLF  
WOLF 7





An Iraqi policeman with the Diyala Police Dog Program, works with his dog to find a mock explosive device during a joint training exercise with U.S. Soldiers from Headquarters Company K-9, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, on Forward Operating Base Warhorse, near Baqouba, Iraq, Aug. 2, 2009. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sergeant Ali E. Flisek)



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# Arctic Wolves take over battle space

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## November 2008 issue

Story and photos by

Pfc. Alisha Nye

14th Public Affairs Detachment

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A transition of authority ceremony took place, Oct. 27, 2008, at Forward Operating Base Warhorse, located in the Diyala province of Iraq, signifying the end of a 15 month tour of duty for the 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment Dragoons and the start of a year-long tour of duty for the 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division Arctic Wolves.

"It's a very important day because the Arctic Wolves are coming in – a very good organization," said Maj. Gen Mark Hertling, commander of 1st Armored Division and Multi-National Division-North.

"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."

Hertling said he's seen Col. Burt Thompson, commander of 1st SBCT, 25th In. Div., and his Arctic Wolves rise to the challenge of taking over the battlespace.

"I'm very much looking forward to working with Col. Thompson and his group because, what I've seen so far, they have come right into the province and have really taken charge from the first day," Hertling said.

The biggest thing Hertling hopes to accomplish with



Col. Burt Thompson and Command Sgt. Maj. Gabriel Cervantes, commander and command sergeant major of 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, uncase the brigade colors during a transition of authority ceremony Oct. 27.

1st SBCT, 25th In. Div., 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 helping people of the province," Hertling said. The mission for 1st SBCT, 25th In. Div., doesn't stop there, however.

"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."

Thompson said 2SCR set 1st SBCT, 25th In. Div. up for success and the transition from

the regiment to the brigade has been going quite smoothly so far.

"The operative word there is, 'transition,'" Thompson said. "It is a change from one brigade combat team, or regiment, to a new one and, certainly, the most volatile time for any organization is during a period of transitions. So we have to make sure, which we have done here, that it is smooth."

Despite the huge undertaking, Thompson said he has no doubt in his mind that his SBCT will accomplish its mission in Diyala.

Hertling agreed. "They have a good training background, they know what they're getting into, they all have a very good feel for what they have to accomplish very quickly," Hertling said. "They're ready for it. There are some very sharp soldiers that I've met in every single one of the battalions. It's good to have that new energy here to bring new things to the province. They've come just at the right time."



# 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team Closes Combat Outposts Across Diyala



Iraqi Army Lt. Col. Khalil Malik Ahmed, commander 3rd Battalion, 20th Brigade, and Capt. Matthew Caprari, commander Apache Company, 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Stryker Combat Team sign the paperwork officially transferring control of Combat Outpost Ayres to the Iraqi Army.



Contractors remove barriers at Combat Outpost Zaganiyah, previously occupied by Company C, 1st Battalion, 24th Infantry Regiment, as the COP is closed and handed back to the Government of Iraq, June 28, 2009.

Capt. Justino Lopez, Charlie Battery Commander, 2nd Battalion, 8th Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, signs documents turning over command of Combat Outpost (COP) Mullalah to Sameer Al-Haddad, Secretariat of the Prime Minister, during a change of command ceremony at COP Mullalah, Diyala province, Iraq, June 25th, 2009.



# Farrell Receives Soldier's Medal for Heroic Rescue of Fellow Soldier

**June 2009 Issue**

Story and Photo by  
Spc. Anthony Jones  
145 MPAD

Trapped upside down inside a dark Stryker filling with cold water is a terrifying ordeal with a horrible fate for those inside, however dedication to one another and the heroism of Soldiers prevented a catastrophe in mid December 2008.

Spc. Ricardo Farrell, of Annandale, Va., a member of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, was put in such a situation.

Following the Army core values of personal courage, loyalty and selfless service, Farrell dove from the vehicle commander's seat of his Stryker swimming through the flooded driver's hole to rescue the trapped driver and saving his life.

For his actions, Farrell was awarded the Soldier's Medal, an award presented to any person of the Armed Forces of the United States, or of a friendly foreign nation who while serving in any capacity with the Army of the United States, distinguishes themselves by heroism not involving actual conflict with an enemy.

The night of December 22, 2008, Farrell's Stryker was part of a convoy headed out for a combat patrol; when an oncoming vehicle caused the driver of Farrell's Stryker to swerve and ultimately roll into a watery canal, leaving only a foot of breathable water in the rear of the Stryker.

"We hit the canal and started to slide to the right and the



Spc. Ricardo Farrell, a member of 1st Battalion, 24th Infantry Regiment, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, shakes the hand of Brig. Gen. James Nixon after being presented with the Soldier's Medal

weight pulled the Stryker into the canal," said Farrell. "Next thing I know we are upside down and water is rushing in."

After righting himself in the vehicle and finding most of the crew in the back Farrell heard the shouts of his driver, trapped under his seat.

"I heard my driver yelling, he was screaming 'I don't want to die'. I heard him a couple more times then the yelling stopped," said Farrell.

Still wearing his own body armor, Farrell went through what Soldiers call the "Hell hole", a small opening between the crew compartment and drivers seat, and pulled the driver out.

"I went under the Hell hole, but I couldn't reach him, I remember moving stuff out of the way and I was scared he had drowned. I thought that was it for him," Farrell stated. "I grabbed him by his arm and body armor and pulled him out. I just didn't want

my driver to die. That's the worst feeling anyone could have."

Farrell was recognized for his heroism in a ceremony held on Forward Operating Base Warhorse. Brig. Gen. James C. Nixon, Deputy Commanding General – Operations, 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, presented Farrell with his medal.

Also honored was Staff Sgt. Melvin Clark, from Minneapolis. Clark was the first Soldier from another vehicle to reach the rolled Stryker and was able to open the doors allowing the trapped Soldiers to escape. Clark was awarded an Army Commendation Medal for his actions.

After presenting the Soldiers their awards Nixon stated, "These two heroes, under great stress, made the commitment to risk their own lives to save one of their buddies, quite frankly there is no higher honor. I'm proud to stand in front of these two heroes among heroes. It makes an old Soldier feel proud."



# The *hunter*, the *hunted*

**March 2009 issue**

Story and photos by

Spc. Opal Vaughn

14th Public Affairs Detachment

The hunt is on. An improvised explosive device detonates in the Diyala province of Iraq. No time for thinking or questioning, just training put into action. Without a second to lose Chapman calls his team to a halt, "turn it around," he yells.

Sgt. 1st Class Brent Chapman, team leader, Thunder Troop, Company A, 5th Squadron, 1st U.S. Cavalry Regiment, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division and his team are hungry. Not hungry in the sense that they need sustenance but they are hungry to find the whereabouts of an IED blast site.

There are hunters and then there are the hunted, and these Soldiers are hungry. Today's menu includes one IED blast site and one battlefield damage assessment by Thunder Troop.

"We got word from the Iraqi army or Iraqi Police, I'm not sure which, that an IED went off and hit a civilian vehicle," said Staff Sgt. Jeremy Bland, squad leader, Thunder, 5-1Cav. "Even though the IA and IP are responsible for that - just to maintain situational awareness in our sector so that we have an accurate picture of what the threats are - we've sent an element to check it out and link up with the IP to find out what the deal is."

Like a pack of wolves on the prowl, Thunder Troop whips their Strykers around and prepares to adjust fire toward the new mission.

"We roll out every single day. Something is bound to change while we're out," said Manas-

sas, Va. native, Sgt. Jon Mycko, squad leader, Thunder, 5-1 Cav.

Making adjustments like this are quite common in military operations. An adjustment Thunder is trained and willing to do.

"Right now it's not confirmed that someone, Coalition Forces or ISF, is actually at the blast site," said Staff Sgt. Charles Marshall, squad leader, Thunder, 5-1 Cav. "So we'll cordon the area and take some information down and try to develop the situation."

One IP checkpoint after another, Thunder moves swiftly taking advantage of their close proximity to the blast site.

"The mission that we have today is taking precedence, so Navy EOD - that's more of their specialty - is going to the blast site. That way, we can get the professionals on site which will allow us continue our first mission," Bland stated. "Working with ISF, we're required to link up with IA and IP officials. We have contacts that we link up with at each individual office to conduct joint missions in Mandeli and Katoon."

"Link - up" missions conducted by CF are important for ISF to become more proactive in keeping their country safe.

"We're trying to allow the ISF to take a more active role in the protection of their individual cities," Bland said. "Mainly we just supplement their forces and try to let them take the lead. It's good for the morale of the people in the village to actually see their own local security forces taking the lead on providing security for their AO as opposed to Americans just doing it for them; which is the way it has been."

A safe distance from the blast site, several ground ele-



Staff Sgt. Charles Marshall, squad leader, checks a bag for possible munitions while Spc. Carl Deuel pulls security during a mission while in the Diyala Province of Iraq.

ments dismount, standing side by side with local IP's pulling security at a main intersection.

"I think we do have a purpose here," said Stony Brook, N.Y. native, Spc. Stavros Stathakos, gunner, Thunder, 5-1Cav. "We can definitely commit time and be sure that our job is done right to make sure that the ISF are well grounded and confident to pick up from where we leave off. This will assist them to further achieving the goal of having to sustain this country themselves."

That's what separates Thunder troop from the rest, their determination. They didn't just get their name by sitting around, Mycko stated.

"This isn't an egotistical remark," Mycko began, "but this is by far the most versatile platoon within Alpha troop. Thunder is normally thunder or lightning which is used by a mortar section in our unit. When the rounds hit the ground, they go boom. A loud and thunderous boom - 120 millimeters of thunder," Mycko stated with a grin.



# Recon Platoon, 1-5 IN trains

**July 2009 issue**

Story by Spc. Anthony Jones  
145th MPAD

Photos provided by 1-5 IN

A graduation ceremony held June 3 marked the culmination of months of cooperation between Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces.

Recon platoon, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, a unit which mission includes source driven raids across the battalion's area of operations in Diyala, was in need of a dedicated ISF partner.

"With the new security agreement we could no longer perform unilateral operations after January," said Capt. Mario Anthony Cicconetti, commander, Recon Platoon. "So we began pairing up with local police stations and Emergency Response Force battalions.

Cicconetti said due to the nature of his platoon's mission they do not have their own battle



Recon Platoon, Headquarters, Headquarters Company, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> Stryker Brigade Combat Team.

space like the companies of the 1-5 IN, creating the problem of not having a constant ISF partner.

"We ran into the problem where we were pulling guys the companies were going to use for patrols," said Cicconetti. "I approached the battalion commander with the idea of getting a good group of guys who are competent and want to do our type of mission."

Lt. Col. Shawn Reed, commander of the 1-5 IN, worked with the commander of the ERF to create a 14 man ERF platoon. The platoon was created using ERF soldiers from the ERF headquarters and the 2<sup>nd</sup> ERF Battalion.

Once Recon Platoon was partnered with the ERF platoon, they started to train them in basic soldiering skills and pre-mission procedures ranging from pre-combat inspections to ramp briefings and mission rehearsals.

"They started off on the side lines watching us do our pre-combat checks and as we continued they began performing their own rehearsals," said Cicconetti. "Their leaders and platoon sergeants stepped up and took the lead."

Recon Platoon and members of the Emergency Response Force conduct small unit clearing tactics while others observe and direct the training from atop Hesco barriers.





# Emergency Response Force

Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Joseph Velasquez, platoon sergeant, Recon Platoon, said as the two platoons trained and worked together he saw the ERF's platoon sergeants take on their role, becoming the trainers and conducted their own training providing a chance for the Soldiers of Recon Platoon to act as observers and help guide the ERF when needed.

"In the beginning we had to do a lot of explaining why we do things the way we do them. Things like positioning them to establish proper security," said Velasquez. "When we started doing raids they really wanted to catch the suspect and they knew exactly where to look to find hiding spots."

Both Cicconetti and Velasquez said they were proud to be able to work with and train the ERF platoon which over time became more and more proficient in intelligence gathering, mission planning and ability to carry out successful raids.

Cicconetti said most of the missions after the June 3 graduation and the June 30 deadline for Coalition Forces to be withdrawn from cities were not U.S. led missions. They were missions planned by the ERF with information they had gathered themselves with Recon Platoon assisting.

"It makes us proud because we know they care," said Cicconetti. "They care enough to rehearse, train and gather their own information to drive their own operations."

Members of Recon Platoon observe an ERF unit conducting small unit tactics during a training session.



With the aid of an interpreter a Recon Soldier instructs members of the Emergency Response Force.







Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 8th Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division and Iraqi Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 19th Brigade, 5th Division, detonate firebombs with the intention of burning the underbrush of a section of palm groves, Dec 22.(U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communications Specialist 2nd Class Walt Pels, Joint Combat Camera, Fleet Combat Camera Group Pacific)

# ARCHANGEL

*Pursuit III*

## January 2009 issue

Story by Pfc. Alisha Nye

14th Public Affairs Detachment

Photos by Spc. Bobby Allen

982nd Combat Camera (Airborne)

In theology, an archangel is a heavenly being who is meant to protect humankind by serving in the army of God. Conserving and protecting the wellbeing of their fellow men is an ideal that Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 8th Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Stryker

Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, as well as their Iraqi Army counterparts, took to heart during the appropriately named Operation Archangel Pursuit III.

"The purpose of the mission was to go into the town of Naqib and conserve it," said 1st Sgt. Dean Johnson, Battery A, 2nd Bn., 8th Field Artillery Regt. "Enemy forces came in the area and forced the families who lived there out."

The importance of saving this area is great. The town



SOLDIERS FROM THE 87TH ENGINEERS COMPANY, PREPARE A BARREL OF GAS FOR A CONTROLLED BURN IN THE PALM GROVES OF NAQIB, IRAQ, DURING A JOINT CLEARING OPERATION DURING OPERATION ARCHANGEL PURSUIT III





SOLDIERS WITH THE 87TH ENGINEERS COMPANY, PREPARE TO DETONATE A CONTROLLED BURN IN THE PALM GROVES OF NAQIB, IRAQ, DEC. 19

of Naqib, which is located in the Diyala Province of Iraq, is an agricultural area that once provided the majority of the families in the vicinity with an income, Johnson explained.

"The area is a great farming area," said the Detroit, Mich., native. "The palm groves produce oranges, pomegranates and grapes as well as dates. That's how the families in the area made their money – made their living, by farming."

However, where the palm groves once supplied the locals with a much needed livelihood, the underbrush of the palm groves now supply enemy forces with hiding spaces as well as a place to stash weapons.

"The problem with the palm groves is that they are overloaded with IEDs and booby traps," Johnson said. "When Al Qaeda took the area over it had a real impact on the families."

This is why Coalition Forces teamed up with key Iraqi Army leaders and decided to unleash havoc on the one thing displacing the families of Naqib

and preventing them from living normal lives. During Operation Archangel Pursuit III, the Soldiers of 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn., 8<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Regt., with the assistance of their Iraqi Army counterparts, transformed the underbrush into an inferno.

"The initial explosions burned off a lot of the fuel, and what that did was burn off the underbrush," Johnson said. "By clearing out the underbrush we can see straight through the palm groves so we can uncover and clear booby traps. We can clear out anything that may be in there – including bad guys."

Burning the underbrush not only heightened visibility but it helped to keep Soldiers from going into the palm groves unharmed.

"Burning down the underbrush made it possible to go into the palm groves without injury to the IA or Coalition Forces," Johnson said.

Now that the fire has burned out and threats have been found and destroyed, the main focus of the mission in Naqib

is security, said Johnson.

"The Iraqi Army is getting in there and securing the area so they can start bringing families back in," he said.

Johnson is hopeful that this will be the start of a larger mission to clear the palm groves in the entire Diyala Province of threats to the families who reside there.

"Naqib is a small area, but it's a start," he said. "I'm hoping this will trickle throughout the province. It will help bring stability back."

Though the mission was considered to be a success, Johnson said it could not have been done without the Iraqi Army spearheading the operation.

"They were the ones out front pulling security and patrolling," he said. "They are what made the operation successful. They know the area and without them I don't think we would have been as successful as we were. They are doing a tremendous job. They are ready for their country back."



STAFF SGT. RICHARD LUCIANO AND STAFF SGT. AARON BETZ, BOTH WITH 87TH ENGINEERS COMPANY OF FORT HOOD, TEXAS REVIEW A MAP OF THE AREA THAT IS ABOUT TO GO THROUGH A CONTROLLED BURN IN THE PALM GROVES IN NAQIB, IRAQ, DEC. 19



# *It's a Jungle Out There*

**May 2009 issue**

Story and Photos by  
Sgt. Jeremy Pitcher  
145 MPAD

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

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

suspected weapons caches, and questioned people about insurgent activity.

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

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

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

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

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

The Soldiers pushed through thick brush and tall grass. The setting resembled an equatorial jungle,

unlike what most had experienced before in Iraq.

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

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



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



# *Air Assaulting the Tigris*



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

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

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

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

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





# NAVY EOD<sup>teach</sup> SOLDIERS HBIED clearance

**February 2009 issue**

Stoy and Photo by

Spc. Opal Vaughn

14th Public Affairs Detachment

“Okay stop,” says Navy Lt. Chris Hussey, a platoon officer with Explosive Ordnance Disposal, Mobile 1, based out of San Diego, Calif., as he walks through a set of t-wall barriers, which compose the entrance of a House-Borne Improvised Explosive Device training site. “What did you guys do wrong?” Hussey asks a group of Soldiers he’s training.

Hussey looks around and smiles seeing no one raising a hand to answer his question. Slowly he crouches down on one knee, “You see this?” he points to what looks like an ant trail but to the Soldiers surprise, a wire protrudes at the end of the trail. “These are the kind of mistakes that get people killed and that is why I am going to train you guys on what to look for and how to clear a house properly.”

“Now line back up and let’s try this again, step by step,” Hussey grins.

And just as quickly as the command is given, the Soldiers quickly set back up behind the barriers to start the Level 1 class on HBIEDs while at Forward Operating Base Warhorse, Jan. 9.

“Typically we train Coalition Forces here at Warhorse or within our area of operation,” said Hussey. “But we have been starting to integrate the Iraqi Army into our training as well.”

“HBIEDs and booby trapped buildings have been a pretty decent threat out here; we’ve had

a few casualties,” Hussey stated. “We’ve created this training to give some safe tools to the Soldiers so that they can stay safe and be confident in what they’ve learned.”

The HBIED training site is composed of a wood house and several CONEXs converted into buildings. Each room is booby trapped with different scenarios which are realistic to what a Soldier might see when out in the field, according to Hussey.

“We try to keep things pretty realistic to the devices that are found in our AO,” Hussey explained while pointing out different places where IEDs could be hidden in the walls of the house at the training site. “Simple things like victim-operated devices such as crush wire, IEDs, trip wires in doorways, anti-personnel landmines and command wire IEDs. They are all pretty basic and things the Soldiers can identify and learn proper safety procedures to work around them,” Hussey stated.

“They are devices we’ve recovered from the field; things we’ve built up that are simulations of devices that are actually out there,” Hussey said, walking toward the next training station.

“Make sure you guys communicate with each other. There’s no since in trying to clear something by yourself. You have to work together as a team,” Hussey shouts to the Soldiers.

Hiding himself inside a room of one of the houses, Hussey continued to explain, “Prior to even touching a house, do a 360 degree reconnaissance around the outside. Get any type of information you

can gather on the house by looking inside windows, looking outside and around the house, look above the house, look for anything that may look suspicious, anything out of the ordinary like piles of brush in the doorway, command wire routed along the ground and through windows, entry and exit access to the house; these are all key factors to look for,” Hussey stated.

“Seeing inside those windows is really important to see if you can identify any type of hazards inside or any type of unknown materials that you can check out once you enter the house,” Hussey said. “But if you identify these threats prior to entering the house, you’ve mitigated an extensive amount of risk prior to entering it.”

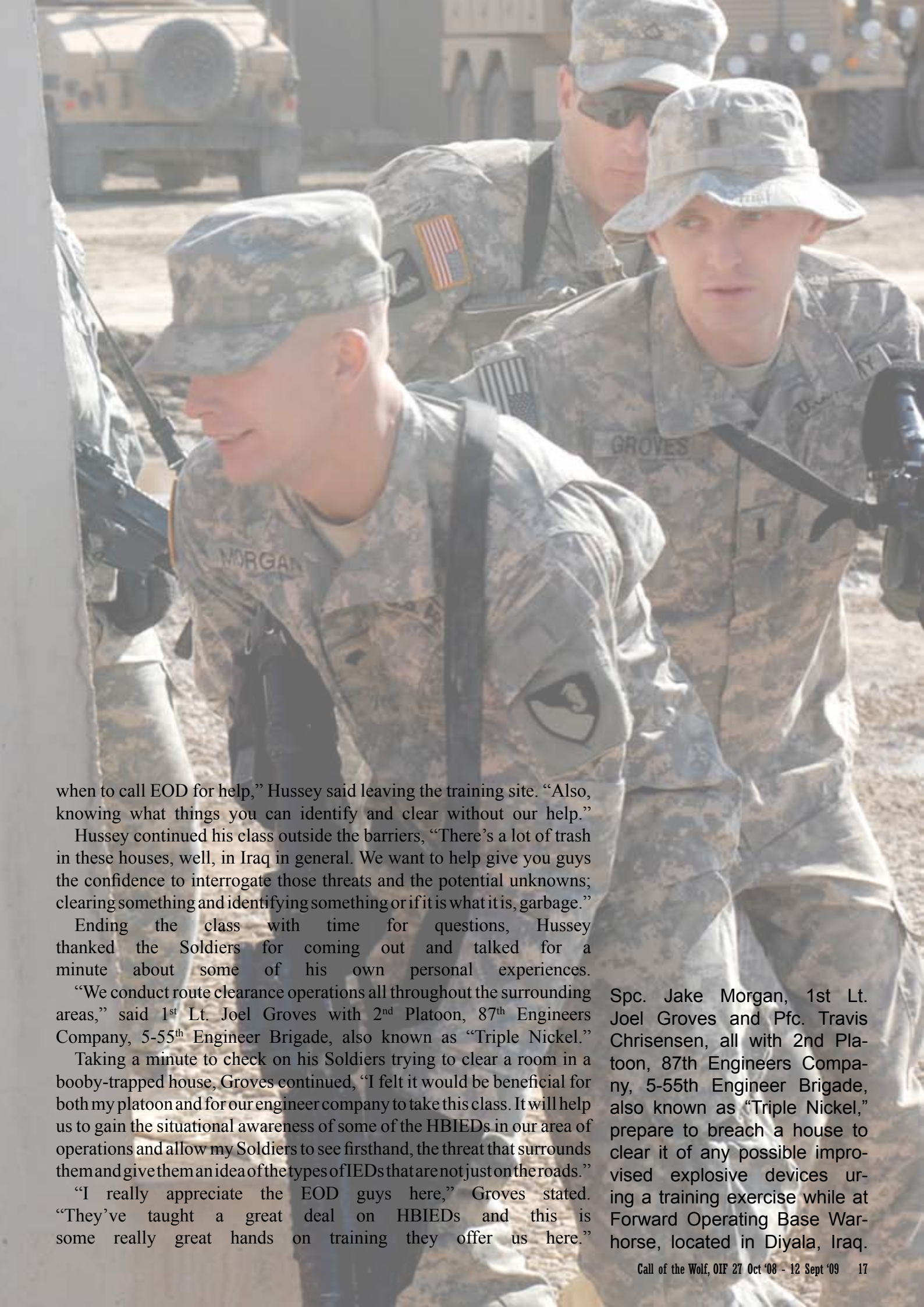
“Shhh, here they come,” Hussey grinned as he crouched lower in his hiding spot.

After about ten minutes of waiting, Hussey finally popped out of his hiding position. “Now, if I were an insurgent, you guys would be done,” Hussey looks at the Soldiers. “You must ensure to check everything, even if it’s something as simple as knocking on wood,” Hussey tapped on the wall with his hand.

Even though Navy EOD offers two levels of HBIED classes, Hussey integrates techniques from both classes into his training to better prepare the Soldiers.

“We teach two levels; level one is simple recognition of the threats and going through techniques to teach the Soldiers to be safe. Level two is more identifying the threats as soon as possible and taking appropriate measures like knowing





when to call EOD for help,” Hussey said leaving the training site. “Also, knowing what things you can identify and clear without our help.”

Hussey continued his class outside the barriers, “There’s a lot of trash in these houses, well, in Iraq in general. We want to help give you guys the confidence to interrogate those threats and the potential unknowns; clearing something and identifying something or if it is what it is, garbage.”

Ending the class with time for questions, Hussey thanked the Soldiers for coming out and talked for a minute about some of his own personal experiences.

“We conduct route clearance operations all throughout the surrounding areas,” said 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Joel Groves with 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon, 87<sup>th</sup> Engineers Company, 5-55<sup>th</sup> Engineer Brigade, also known as “Triple Nickel.”

Taking a minute to check on his Soldiers trying to clear a room in a booby-trapped house, Groves continued, “I felt it would be beneficial for both my platoon and for our engineer company to take this class. It will help us to gain the situational awareness of some of the HBIEDs in our area of operations and allow my Soldiers to see firsthand, the threat that surrounds them and give them an idea of the types of IEDs that are not just on the roads.”

“I really appreciate the EOD guys here,” Groves stated. “They’ve taught a great deal on HBIEDs and this is some really great hands on training they offer us here.”

Spc. Jake Morgan, 1st Lt. Joel Groves and Pfc. Travis Chrisensen, all with 2nd Platoon, 87th Engineers Company, 5-55th Engineer Brigade, also known as “Triple Nickel,” prepare to breach a house to clear it of any possible improvised explosive devices during a training exercise while at Forward Operating Base Warhorse, located in Diyala, Iraq.



# HEAR THEM ROAR

February 2009 issue

Story by Pfc. Alisha Nye

14th Public Affairs Detachment

Photos by Spc. Anthony Jones

145th MPAD

There was once a time in U.S. military history when it would have been impossible to think of troops in combat without the assistance of tracked battle vehicles. In modern warfare, tracked vehicles are being replaced by wheeled vehicles and the calls of tanks are seldom heard.

However, there are still select locations in today's theatre of war where the roar of an M1A1 Abrams Main Battle Tank can still be heard. The Diyala Province of Iraq is one of those places.

Diyala, currently the home to 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, has recently taken on a new resident—Task Force 3rd Battalion, 66th Armor Regiment, 172nd Infantry Brigade (Separate.) The unit recently deployed in support of their Stryker brethren.

"Based on the real estate that they have out here, I guess the (Division) felt it necessary to bring an additional battalion task force out here to be able to cover such a vast amount of area," said Maj. Joseph Pepper Jr., TF 3rd Bn., 66th Arm. Regt., TF executive officer. "From how they have their forces arranged with 5th Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment primarily focusing on the northern part of Diyala, the brigade

needed an additional battalion task force to be able to assist with the operations down south."

Task Force 3rd Bn., 66th Arm. Regt. was the choicest of battalions 1st SBCT, 25th Inf. Div., had to select from, said Pepper.

"I think they wanted the best battalion they could get, so they called Task Force 3-66," he said.

Pepper's logistics noncommissioned officer in charge agreed.

"I think our battalion's professional and efficient reputation is what got us picked for 1-25 from our brigade combat team," said Sgt. 1st Class Ronald Hardin.

The unit itself is particularly an asset to 1st SBCT, 25th Inf. Div. because it is an armor battalion.

"We bring a heavy capability that most units over here in this brigade don't have," Hardin said. "We bring the M1 and the Bradley series to help accomplish the mission. That provides them with an additional capability they're not used to."

Pepper concurred.

"We bring a lot of manpower and equipment that's not common to theatre anymore," Pepper said. "Particularly, we bring two infantry companies which add a lot of personnel – infantrymen. In addition, we bring heavy armor, which is the M1A1 tank as well as

the Bradley Fighting Vehicle, which is the M2A2. We also have one 20 millimeter mortar section, which consists of four M264 mortars – a significant amount of combat fire."

The Soldiers in this unit and manning this equipment will be dutifully deployed, Pepper said.

"We plan on doing a series of clearing operations that include route clearance and area clearance operations focused on specific areas that we identify over the next couple of weeks," Pepper said. "We're looking to do some combined operations with the Iraqi Army, as well, which will give the Iraqis the capability to sustain the area, in terms of security, once we do leave."

Overall, Pepper said, the Soldiers of Task Force 3rd Bn., 66th Arm. Regt., are happy to be providing 1st SBCT, 25th Inf. Div., with an additional in-theatre asset, as well as they are happy to let the roar of their tanks ring across the battlefield.

"We're really happy to be here to be able to support the 1-25th," Pepper said. "We're glad that they chose us to be part of their team and we're looking forward to seeing the successes of both the brigade as well as the task force in this endeavor."



A M2A2 Bradley Fighting Vehicle, from Task Force 3-66 AR provides overwatch security for dismounted Soldiers during a patrol in southern Diyala Province



# United States Air Force:

## *Bringing the Boom*

April 2009 issue

Story by Pfc. Alisha Nye

Photo by Spc. Opal Vaughn

14th Public Affairs Detachment

Most people think that all Airmen do is fly airplanes. Most people are wrong.

While the United States Air Force does use aircraft to supplement and defend U.S. Forces on ground in combat zones, it takes a considerable amount of ground coordination to organize a successful air strike – to drop a bomb from an aircraft onto a selected ground target.

This organization is provided by Airmen such as Staff Sgt. Andrew Carpenter, joint terminal attack controller, 5th Air Support Operations Squadron, attached to 2nd Battalion, 8th Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division.

“The biggest factor for us, our main focus, is making sure that all the friendly forces are out of harm’s way so we don’t have an incident of fratricide,” said Carpenter.

Ultimately, it is a communications specialist who corresponds with troops on ground who runs the show. This specialist will get a grid coordinate for the target on ground once the locations of all ground forces has been established, said Carpenter.

“It has to be very precise,” Carpenter said.

After establishing a grid coordinate with the pilots of the aircraft and all further information regarding a bomb drop onto a selected ground target is passed on, that’s when the communications specialist will enter into an actual control procedure with the pilots.

“We try to talk the pilots’ eyes onto the target so they can see what

Pfc. Lukas Couvaras, an infantryman with 2nd Battalion, 8th Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division looks on from a distance at the results of a Joint Direct Attack Munitions demolishing a school in Amugaten, Iraq, Feb. 7. The school was a known house-born improvised explosive carrier and was destroyed as part of a joint mission called Operation Automatic Pursuit II, lead by U.S. Forces and 3rd and 4th Battalions, 18th Brigade, Iraqi Army.

we’re talking about,” Carpenter said. “From there, we have to work out what direction they will be flying in from. If, for whatever reason, a bomb falls short or long, it could cause fratricide. So, we try not to have them flying in toward friendly people. We have them fly parallel to friendly forces.”

The success of all of these factors determines the success of the drop, said Carpenter. If all information is communicated properly, an air strike is extremely successful, but the job isn’t always easy.

“It gets pretty hairy sometimes,” Carpenter said. “But we’re very good at what we do.”

Communication, said Carpenter, is the key to success.

“Our main job is knowing how to use a radio,” he said.

Along with coordinating air assault missions, 2-8 FA’s Air Force brethren work with a myriad of aircraft in order to support the ground missions of 1st SBCT, 25th Inf. Div.

“We’ve got a jamming aircraft that we can use to jam signals from anything from cell phones,



to remote controlled improvised explosive devices,” Carpenter said. “We can work with unmanned aerial vehicles to do some intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance.”

The most difficult part about this highly coordinated job? Sitting in a tactical operations center, said Carpenter.

“Three years ago and when I came in 2003, we were very much going outside the wire, going out with companies and doing operations on a daily basis,” he said. “Technology has kind of hampered us. People might think it’s easy because I can do everything I need to do from the TOC, but I would much rather be out there, boots on ground, with the guys and doing my job.”

Though the way he operates during deployment is different now than it was before, Carpenter would not trade doing this job, or who he’s doing this job with, for anything.

“I like my job and I love working with 2-8,” he said. “They’re the best battalion I’ve worked with in six and a half years of doing this job.”



# History Made in First Joint Iraqi-Coalition

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## April 2009 issue

Story and photos by  
Sgt. Jeremy Pitcher  
145th MPAD

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History was made as the first joint U.S. and Iraqi Army Non-Commissioned Officer ceremony was held at Forward Operating Base Faylok in Diyala province on March 27. Soldiers from 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 21<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division joined with Soldiers of the 20<sup>th</sup> Brigade, 5<sup>th</sup> Iraqi Army

Division to officially induct their newest members into the NCO Corps.

Of the 27 Soldiers that were inducted in the ceremony, 18 were members of the 3-21 Inf. and 9 were members of the 20<sup>th</sup> IA Brigade.

Though the ceremony is not required for Soldiers who become NCOs the ceremony is seen as a time-honored tradition that displays the pride and respect Soldiers have for the Corps.

"It is a great honor. I know when I came up as a Sergeant, this was pretty much the tradition and the norm, but due to all

of the deployments it has kind of went away. So it is good to see it come back and to see the Soldiers get to participate," said First Sgt. Richard Beaver of 3-21 Inf. The ceremony began with the playing of the U.S. and Iraqi national anthems symbolizing the bond the two groups have created with each other.

"We have united over the last few years. Last deployment we didn't joke around or talk to them [Iraqi Army] very much but now we interact with them quite a bit," said Sgt. Melvin Gibson, an NCO

Iraqi Soldiers stand at attention after reciting the Iraqi Army Non-Commissioned Officer's creed on March 27. The joint ceremony is a testament to the partnership that has been formed by Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces. The historical event is hoped to be just the first of many more in the future.





# Coalition NCO Induction Ceremony



American Soldiers raise their right hands while reciting the Non-Commissioned Officer's creed on March 27. The first joint induction ceremony included 18 Soldiers from 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division and 9 Soldiers from 20th Brigade, 5th Iraqi Army Division.

inductee with the 3-21 Inf.

During the ceremony the Soldiers from each respective nation stood and recited their service's NCO creed. Each creed was then interpreted to the others language so all could acknowledge the creed being recited.

The guest speaker for the ceremony was Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Austin of the 25<sup>th</sup> Brigade Support Battalion, 1/25<sup>th</sup> SBCT who spoke on what it means to be a leader and NCO in the military.

"It was an honor for me to be chosen as the guest

speaker to be able to give a message to the young leaders; our future leaders of tomorrow," said Austin.

After Austin spoke, four senior U.S. NCOs along with one Iraqi NCO entered and lit four separate candles signifying the core principles of the military and its forever endurance.

The Soldiers then walked through an archway and over a small wooden bridge on the event's stage to signify their passage into the NCO Corps.

"This is something I'll always remember; the biggest reason is because

of the IA. It just shows that every day we are getting closer to the Iraqi people and the Iraqi Army," said NCO inductee Sgt. Jessie Calvillo, Company C, 3-21 Inf.

After the ceremony closed the new inductees lined up and were greeted with smiles and handshakes from their fellow Soldiers from both the U.S. and Iraq. The historical event was a defining mark in the relationship between the two nations, once enemies, now comrades, in the struggle to bring peace to a nation.



# Infantry Soldiers train IPs for take over

December 2008 issue

Story and Photos by

Pfc. Alisha Nye

14th Public Affairs Detachment

Infantry Soldiers from Company A, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, do more while deployed than simply patrol the streets of Iraq in order to keep the towns and villages within the Diyala Province safe for its residents; these Soldiers train Iraqi Police in the Emergency Response Force on various skills that will prepare them for self-sustaining justice on the streets of the province.

"We've been going from safe-house to safe-house teaching them different things," said 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Matthew Kotlarski, platoon leader, Co. A, 1<sup>st</sup> Bn, 5<sup>th</sup> Inf. Regt. "Such as room clearing, searches, how to conduct a raid, interrogation techniques, tactical questioning, those sort of things."

Training these IPs is an effort the newly deployed 1<sup>st</sup> Bn., 5<sup>th</sup> Inf. Regt. Soldiers have continued from the unit they recently replaced and have made strides to not only train more often, but improve upon the training as well.

"The last unit was doing classes with the IPs and it was kind of haphazard because the old IP units kept moving in and out," Kotlarski said. "This current IP unit has been here for a little while, so we started doing the classes."

The Soldiers train the IPs on tasks that are necessary not only to mission safety, but also the safety of the residents of the Diyala Province and have a working program in place to ensure the training is accomplished, said Kotlarski.

"We had an idea of what they needed to work on and made a list of classes," he said. "Prior to a patrol, we assign a squad with the teaching for the day."

When these Soldiers go out on patrol, they first train IPs in the area on a certain skill and proceed to finish their patrol alongside the IPs they just finished training, Kotlarski said, an occurrence which happens five or six times a week and is important to the future safety of the country.

"We're trying to work on their basic

skills," Kotlarski said. "We're not trying to get them overly trained, but we're trying to teach them skills they can use. It's so when we get pulled out we can turn over the province to them. It's so they can stand up on their own and conduct police operations to a point where they don't need us looking over their shoulder or backing them up."

This is something Staff Sgt. Timothy Kelly, squad leader, Co. A, 1<sup>st</sup> Bn., 5<sup>th</sup> Inf. Regt. feels that while the Iraqi Security Forces are well on their way to achieving, they are still not ready for.

"When I was here two years ago, the ISF were pretty disorganized," Kelly said of a previous deployment. "They still have a long way to go, but they're very motivated to learn."

Kotlarski agreed.



An infantry Soldier with Company A, 1<sup>st</sup> Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, demonstrates one of the steps of properly entering and clearing a room of threats while training Iraqi Police on the procedure, Nov. 18.



“They’re very receptive to the training,” he said. “In fact, their officers take the training we teach them and they go and teach it to the rest of their guys. It’s not quite to the level of training we’re at, but at least it’s something. It shows that they’re being proactive.”

The IPs that have gone through the training given by the infantry Soldiers have also shown a willingness to apply what they’ve been taught, Kotlarski said.

“They try to apply what they’ve been taught,” he said. “Sometimes they fall back into bad habits. For the most part, though, they’re trying to take it and apply it when they go out on patrols.”

Though Kotlarski feels these Iraqi Police are not yet ready to completely meet the challenge of patrolling the streets of Iraq alone quite yet, he feels that they are well on their way, he said.

“They seem like they’ve come a long way,” he said. “They’re really taking ownership. They’re not ready to go on their own, I’d say, but they are well on their way.”



Staff Sgt. Timothy Kelly, Squad leader, Company A, 1st Battalion, 5th Infantry Regiment, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, demonstrates one of the steps of properly entering and clearing a room of threats while training Iraqi Police on the procedure.



Iraqi Police in the Emergency Response Force participate in a room-clearing training exercise conducted by Soldiers from Company A, 1st Battalion, 5th Infantry Regiment, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, Nov. 18.





Sgt. Monique Raymundo supervises, while Spc. Shaun Grigsby assists, both medics with Brigade Support Medical Company, 25th Brigade Support Battalion, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, local Iraqi Police in how to properly seat carry a patient to safety without injury to themselves or to the patient during a combat life saving class at Callas, Iraq, November 12.

## *ARMED WITH COMBAT LIFE SAVING SKILLS*

### **December 2008 issue**

Story and Photos by

Spc. Opal Vaughn

14th Public Affairs Detachment

**S**aving the life of another takes courage. Combat medics are trained to do just that. They utilize the training they receive in advance individual training and ensure the health and well-being of an injured or sickly patient.

Forward Operating Base Warhorse houses some of the finest combat medics. Medics with Brigade Support Medical Company, 25th Brigade Support Battalion, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat

Team, 25th Infantry Division, venture outside the wire on a weekly basis and take the skills they have learned and teach local Iraqi police to do the same as part of an ongoing mission, BSB Diamond.

Callas, Iraq is just one stop on the long list of Iraqi police operational posts in the Diyala province of Iraq, Nov. 12.

"We teach different classes - bleeding control, shock, airway, burns, moving patients around safely and quickly, preventative medicine and field sanitation," said Sgt. Monique Raymundo, a medic with BSMC, 25th BSB, 1st SBCT, 25th Inf. Div.

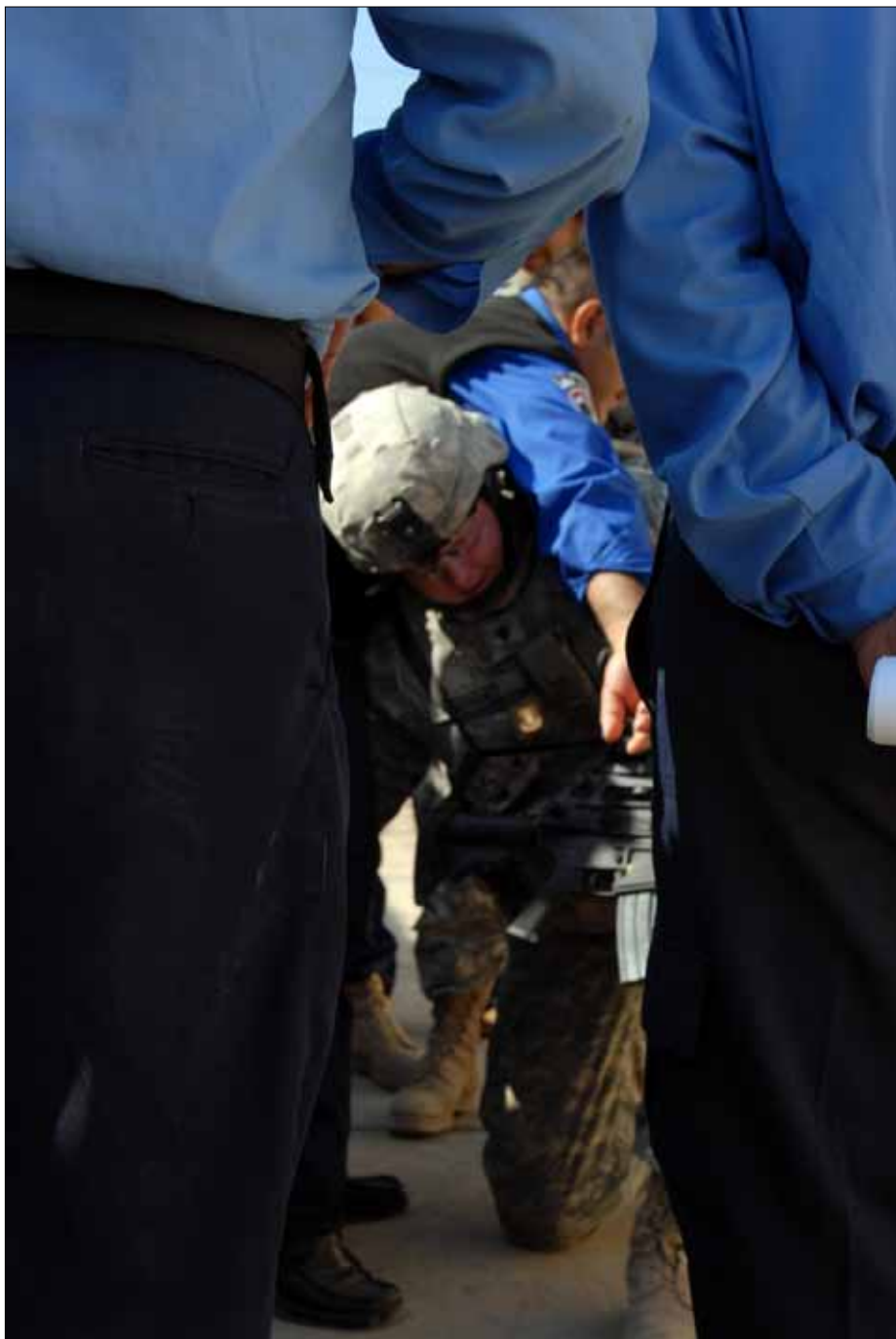
"It was a little difficult

for me because it was my first time teaching this class with an interpreter," Raymundo stated. "But the IPs seemed pretty receptive to what I was teaching them."

According to Raymundo, for the BSMC Soldiers, teaching is not something new for them. "We usually teach the CLS classes to our Soldiers in the rear all the time. That is how we learn to teach and dually train as well. And during missions, we have a different medic come out to teach each time so that everyone can get the experience of teaching," Raymundo added.

Spreading the knowledge of combat life saving





Spc. Shaun Grigsby, a medic with Brigade Support Medical Company, 25th Brigade Support Battalion, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, shows local Iraqi Police how to properly fireman carry a man to safety without injury to themselves or to the patient during a combat lifesaving class at Callas, Iraq, November 12.

techniques is not just for one IP station though. Medics with BSMC try to get out to as many IP operational posts as possible, said Capt. Gabriel Medley, BSMC, 25th BSB, 1st SBCT, 25th Inf. Div. company commander.

"These classes are essential to ease the transitioning process when we're dealing

with the IP's and provincial Iraqi control," Medley stated. "It can be difficult because of the language barriers but we have several interpreters on hand to mediate the language between the IPs and us."

"In order to have a smooth transition we have a team of three that usually teach with a hard copy of the training

for that day, translated in Arabic so the IPs can follow along. Plus, all of our classes are on digits so that we can make as many copies possible, which the IPs can keep," Medley continued.

In support of the BSMC medics and the transitioning process, the 202nd Military Police Company, was also at Callas district headquarters to help.

"Our mission is to escort the reconstruction team for medical training, generator mechanical repairs and additional security reinforcement equipment," said Staff Sgt. David Mickem, 202nd MP Co. non-commissioned officer in charge.

"But we also advise IP operations, training in police techniques and working with our IP counterparts to ensure they are appropriating all of the training and policies, Mickem stated. "We do this to help stabilize all of the IP operations in the area so that we can utilize the Iraqi army forces in other areas."

"Law and order and security in the area are essential," Mickem stated. Even when the BSMC Soldiers aren't out and about teaching the local IPs CLS classes, they're back at the FOB providing medical support.

"We provide medical aerial support for the FOB and we also send a lot of our medics out on missions with the personal security detachment and the combat logistic patrols," Medley stated. "Our medics are at every echelon of the battlefield," said Medley. "They're doing a great job in this transition process."



# Partnership program to train Iraqi mechanics

**March 2009 issue**

Story and photos by

Pfc. Alisha Nye

14th Public Affairs Detachment

**S**oldiers with 25th Brigade Support Battalion, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, have begun training Iraqi Army Soldiers the delicate art of vehicular machinery at Forward Operating Base Warhorse, located in the Diyala Province of Iraq.

"We first started training them close to the end of the year, 2008," said Staff Sgt. Ramiro Carrasco, an automotive mechanic currently overseeing the training of the Iraqi Army soldiers involved with the program. "We have them, roughly, for about two weeks at a time."

The training was started as part of a partnership program between 1st SBCT, 25th Inf. Div., and the Iraqi Army in the area, said Carrasco.

Carrasco also explained that the program is designed around the knowledge base of the individu-



An Iraqi Army Soldier attends his last day of automotive training at Forward Operating Base Warhorse, located in the Diyala Province of Iraq.



An Iraqi Army Soldier conducts maintenance on a humvee after attending a two week training course at Forward Operating Base Warhorse. The training is being conducted by Soldiers with 25th Brigade Support Battalion, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division.

als going through it at the time.

"We do a knowledge assessment of what it is that they know and we actually base our curriculum (on) how much they know," the native of Dallas, Texas, said. "We've actually gotten some that are pretty proficient in different areas. The last crew... we had two of them who were electricians. When we got to the electrical portion of the training it became relatively easy just for the simple fact that they had some knowledge base."

Training these individuals serves a strong purpose, said Carrasco.

"They're going to have a lot of the same equipment that we currently have or that we've given them already," he said. "So it's best that we teach them how to use it and how to troubleshoot the problems."

So far, Carrasco said, that has been the chief element in training the Iraqi Army Soldiers on vehicle mechanics.

"A lot of it has to do with just

troubleshooting – just finding the right answers to the problem," he said. "Once we've gotten past that, then we just show them how maintain the equipment."

The most challenging part about the training, however, has been breaking old habits.

"We try and teach them the curriculum by the textbook itself," Carrasco said. "With these guys, it's almost like a shade-tree mechanic. They're just trying to get to it, versus trying to do it right."

The completed training is not done without avail. Carrasco assures that it is all for a greater purpose.

"At the end of every day they do a check on learning and it's not just something they're going through the motions with," he said. "We're trying to teach them something more advanced they can take back to their units with them. At the end of the day, they actually retain what it is they're doing."



# RETRANS Keeps Soldiers Talking on the Battlefield

**May 2009 issue**

Story and Photo by  
Sgt. Jeremy Pitcher  
145th MPAD

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

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

Their response: go mobile.

With three retransmitting teams, the 176<sup>th</sup> has established two locations in strategic regions of the province and additionally have a mobile asset that can travel to the battlefield to keep the eight different

communication networks going.

A "Retrans" team is equipped with a set of four antennas. They move to a location and setup up the antennas to receive incoming signals.

These signals are then relayed from the site to their desired location. Without the retransmission, these signals would fall short of their desired recipient and would not be heard.

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

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

This added mobility also adds to the ground troops' ability to conduct missions. "Since we can resend communications a long way it extends the battlespace for the troops. It allows

them to move where they are needed," said Specialist Harvey Watson of the 176<sup>th</sup>.

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

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

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

"It is all about the Soldier. Without the Soldier none of this would be possible," said Sgt. Shane Smith of the 176<sup>th</sup>.

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



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



# Operation Legion

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## April 2009 issue

Story and photos by  
Spc. Anthony Jones  
145th MPAD

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Before the sun rose the morning of March 26, Soldiers of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment were already on the move, heading for the villages of Abu Bakr and Abu Awad.

The Soldiers, commanded by Capt. Matthew D. Mackey, were beginning Operation Legion Pursuit II.

The top three key tasks of

Legion Pursuit II were to project and sustain Iraqi Security and Coalition Forces in the area, conduct a detailed census of the towns and to provide humanitarian assistance in order to bolster ISF and local national relations, said Mackey.

“To accomplish the first task is to project ISF and Coalition Forces combat power in the sector; go out there with the people and stay out there for an extended period of time,” said Mackey.

The force projection was intended to be provided by combat air support and the large amount of ISF and Coalition

forces. However, once at the village of Abu Bakr, the Soldiers noticed the target area was now covered by farmland that they didn’t want to destroy; after a short deliberation the air strike was called off and artillery fire was coordinated, firing into an unused area of the river valley.

In order to complete the census, Coalition Forces and Iraqi Army Soldiers moved from house to house using satellite images that labeled each building in the two villages. Overall, approximately 422 buildings were searched. Included in that number were houses, animal pens and



Pfc. Konrad, a member of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division provides security with an Iraqi Army Soldier during Operation Legion Pursuit II, March 26th.



# Legion Pursuit II

other standing structures.

“As a squad leader, I would greet the village people, ask them their concerns, comments, if they’re getting enough food and where they’re getting their water from,” said Staff. Sgt. Ian H. Martinez. “From there I would write down their personal information; who was the head of the household, how many males or females lived there and how many children were there.”

Early in the first day of the operation the villagers were curious when the Soldiers began moving from house to house, but by midday and into the second day word had passed about the ISF and Coalitions Forces’ intentions in the area and the villagers began to open up to Soldiers from both forces.

“They have seen us patrolling before, but usually we (were) doing a quick pass,” said Mackey. “I saw no hostility; once they understood why we were there they were very open and supportive. One woman said she was very happy we were working with the IA and she hoped that someday the IA could be at the level of Coalition Forces, which I think they are getting there.”

While maintaining security, the Iraqi and Coalition Soldiers were very personable and respectful; many of the noncommissioned officers have deployed before and understand the culture, said Mackey.

After clearing both villages and the wadi’s, deep canyons



Iraqi Army and Coalition Soldiers speak with a Iraqi citizen during the census phase of Operation Legion Pursuit II, March 26th.

caused by erosion leading to the river valley, the IA dropped off food supplies in the villages.

Preliminary results of the operation show 422 homes or structures were searched,

150 families were entered into the census, 26 caves were cleared and reduced and four weapons caches were located and exploited.



# WALKING THE LINE

**January 2009 issue**

Story and Photos by

Spc. Opal Vaughn

14th Public Affairs Detachment

“Sergeant, line ‘em up,” Syells Amarillo, Texas, native 2nd Lt. Mark Herrmann, platoon leader, 73rd Engineers Company, 25th Brigade Troops Battalion, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, as he draws an imaginary line with his finger in the air.

“Roger sir. Line it up guys,” hollers Big Fork, Mich., native, Staff Sgt. Peter Johnson, a combat engineer squad leader with 73rd Eng. Co., 25th BTB, 1st SBCT, 25th Inf. Div. And just as quickly as the command is called, several engineer Soldiers form a line to sweep an open field of any possible improvised explosive devices in the Southern Legion Area of Operations during a route clearance mission, Dec. 21.

Slowly but surely the 73rd Engineers have been clearing

the Southern Legion AO of IEDs and munitions threat in the area over the past months.

“The IED threat in our area is not that great, however, there is a lot of ordnance out and about and a lot of caches,” Herrmann stated. “Usually we go out on patrol and clear the roads, but we are not limited to just that. We can and will do anything the brigade asks us to accomplish. In this case, we cleared an area in the Southern Legion AO and found some old munitions in the area so we went ahead and reduced the ordnance.”

The task of route clearance can be repetitive at times but in good reason; it is a vital role in the military’s mission toward cleaning up Iraq and a task the 73rd Eng. Co. is willing to take on.

“Recently, we’ve been conducting more and more searches in the area,” Johnson stated while directing some Soldiers to dig in a spot where the Anps-12 Metal Detector his unit uses to find

munitions, signaled as a possible threat. “One of our biggest jobs right now is to confirm or deny whether these caches exist. So the more we look, the better idea we can gauge on munitions in the area and deem them clear,” added Johnson.

According to Johnson, making sure insurgents are aware of the coalition forces, IP and IA presence is the most important aspect to ridding Iraq of possible munitions and ordnance threats. “We are showing a presence,” Johnson stated. “Our aggressive searches and clearing operations will deter any insurgents from going back to the areas we have cleared, from placing new munitions in the area.”

The hard work of the 73rd Eng. Co. has been paying off. Even when a large cache is not found, every little bit helps.

“Apparently, this area use to be an old battle field position,” said Fairmont, Minn., native Sgt. 1st Class Chris Wolter, a platoon sergeant with 73rd Eng. Co., 25th BTB, 1st SBCT, 25th Inf. Div. “So far we’ve found fuses and recoilless rifle tail extensions. It may not seem like much but with



Johnsonburg, Pa. native, Sgt. Daniel Thorwart, a combat engineer patrolman with 73rd Engineers Company, Brigade Troops Battalion, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, digs to extract any possible munitions, while in the Southern Legion Area of Operations, Iraq, Dec. 21



Long Island, N.Y. native, Spc. Jasper Jones, a route clearance patrolman with 73rd Engineers Company, Brigade Troops Battalion, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, uses an Anps-12 Metal Detector to clear an overgrown palm tree of any possible munitions, while in the Southern Legion Area of Operations, Iraq, Dec. 21.



Soldiers with the 73rd Engineers Company, Brigade Troops Battalion, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, pull security while on a route clearance mission, while in the Southern Legion Area of Operations, Dec. 21.



just these few items, an insurgent can utilize the parts and pieces from the used munitions to make IEDs. So if I'm not familiar with something we find out here, then I call up EOD to dispose of or collect up the ordnance we find. "

When EOD is not hand, the responsibility of disposing of munitions falls into the hands of the 73rd Eng. Co.

"Another Soldier on our team and I are on hand and qualified to destroy any munitions found," Wolter stated. "What determines destroying munitions is if it's any type of factory made munitions found, I am authorized to destroy it. But if the munitions are manmade IEDs, VBIEDs, HBIEDs, or if it's a large weapons cache find, then I will call up EOD to dispose of the ordnance," Wolter added.

Engineers in the military are well known for rebuilding communities and construction projects. But according to Herrmann, there is a lot more to an engineer than meets the eye.

"There are several types of engineer jobs," Herrmann said. "We are not construction engineers like some may think, we're combat engineers. Right now, we have one engineer company

which supports the entire brigade. Our mission title or our job title is basically route clearance."

Even though the threat level is not as high, Herrmann keeps his Soldiers vigilant at all times. "I like to mix things up quite frequently as not to get complacent on patrols," Herrmann said. "Obviously, travelling the roads everyday is still very dangerous. IEDs are still a threat toward forces on the roads even though we haven't seen a high threat level in our AO. But we all know it's there."

Herrmann continued to explain, "When we're on the ground, when we're looking for these old caches, there have been a lot of defensive belts. This simply means the enemy is trying to protect their cache sites so they put up defensive IEDs; specifically in palm groves, they lace coke bottle IEDs with wire and target the single Soldier and attempt to wound them as much as possible," Herrmann stated.

"So when we find these caches we disable them," Herrmann added.

However long the road to purging Iraq of caches will take, Herrmann notes coalition and Iraqi forces are still making progress.

"A majority of the local nationals we come in contact with

are pretty receptive to coalition force presence," Herrmann stated. "But a lot of the areas we have been going into have not seen any coalition force presence at all so the people are still kind of weary and take a stand-off approach when we come through." Even with the little amount of coalition force contact, the local nations still continue to assist Iraqi and coalition forces in any way they can. Herrmann credits this to the increase in security in the local area.

"It's amazing to see the Iraqi police and Iraqi army presence in the area," Herrmann stated. "The reason there is no imminent IED threat in our AO is because there are IP check points now, almost every 100 yards apart. What the IP and IA are doing is great; they are changing the whole fight as far as being capable and ready to take control at any minute's notice."



Soldiers detonate a 40lb. shaped charge to destroy munitions found in an open field, while in the Southern Legion Area of Operations, Iraq, Dec. 21



A soldier with the 73rd Engineers Company, Brigade Troops Battalion, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division searches for hidden munitions while in the Southern Legion Area of Operations, Iraq, Dec. 21



Fairmont, Minn. native, Sgt. 1st Class Chris Wolter, platoon sergeant, and Phoenix, Ariz. native, Spc. Todd Casham, a route clearance patrolman, both with 73rd Engineers Company, Brigade Troops Battalion, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, set up a 40lb. shaped charge to destroy used munitions found in an open field, while in the Southern Legion Area of Operations, Iraq, Dec. 21.



# A patrol in So

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## May 2009 issue

Story and Photos by  
Spc. Anthony Jones  
145 MPAD

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



# South Balad Ruz

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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





# TIGER SHARKS: *Aerial Attack Force*

**January 2009 issue**

Story and Photos by

Spc Opal Vaughn

14th Public Affairs Detachment

A new attack force has arrived at Forward Operating Base Warhorse located in Diyala, Iraq, Dec. 11. The 110th Attack Reconnaissance Battalion, better known as the "Tiger Sharks," have already begun to take flight with their distinct Apache attack helicopters, but not without the assistance of their ground troops, who keep the mighty birds a flight.

"My unit handles any missions as far as the forward arming and refuel point is concerned," said 1st Lt. William Tveten, platoon leader for Echo Company, 110th ATK Recon. Bn. "But we are mainly an attack reconnaissance battalion in support of 1st SBCT, 25th Inf. Div. for air support. Our pilots go out and do reconnaissance missions, improvised explosive device detection and counter insurgency."

An Apache attack helicopter is the Army's primary attack helicopter which was first used in combat in 1989 in the U.S. military action in Panama. The AH-64 Apache, which is a successor to

the AH-1 Cobra, is a versatile aircraft which can be maneuvered during the day or night or in adverse weather conditions. The Apache also carries a healthy mixture of rockets and fixed armament on the outer body of the aircraft. So keeping this aircraft in flight is an important mission for the Tiger Sharks.

Running the FARP for Warhorse is not the only job the Tiger Sharks are tasked with, according to Escondido, Calif. native, Pfc. Kevin Dunn, a mechanic with Hammer Heads Company, 110th ATK Recon. Bn. "I'm an Apache repairer," said Dunn. "I also inspect the Apache aircraft for flight operations and ensure they are mission capable. If an Apache helicopter is broken, then I fix it all up and make it fly again."

Dunn is just one of the many Tiger Sharks working hard to keep the Apache attack helicopters in flight. Spread across Iraq, each aviation brigade has been broken down into battalions in order to support the fight in Iraq. "Each aviation battalion has its own mission, dependent on the type of aircraft they support," said Olympia, Wash. native, Sgt. Willard Van Dalsen, the section sergeant aviation fueler with the Road Warriors

Company, 110th ATK Recon. Bn.

"For us, we're an Apache battalion so we're trained to focus on Apaches but we are cross-trained to handle several types of aircraft if need be," Dalsen continued. "We are a multinational attack force. We've worked on local Iraqi national aircraft, Black Hawks, Chinooks, any type of aircraft we can pretty much handle."

There is a lot of history behind the Tiger Shark name which is the name of the battalion as a whole, according to Tveten and Dalsen. Based out of Hunter Army Airfield, located in Savannah, Ga., the Tiger Sharks derive from a long history dating back to the war in Vietnam.

"Our unit has been around since Vietnam," Tveten stated. "We've been called by many names, including the Flying Tigers, but the Tiger Sharks have always remained. We went from Bragg, to Stewart, to Hunter and now we will reside at Drum once we get done with this deployment and reassigned under 10th Mountain," Tveten stated.

Regardless of where the Tiger Sharks stand, Tveten is adamant about keeping with heritage. "Even though we will belong to 10th Mountain and have moved from our home in Georgia, we will still maintain our Tiger Shark heritage."







Omaha, Neb. native, Sgt. Daniel Ketchmark, an armament electrician with 1-10th Attack Reconnaissance Battalion, "Tiger Sharks," out of Hunter Army Airfield, located in Savannah, Ga., carries a point detonate rocket to be loaded onto an Apache aircraft while at Forward Operating Base Warhorse located in Diyala, Iraq, Dec. 11.



# Homeland security

## Border Patrol

**March 2009 issue**

Story and photos by

Spc. Opal Vaughn

14th Public Affairs Detachment

Just as the United States has border patrol agents, so does Iraq. There are no fences, no drawn outlines or even a sign stating that the border is just up ahead, but it exists.

The only way of knowing the border is near is by the 100 or so checkpoints varying in distances along the imaginary line that makes up the border of Iraq. Each checkpoint is armed with Iraqi Border Transition Team personnel in place and ready to detain any one trying to cross over illegally.

In conjunction with the Iraqi BTT, U.S. Army Border Transition Team, 4312, also assists in keeping the borders safe.

"Our job is to track, confirm or deny illegal border access," said MSgt. Michael Henle, a team sergeant with BTT, 4312. "We strictly work with the Iraqi BTT but we try to integrate the IA and the IP into the systems so they can work hand in hand, instead of operating unilaterally."

The first efforts in border con-

Maj. Mickey Thomas and Capt. Brian McCraine, both with Border Transition Team, 4312, reevaluate their course of action while out on mission in Diyala, Iraq.





trol dates as early as 1904, but then, the border patrolmen were called mounted watchmen. The men engaged in patrolling during that time period patrolled in an effort to prevent illegal crossings just as patrolmen do now. But the dangers of the job were not the same then as they are today.

"Our biggest threat is anti-tank mines along the border, IEDs - there's not really a big push with a mass on mass fighting or ambush fighting - it's more the IEDs and anti-tank mines that have been leftover from the Iran, Iraq war," Henle stated. "We are making progress though."

The border patrolmen of today's generation still carry on some of the same traditions as the "mounted watchmen" but with a different twist, especially those patrolmen working in Iraq.

"A lot of our missions resemble U.S. border patrol mission," said Capt. Eric Wagoner, with BTT, 4312. "There's no way to block off a border - you're more of a deterrent, you can't put the fence up and expect everyone to stop coming across. Our job is to make sure the Iraqi BTT have good methods to sustaining their deterrence and force any possible movements in the areas across the border to move to locations that are easier to catch them."

"Part of our objective about doing this job is to make sure the Iraqi BTT is there with us," Wagoner stated. "We train our Iraqi counterparts even though they are very good at training themselves on their border tasks. They do not have the resources for or they do not have the experience in certain areas; those are the parts we are trying to train them in. A lot of these guys are experienced Kurdish fighters so they have experience with these types of things."

Success of each mission is not

just dependent upon the BTT but it is also dependent upon the locals living in the area.

"Border villagers are the guys who live right there and see everything," Wagoner stated. "When we go talk to the people, we want the Iraqi BTT to do it because we want to make sure the local people know that the Iraqi BTT are a legitimate force in the area and that they are recognized."

Utilizing every resource, Wag-

oner stated, helps to have additional eyes out there. "We have the actual Iraqi BTT guys and their locations; but it's just places we cannot get to that we need to have a couple more eyes out there. We also coordinate a lot of missions with 5-1 Cav. They support us if we need more bodies on a mission for security reasons. We cannot really pull them or task them, but they try to help us out whenever they can."



Staff Sgt. Ronnie Gonzalez with Border Transition Team, 4312, pulls security while on mission in Diyala, Iraq.



Soldiers with Border Transition Team, 4312, pause while awaiting an "all clear" of possible improvised explosive devices buried in a field, before taking another step forward while out on mission in Diyala, Iraq.



# Small Village a Symbol of Resurrection in Iraq

**June 2009 issue**

Story and Photos by  
Sgt. Jeremy Pitcher  
145th MPAD

In a small village south of Baqubah, something extraordinary is happening. Without the national attention or funding seen in the larger cities around Iraq, this small, out of the way village has begun to rebuild from almost complete destruction.

The village of Bey'a was once an illustrious farming area located on the Diyala River in the Diyala province. Today all but a few houses are nothing more than a

pile of rubble; evidence of years of fighting in the region during some of the most volatile years in Iraq.

The village housed over 30 families in 2006 before Al-Qaeda in Iraq moved into the region and threatened the families with death if they did not join their cause or leave. This action displaced nearly the entire population, who fled with only the possessions they could carry.

"They put pressure on us. They tried to get us to join (Al-Qaeda) them. When we said we wouldn't they threatened to kill us," said the village Sheik.

Three years later some of the families have returned to

what used to be their homes.

This has not deterred the residents however, who have come together to share the remaining structures left standing. With the limited space some families have been forced to live in small tents in an open field just feet away from the rubble.

Despite reconstruction funding not yet paid to the homeowners, the families here have chosen to take the initiative and begin the daunting task of rebuilding on their own.

"We all pitch in and work together to try to rebuild. We work on each house together so that families can move back into their home," said a local resident.

This hard work in a difficult



During the 2-8's patrol of Bey'a Capt. John Turner speaks with the Bey'a Sheik and local residents. Turner's team has seen great progress being made by the people of the village through hard work and initiative.



situation has inspired members of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 8<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Regiment that controls the area Bey'a is located in.

"It is amazing for me to come here and see the progress being made," said Captain John Turner of the 2-8. "They have been so willing to not only rebuild but to reconcile within their own community and around the area."

On May 27, Turner and a team from the Provincial Reconstruction team went to the village in order to see what projects were needed and if they would be possible to accomplish. Without a medical clinic, septic system or school for the area, the men of the small village offered to donate the land and volunteered their labor to encourage needed development.

"These people are not lazy. They do not expect for you just to give them stuff. They are willing to work to make this a better place. That says a lot about them," said Turner.

A young girl and her family rest during the heat of the day. Many Families live in tents while rebuilding thier homes in the village of Bey'a



A Soldier pulls security in the small village as leadership from the 2-8 and PRT meet with the local Sheik.







A Soldier with Alpha Troop, 5th Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division pulls security near a check point in Diyala Province



# Maintaining security in Balad Ruz, Diyala

December 2008 Issue

Story and Photo by

Spc. Opal Vaughn

14th Public Affairs Detachment

Some people might have noticed there's a new unit in town. But that makes no difference at all. Even though 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division has only been in country for a short while, the mission still remains the same; maintain security while transitioning the return of Iraq to its people.

Alpha Troop, 5th Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, 1st SBCT, 25th Inf. Div. has taken the lead on maintaining security for Forward Operating Base Caldwell located in Diyala, Iraq, by making it their mission, one day at a time.

Forward Operating Base Caldwell, formally inhabited by 2nd Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment and recently turned over to 5-1 Cav., has already begun creating sand storms throughout Diyala and Balad Ruz by ensuring the local Iraqi police, Iraqi army, Sons of Iraq and emergency relief forces continue to stay on task for the betterment of Iraq. Professional, thorough and a tight-knit group of Soldiers, Alpha Troop lives up to every word they embody.

"I always say three things to my guys before every mission; Do the right thing, do what your trained to do and take care of your buddy," said Des Moines, Iowa native, 1st Lt. Marcus Green, 2nd Platoon, platoon leader, Alpha Troop, 5-1 Cav.

Initially the mission was to

clear Balad Ruz of any possible weapons caches in the area. But with quick reaction, Green, working with a combined 40-plus years of service on his team, ventured upon a new mission of assuring the security of local IP checkpoints in the area, Nov. 19.

"We want to ensure the local IP's are doing their jobs correctly and safely," Green stated. "It gives them a sense of confidence to know that eventually we can turn the country over to them all together. A lot times we go to the check points and spot check to ensure the IPs are trained properly and conducting all of the necessary steps to not only make themselves safe, but their areas safe as well."

"By going to the check points, it allows us to fine tune their training as needed if we see something done incorrectly or an unsafe act," Green stated.

For added safety, Spc. Forrest Hull and his military working dog, Flopper, both with Headquarters Headquarters Troop, K9, 1st SBCT, 25th Inf. Div., assisted Alpha Troop in securing checkpoints in Balad Ruz and Diyala.

"My job is to clear the surrounding areas of checkpoints in the area as well as search vehicles randomly selected for inspection, for any possible explosive devices," said Hull.

"Flopper searches by checking the interior and exterior of the vehicles we inspect. If he sits then it means there are explosives or a weapon of some sort aboard in the vehicle. We have several military working dogs on hand and each one of them is amazingly accurate."

Making sure the dogs are conditioned is essential to keeping the dogs on their toes, according to Hull. "Every once and a while we give the dogs a treat but we keep them on a strict diet because they are military working dogs," Hull stated.

"The dogs hold different job responsibilities just like we do," Hull continued, "for instance, we have combat trackers, dual purpose and single purpose dogs. A combat tracking dog tracks humans, a dual purpose dog attacks and detects and a single purpose dog just tracks."

According to Hull, the use of canines brings a whole new aspect to the fight, in securing Iraq. "Flopper's only been working with me for about six months now," said Hull, "but he and I have had some big finds."

Alpha Troop ensures the IPs are doing their job correctly and safely, but ensuring Alpha Troop does their job correctly and safely is Alpha Troop scout platoon sergeant, Sgt. 1st Class Noah Pugh.

"Our mission was to clear the palm groves with the ERF but it was deterred because they could not support us on this mission," said Pugh. "Instead, we changed our route and are now conducting random traffic control point security checks."

"While Alpha Troop checks the traffic control points," Pugh continued, "I ensure quality control of my Soldiers so that the enemy cannot get at us while we assist the IPs. I've been in long enough to have learned my lesson a time or two. So I just want to ensure that my guys are being safe while they secure these checkpoints," Hull said.



# 3-21, Iraqi Army conduct

**June 2009 issue**

Story and Photos by  
Spc. Anthony Jones  
145th MPAD

Even in the face of adverse weather, Soldiers of the Iraqi Army trained alongside Coalition Soldiers in combined strike training on the flight line of Forward Operating Base Normandy, April 8.

The training, conducted by the IA's Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 20<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 5<sup>th</sup> (IA) Division and 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon, Company C, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 21<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, was performed to keep the Soldiers prepared for an aerial quick reaction force mission, said Capt. Morgan Maier, platoon leader, 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon.

Due to the adverse weather; heavy clouds, sand and partial rain, a helicopter could not be provided for the static training portion, forcing Soldiers to improvise and use cots to simulate the inside of a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter.

The training included how to safely enter and exit a helicopter while maintaining security. Coalition Soldiers demonstrated how to properly conduct the movement then had the IA Soldiers join in and practice conducting combined

entering and exiting.

"This training is important," said Staff Sgt. Caleb Mellette, a squad leader with 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon. "It builds [the IA's] confidence and allows them to establish their own tactics, training and procedures (TTPs)."

Mellette added that the static training is productive for Coalition Soldiers as well, pointing out the language barrier in coordinating movement to and from the helicopter.

As a way to bypass the language barrier the Coalition Soldiers taught hand and arm signals to the IA; this allowed for information about movement and security to be passed between Soldiers of both Iraqi and Coalition forces easily and quickly.

After completing the

static load training, there was another mandatory task: the completion of the house-borne improvised explosive device (HBIED) lane, operated by a Navy explosive ordnance demolition team.

The IA Soldiers, lead by an Iraqi non-commissioned officer, navigated through several stages of the HBIED training complex, finding several hidden IEDs and booby traps.

Once inside the final area of the HBIED trainer the IA Soldiers collected several intelligence items and weapons placed by Navy EOD personnel.

Following the IA's completion of the HBIED training lane, Maier had his Soldiers navigate the lane in order to keep their edge and reinforce previous IED awareness training.



Iraqi Army and Coalition Soldiers practice the "three steps and drop" method of exiting a UH-60 Black Hawk during joint strike training, April 8.



# combined strike training



Iraqi Army Soldiers belonging to the 20th Battalion, 5th Iraqi Army Division demonstrate their room clearing technique to Coalition forces during combined strike training at Forward Operating Base Normandy, April, 8.

Staff Sgt. Joshua Wilson briefs Iraqi Army Soldiers on how to clear a large room with multiple doorways, providing feedback on what they did properly and what could have been done better. The room clearing training was part of combined strike training conducted on FOB Normandy, April 8.





# DAGGER COMPANY RE

## August 2009 issue

Story by Spc. Anthony Jones  
145th MPAD

Photos provided by Co. A, 1st  
Bn. 5th Inf. Regt.

“The terrain changed, but the mission didn’t,” stated Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Kevin Staddie, of Riverton, Wyo., first sergeant of Company A, the “Daggers”, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division.

“Terrain change” refers to the mid-deployment move Company A made from Diyala Province, just northeast of Baghdad, to the city of Mosul, in the northern province of Ninawa.

After spending four months

in Diyala province, where the unit conducted operations with local Iraqi Police and Army units, a decision was made to move the company of Stryker Infantrymen to the northern city of Mosul, at a time when the city was seeing some of the heaviest action in the country of Iraq.

“At that time, Mosul was definitely a center of gravity for all of Iraq. It was producing more significant activities and ... actions such as grenade attacks than most of the country,” said Capt. Luke Booth, Alpha Company’s executive officer, and a Casper, Wyo. native.

Upon arrival in Mosul in February 2009, Company A was attached to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Squadron, 8<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, 3<sup>rd</sup> Heavy Brigade Combat

Team, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division.

“Our mission involved clearing operations, presence patrols and raids,” said Staddie. “Our Third Platoon became the Squadron’s time sensitive target platoon, and captured the unit’s number one and number three persons of interest.”

One of the critical attributes and fundamental strengths of the unit’s selection to operate in the city was the Stryker vehicle’s maneuverability and ability to bring Soldiers to the fight in the city’s often congested and crowded streets, where the armored, tracked vehicles of 3-1 CAV cannot go.

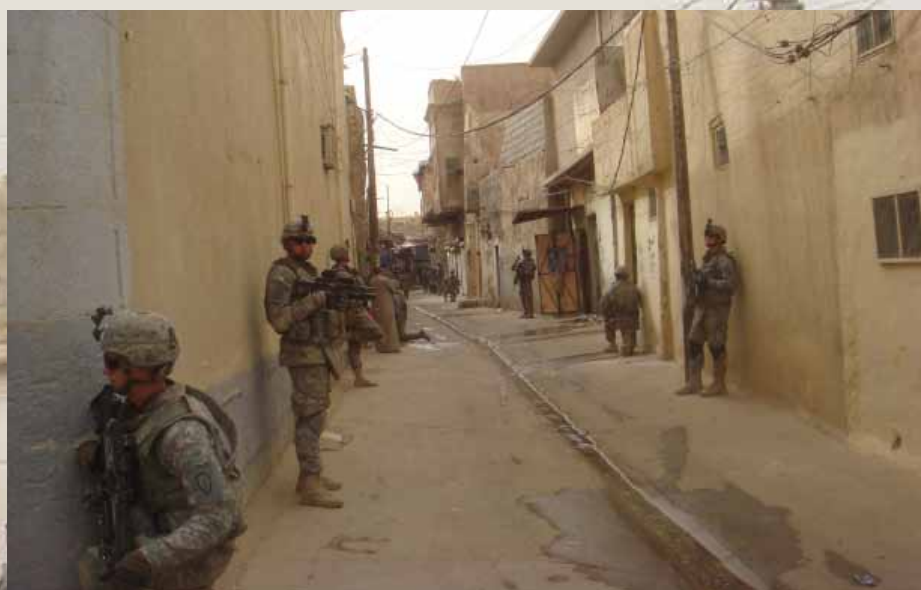
“We conducted joint clearing operations with our ISF partners in all our sectors in Mosul. Following that, we were involved



Spc. Nicholas Bacon and other members of Company A, 1st Battalion, 5th Infantry Regiment provide security for 2nd Lt. Matthew Kotlarski, a platoon leader with Company a, during a leaders meeting on a patrol in Mosul, Iraq.



# TURNS FROM MOSUL



Soldiers of Company A rest for a moment while on patrol in West Mosul.

in the push into "Old Town" and other sectors of the city where we conducted a 10-day operation. Once that was completed we maintained that area and picked up our 'old' sectors," said Staddie.

The unit was stationed at Joint Combat Outpost Rabi, where they operated a joint tactical operations center with National Police units deployed from Baghdad to Mosul.

"When it came to large operations, such as clearing operations, we came together with the National Police for joint planning sessions and joint battle tracking," said Booth. "We had a really good relationship; they were always willing to patrol and train with us and were a fairly competent police force."

Prior to making the move to Mosul, Company A was involved in training units of the Iraqi Police located in Diyala. Following their move, they took their knowledge and applied it to working with the National Police.

"We took the same stuff Battalion and Brigade had taught us on how to deal with Iraqi

Security Forces and did the same things. It worked...in Diyala and worked up there in Mosul," said Staddie. "Once we got up there we worked on our joint patrol techniques and watched our ISF partners' progress to the point they took one hundred percent lead, which was outstanding to see them get to that position. It was good for us to see it and it was good for the Iraqi people to see it."

Throughout their time in Mosul the Soldiers experienced a varying amount of action with brief times of multiple actions in a single day.

"The insurgents went through a plan, prepare and execute cycle with operations much like we do," said Booth. "We would see weeks where absolutely nothing would happen then everything would happen at once, a vehicle borne improvised explosive device hit a unit and grenades would hit us. It could have been circumstance or a coincidence, but I believe it to be planning."

However it wasn't all kinetic combat operations for the company. Soldiers found themselves

working on civil projects, helping to rebuild the communities they operated in and around.

"For each of these guys, Mosul was more of an experience than they thought they would get in Iraq. It was more palatable sometimes, with projects such as sewage or trash collection, we were very involved with activities like those and with some neighborhoods where that work really paid off," said Booth.

This tour wasn't the first time in Mosul for some of the Soldiers of Alpha Company. More than 30 Soldiers had served their last deployment in Mosul with Alpha Company when the 1-25 SBCT was the 172<sup>nd</sup> SBCT.

"The mission has changed since our last deployment. Now the ISF is up front and leading the way, and compared to our last deployment, they seem more prepared and have more confidence," said Staff Sgt. Balam Carrillo, a squad leader with 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon, Alpha Company. "The city itself has changed; there are more barriers and blockades which restrict the insurgents' freedom of movement which on the previous deployment was wide open."

Through the work of Alpha Company and other Coalition units working alongside their ISF partners, the security of Mosul improved to a condition allowing the company to return to its parent battalion at FOB Warhorse July, 5 and begin the redeployment process.

"Overall, our time in Mosul was a good experience for the Soldiers and for the company (and) to get to see more of Iraq and go into a more dynamic operating environment," said Booth.



# Chaplain's Corner

## Thriving Relationships and Finishing Strong

As I reflect on the past year and all that has transpired, I am awestruck by the enormous sacrifice, dedication, and hard work of so many. It has been my sincere honor to serve every Soldier and Family member in this brigade during this combat rotation. Like every deployment and combat rotation, this one has presented its own set of unique challenges. There have been days of high stress and frustrated people over-subscribed to the 24-hour day because of the demands of the mission. Yet in the middle of it all, stronger relationships developed and many Arctic Wolves leave Iraq with lifelong friendships of resounding fidelity that was forged like steel in hardship.

I have noticed two types of people who endure hard times. There are those who struggle in growth because they blame themselves, life, God, and people for their troubles. And there are those who forgive, don't worry about blame and look for ways to learn and grow from difficult experiences. Dr. John Maxwell says, "If you're not learning, you're not growing." Perhaps we should add to that, "If you're not relating well to others, you're not learning." Many would argue with that because they can still learn when relationships go sour. But we're not talking about pure head knowledge and academic learning. We're talking about experiential knowledge you can use. Most of what I have learned in life, I have learned from other people. My ability to learn from

others is inextricably linked to my relationship with them. Studies in emotional intelligence show us that people who relate well with others are more malleable and faster learners—not because they're smarter, because they're more willing.

I love to fly airplanes. When I was a kid, I read numerous books on flying, airplanes, aerodynamics, and how to pilot. But not one book actually taught me how to fly. My flight instructors taught me how to fly. Years ago, a good friend used to say to me, "You can't teach what you don't know and you can't give what you don't have." There are many in America who pride themselves in pulling themselves up by their own bootstraps and "making it all by themselves." But I've never met one of those people. I have friends from high school who are multi-millionaires, and others who are civilian and military leaders at just about every level. Everyone one of them will tell you their life is a composite of learning experiences interpreted and imparted to them by coaches, mentors, and father or mother figures—many of them from unexpected places in life.

In the last few months of the deployment, we've talked a lot about finishing strong. My friends, I'm convinced that the *ONLY* way to finish strong in any season in life is to finish strong in relationships. If my relationships are strong, the conduits for growth, team work, learning, skills development, humility, and character are open.



**Chaplain (Maj.) Roderick Mills**

Growth happens innately to those who live in thriving relationships. Winning teams are teams with thriving relationships. People in thriving relationships are dynamic learners. Adaptive mind sets and skill sets are intuitive to those in thriving relationships.

Thriving relationships produce a phenomenon I like to call *gift touching*. When relationships flourish, the heart and soul is populated with senses for the touch points in the strengths and gifts of others. They're like receptacles for inspiration. We learn to touch hearts and inspire dreams, not just manage widgets and track spreadsheets. I believe everyone has a storehouse of gifts, talents, calling, and passion residing within them. When we live in flourishing relationships, we grow in the spiritual sensitivity and relational authority to touch, illuminate, and inspire the deepest calling and abilities in others.

As we proceed into re-deployment and post-deployment, let's challenge each other to intentionally grow into thriving relationships with our family, loved ones, friends, and co-workers. *TOGETHER* we will *FINISH STRONG!*



# FALLEN WOLVES

"FOR THE STRENGTH OF THE PACK IS THE WOLF...

... AND THE STRENGTH OF THE WOLF IS THE PACK."

-- RUDYARD KIPLING

## ***SPC. HEATH PICKARD***

**C COMPANY, 1ST BATTALION, 5TH INFANTRY REGIMENT**

**BORN: SEPT. 18, 1987 DIED: OCT. 16, 2008**

## ***PFC. CODY EGGLESTON***

**C COMPANY, 1ST BATTALION, 5TH INFANTRY REGIMENT**

**BORN: SEPT. 17, 1987 DIED: OCT. 24, 2008**

## ***CPT. WILLIAM JERNIGAN***

**HHC, BRIGADE TROOPS BATTALION**

**BORN: NOV. 16, 1973 DIED: NOV. 24, 2009**

## ***SPC. CODY LAMB***

**B BATTERY, 2ND BATTALION, 8TH FIELD ARTILLERY REGIMENT**

**BORN: APRIL 11, 1980 DIED: JAN. 25, 2009**

## ***SPC. CHRISTOPHER SWEET***

**HHC, TASK FORCE 3RD BATTALION, 66TH ARMOR REGIMENT**

**BORN: FEB. 6, 1981 DIED: FEB. 6, 2009**

## ***CPL. MICHAEL MAYNE***

**A COMPANY 5TH SQUADRON, 1ST U.S. CAVALRY REGIMENT**

**BORN: OCT. 9, 1987 DIED: FEB. 23, 2009**

## ***CPL. MICHAEL ALLENMAN***

**A COMPANY 5TH SQUADRON, 1ST U.S. CAVALRY REGIMENT**

**BORN: JAN. 19, 1978 DIED FEB. 23, 2009**

## ***CPL. ZACHARY NORDMEYER***

**A COMPANY 5TH SQUADRON, 1ST U.S. CAVALRY REGIMENT**

**BORN: AUG. 5, 1987 DIED FEB. 23, 2009**

## ***SPC. ISRAEL CANDELARIA MEJIAS***

**A COMPANY, TASK FORCE 3RD BATTALION, 66TH ARMOR REGIMENT**

**BORN: FEB. 26, 1981 DIED: APRIL 5, 2009**

## ***SPC. MICHAEL EDWARD YATES JR.***

**HHC, TASK FORCE 3RD BATTALION, 66TH ARMOR REGIMENT**

**BORN: SEPT. 5, 1989 DIED: MAY 11, 2009**

## ***STAFF SGT. CHRISTIAN ENRIQUE BUENO-GALDOS***

**HHC, TASK FORCE 3RD BATTALION, 66TH ARMOR REGIMENT**

**BORN: AUG. 16, 1983 DIED: MAY 11, 2009**

## ***SPC. CHARLES D. PARRISH***

**5TH ENGINEER BATTALION**

**BORN: AUG. 21, 1985 DIED: JUNE 4, 2009**

## ***MILITARY WORKING DOG JOE***

**BRIGADE TROOPS BATTALION**

**DIED: NOV. 14, 2008**





## **The Arctic Warrior March**

We conquer the mountains and the  
valleys!

We train in the winter's bitter cold!

Alaska Soldiers! Arctic Warriors!

Sentries of the North!

So pick up your weapons and your  
snowshoes!

We're ready to fight and to defend!

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

## **The Wolf Creed**

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

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

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

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

Arctic Wolves!

Arctic Tough!