



65th Engineer Battalion, US ARMY

# TASK FORCE TRAILBLAZER NEWSLETTER

Friday, September 18, 2009

Volume 1, Issue 18

They've got the Jinood.

They've got the partnership connection.

And, they've just come back from the training...



*Kirkuk, Get Ready for the 12th  
Iraqi Army  
**Engineers!***

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By 1LT Keith Douglas

Howdy, everyone. My latest and greatest adventure was a trip to the Besmaya Training Complex located Southeast of Baghdad. Besmaya encompasses FOB Hammer for those that might know the area. This journey was to accompany the 12<sup>th</sup> Field Engineer Regiment through their Unit Set Fielding (USF) or as some might know it, Force Generation. As new units are created and formed, they do not automatically come with equipment. That, is where USF comes into play. USF is really a lot simpler than it sounds. The regiment schedules a date to show up to the training center with all of their personnel. Then, they are issued equipment and receive training to use the equipment they draw. Our main goal was to observe the training the IA received so that we, as the partnering unit, have a baseline to build upon that training and improve the 12<sup>th</sup> FER's skills. The main concentration was on the route clearance training since the 12th Engineers will be taking over this mission from us in the near future. The training lasted 21 days. It was definitely warmer down south (about 120°F plus) than we were used to up in the Kirkuk area. A 12 man team was sent, 9 U.S. Army personnel and 3 Interpreters. From what I could gather, we were the first partnering unit to attend USF with our own Iraqi counterparts.

So, we began our trip, but not without a few hiccups. Originally, we were supposed to fly from FOB Warrior to COB Speicher and then, from COB Speicher to FOB Hammer. The first flight was cancelled due to maintenance issues with the aircraft. So, after stay-



ing up all night waiting for the chance of a flight, we settled in as passengers on a convoy headed for COB Speicher. Our luck began to pick up as our flight from COB Speicher to FOB Hammer was only delayed two hours. Nonetheless, we made it to our final destination and had the flight, which we had all to ourselves. When we arrived at the ADAG in FOB Hammer, I was left with a feeling like we had flown into a small town airport in the middle of some backwoods spot in Alabama. As I have heard on a comedy show, we flew into "Ed's Tire repair, Nail care, & Airport." At least, that's what it felt like. Of course, once we landed we were on our own and waited for another hour or so at the bus

stop. The driver decided to skip his route and sleep at the PX parking lot. Needless to say, he didn't receive a tip. Finally, we made it to our new home, Tents 2C16 & 2C17, where we would reside for the next 3 weeks or so.

A few hours later, 2LT Carney, SFC Little, and myself were up and recon-ing the area while everyone else was given the chance to catch up on some sleep. Before I go any further, let me explain the layout of this place. FOB Hammer is the American side of a joint US and Iraqi Army installation which houses 1-82 Field Artillery. This is a small FOB but it houses some really big guns. Hammer is located along the southern border of the Besmaya Training Complex which is a jointly ran by Americans and Iraqis. Besmaya, as we called it, encompasses 272 square kilometers of ranges which are set up for just about anything. Our first task was to check in with the Mayor Cell and sign for an LMTV which SFC Little had arranged for us. So, here you now have a SFC and two LT's in an LMTV with a strip map of the FOB which really wasn't that big. 2LT Carney and I were trying to navigate with this horrible strip map while SFC Little was driving. Finally, the question was asked if either one of us had made it through Land Navigation training....HA!

Flying in the distance was an all too familiar flag to SFC Little—the red flag with a bright white Engineer Castle on it. This was SFC Little's first stop to see if he could resource



*Above: An IA Jundi stands with his target from the AK-47 range; Below: Jinood wait in firing order at the range to fire; Opposite page: Images of the Counter-IED classroom instruction.*



us some more vehicles since 12 people in an LMTV for 3 weeks might not go over too well. That, and it would keep 2LT Carney from complaining. SFC Little left us to guard the LMTV while he went in to recon the compound with the red flag flying overhead. The compound was owned by USACE and EODT. SFC Little made friends quickly with two gentlemen, Leo Lennemann & Keith Angles. These gentlemen were kind enough to allow us to use 3 up-armored F-350s and 2 F-550s MRAP conversions. I like to call these vehicles Rhinoceros because they were big and gray. Having these vehicles at our disposal, we decided it would be beneficial to return the LMTV. Thanks to SFC Little, we now had proper transportation to navigate the long roads of Besmaya. Thanks, also, to Keith &

Leo for allowing us to use your vehicles and supporting the 65<sup>th</sup> EN BN's mission!

Our next stop took us over to the Besmaya training compound for the first time. We navigated our way to the US Forces' compound and to our luck, our contact and the US Forces' Commander of Besmaya, LTC Boltuc, was standing at the gate along with the Iraqi Army Besmaya Commander, COL Abass. We introduced ourselves and agreed to meet LTC Boltuc back at the gate later on that evening to get more details about everything that would be occurring in the next 3 weeks. The Besmaya Training Complex is made up of a multitude of personnel from all services of the military and MPRI civilians along with COL Abass and his Eagles (instructors). The Engineers were staying just down the road a few miles. We found them with ease and let them know that we were there to support them with any-

thing that they needed. We got the updated training schedule and 2LT Carney split the troops into 3 groups to follow each of the 3 companies through their training. I stayed with the Officers to observe and help them with planning and coordination as they needed it but I also watched some of the training.

The timing of USF was tricky because we entered the period of Ramadan right at the start of it. Ramadan is a 30 day religious holiday where from sunrise to sunset, Muslims are fasting. They don't eat or drink anything and abstain from other things like smoking. This made training a little more difficult because we had to help keep an eye on those Soldiers who were fasting to ensure we had no heat casualties. To my amazement, we had none, but then again, the Iraqis are used to the heat and fasting more than we are. To stay on their gracious side, we did not eat or drink in front of





them. We did keep ourselves hydrated; we just went behind the truck or around a building out of their eyesight so that we didn't seem rude or inconsiderate. Another note on this training restraint is that the majority of training was conducted from 0700-1100. Nothing in the hot afternoon. This helped mitigate the risk of a heat casualty and help those who were fasting.

The first week was the same for all 3 companies. Like our Army, there was a bit of in processing that involved the collection of some personal data. After the paperwork, all three companies completed AK-47 familiarization firing as well as Close Quarters Marksmanship and Fan Fire. Fan Fire was my favorite as it simulated an approaching enemy force. Targets ranged from 50m to 300m and the targets began rising from far away and then got closer and closer. The Iraqi Soldiers were also able to take advantage of this range for a night fire range which made it even more interesting. Since they didn't have their Night Vision Goggles, a flood light generator set was turned on casting a shadow of light across the range and added an extra look to the approaching targets. The last range of the week was the Crew Serve range where all the Soldiers had the chance to get familiar with the PKC which shoots a 7.62mm round.

One of the most interesting aspects of the majority of the training is that it is lead by Iraqis, and essentially, is Iraqis training Iraqis. This is a huge step in the right direction in helping this Army stand completely on its feet. MPRI civilians have worked with the Eagles (Besmaya Iraqi Instructors) for 18 months now, coaching them on how to properly run a range and the finer points of rifle marksmanship to help pass onto their Iraqi brethren. The units that come to train are also required to send their Officers through a Range OIC course before they are allowed to occupy the ranges. This course, also taught by Iraqis, ensures that they know the proper way to conduct a range and keep everyone safe. Granted, US forces are still there, but merely in an advise and assist role that ensures they are on the right path. The training units even have to submit risk as-

*Top to Bottom: Jinood stand ready for more training; Iraqis prepare the range for the day's training; 2LT Carney enthusiastically stands in front of a Rhinoceros; 2LT Carney challenges a Jundi to arm-wrestle; Jinood listen to a range brief.*



assessments signed by their commanders before they can make use of a range. This is an excellent practice because it ensures everyone is kept as safe as possible during training.

Week Two consisted of the 1<sup>st</sup> Engineer Company participating in Route Clearance training with their newly acquired Badgers. Badgers are similar to up-armored MRAPs and provide extra protection from IEDs if and when discovered. Also participating in training during the second week were 28 Soldiers who took a 5 day course in first-aid. This was a very important class and the information learned was designed to be passed on to other soldiers to help save lives during combat missions or day to day activities. The Iraqi soldiers learned how to properly check temperature, feel for a pulse, check blood pressure, give an IV, and give an injection as well as evaluate a casualty. The 12<sup>th</sup> FER also received their medical equipment which includes a First Aid Kit

for all Soldiers similar to our IFAK (Individual First Aid Kit).

Week Three was a 4 day refresher course for the Bomb Disposal Company, better known as EOD. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Engineer Company participated in their week long Route Clearance training. The Route Clearance training for both companies was the same. It consisted of 3 days of classroom training followed by 3 days of Route Clearance Lanes giving the Iraqis a first-hand experience of what they will encounter while patrolling the streets of Iraq. The classroom training focused mostly on the tasks and battle drills in the case of an IED discovery or detonation with a vehicle disabled. Also included was how to react to small arms fire. The first day of vehicle mounted lane training was going over the battle drills and then, performing them with the vehicles. The last two days were practical exercise lanes that tested what the Iraqi Soldiers had learned by travelling down a road that had hidden, simulated IEDs. Both companies

learned the basics and did very well. 2LT Carney and his crew can continue that training and ensure that they are well prepared to step into our shoes as we leave Iraq. A great aspect of the training was that the MPRI Instructors allowed us to assist in designing the lane alongside them since the team we brought included Route Clearance Soldiers that knew the most current trends in enemy activity. We were also able to give the MPRI feedback on the training as an outside source to help improve their training program.

The training wound down and time blew by fast. Graduation from USF was set for 7 September. At the graduation ceremony, we were presented with a gift from the Besmaya Training Complex as a 'thank you' for helping the 12<sup>th</sup> FER through the training and assisting them. The 12<sup>th</sup> FER packed up and headed out the next night. Hoping that our flight wouldn't be delayed or canceled, we were delighted as we made it back to our homes of FOB Warrior and (for me) K-1.



*Above: Images of the Iraqi IED training lanes. Iraqis were able to become familiar with the vehicles they will use for route clearance. The bottom picture shows the practical exercise portion of the training as the Jinood react to an IED.*





## 0343, 10 SEPT 09

By CPT Miguel Lima

I'm eating an early breakfast in my office. The sun has yet to come up. I'm told that 0400 is the last time that I can eat before I start the fast. As I write this, I'm half awake and trying to stay that way because I plan on going back to sleep for another 4 hours. The more I can sleep or stay at rest, the better as I will have to conserve my energy. I'd also have take it easier on the daytime activities because I wouldn't be drinking water during the sunlight hours. That's the part that worries me the most. Yes, I'm accustomed to eating on a regular basis. But, even more so, I'm used to drinking water whenever I want. If I were going on mission today, I wouldn't even consider fasting. As it is, today is an office day and so, I've figured I'd try to observe one day of Ramadan.

### *The Iftar Experience*

## 1013, 09 SEPT 09

I emailed my peers to see if anyone was planning on fasting the next day. I received a bunch of replies but none of them serious about fasting. In fact, one of them stated that they were "going to fast on the way to breakfast." And, I get it: "Cultural experiences at an arm's length." There is a certain comfort level that folks have to accepting much less personally engaging another's culture. I like experiencing other cultures and I pride myself on being quite bold to want to embrace other's practices and beliefs. I also received a few comments regarding the fact that I'm observing a religious event that is not my own and it may be considered culturally insensitive. Then, I started to think about how I might react if I was to ask someone from another culture to join me for Christmas or Thanksgiving. Although it wasn't their holiday, I'd admire their interest in my culture. I really wouldn't think it odd or insensitive if they were bold enough to take me up on the invite.



*Above: Framed "Now Showing..." prints; Left: SSG Henzerling set them on the wall in prep for the iftar; Below: SSG Henzerling and CSM Morse check the work that adorns First Inn.*

## 1245, 24 FEB 09

For example, I'm walking from the DFAC and I see some of my peers walking up for lunch. As we pass, I tell them that they have decorated the DFAC for Mardi Gras and that they should try the King Cake. That tidbit of advice was met with a quizzical look. I might have had the same if not for 2LT Ruiz.



## 1305, 28 FEB 06

King's Cake is a for Mardi Gras' Fat Tuesday. I know this because during my EOBC, 2LT Ruiz went out of his way to make sure he had some specially delivered from his home state of Louisiana to Missouri to celebrate the day. He brought it to class to share with all of us. If you show genuine interest, people, in turn, genuinely like to share their culture, their beliefs, and the things that make them who they are.

## 2137, 09 SEPT 09

This was reinforced as I was walking to my office last night and I ran into Mike the Interpreter. He used to be the battalion commander's interpreter but moved up north to the Kirkuk AO when a position freed up. It was better for him because he is Kurdish and amongst more of his kind and closer to home. Unfortunately, we see a lot less of him down here at Speicher. He was excited to hear that we were experiencing Iftars and was wondering if I was going to fast. When I told him I was already planning on fasting for the upcoming Iftar at Speicher, he was glad to hear that I was taking part in the custom. In fact, he and a few of the other interpreters helped me out by telling me the rules, like the one to eat and drink before 0400.

That's a safe time to eat before the sun rises.





## 0410, 10 SEPT 09

I'm looking out my window and thinking about the rules. I've finished eating but I want to drink a bottle of water. I don't see the sun yet so I'm going for it. Sorry, Mike.

Now, it's off to bed to get ready for a first hand experience of what its like to fast during one day of deployment.

## 1158, 10 SEPT 09

Normally, I'd be making lunch plans, if not already on my way to the DFAC, by now. Since had come into my office that day, several of my fellow staffers have made it a point to come in my office and either proclaim their plans to openly eat and drink in my office when I'm present. After the first two incidents, I figured I'd tote my camera with me to document these occurrences.

## 1325, 10 SEPT 09

Opening my desk drawer, I see a pack of gum and instantly, I want some. Unfortunately, that is also against the rules of this fast. As CPT Arben Vuthi helped to point out to me, aside from eating and drinking, it's also a fast from gum, tobacco, lustful thoughts and cursing. Some of those are obviously easier than others, but as I'm quickly finding out, this is harder than it seemed, in theory, yesterday.

## 1011, 09 SEPT 09

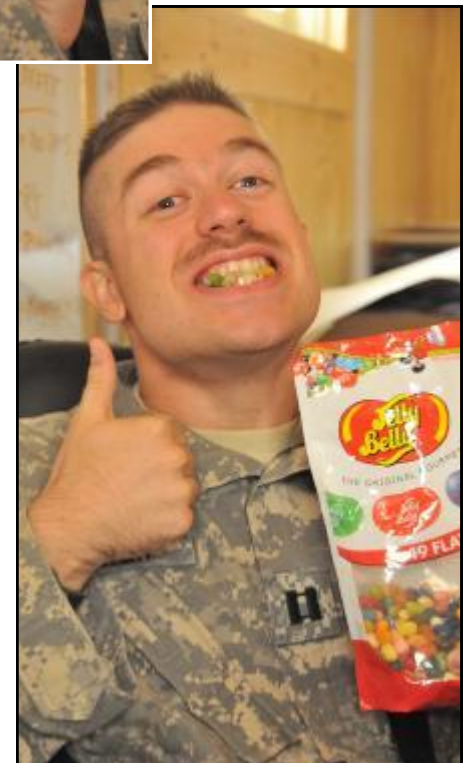
*Note to self: It'd be a great idea to fast before the Iftar. It'll be easy. I mean, it's only one day.*

## 1326, 10 SEPT 09

Still, this self imposed hardship is paying off some dividends. I'm definitely more cognoscente of the things that I am doing and thinking and it's a great time for self reflection. Even so, [I wish I could say that I wasn't] I'm counting the hours until sundown. The end is in sight. I just have to remain strong.



*Clockwise from Upper Left: CPT Burch drinking water in front of me; CPT A. Biggerstaff offering me ice cream; CPT Burch eating my Jelly Bellies; 1LT Vu and CPT Burch challenge each other to catch a jelly bean in their mouth; CPT Burch enjoying ice cream. Mind you, this is all taking place in my office.*





## 1730, 10 SEPT 09

I've been waiting for this moment for some time. It's the final stretch and the desire to hurry up and eat is brewing. It's been progressively more difficult to focus as the day plods along. I've repeatedly checked the times during the day and I feel a slight headache coming on. I went to my normal meeting at the Provincial Reconstruction Team, but without a full stomach and my usual dose of gum before meetings, it was difficult to stay engaged and consequently, awake. Upon my return to ToV, I made a quick pass through the TOC. Unaware of my personal commitment for the day, folks are drinking water and eating snacks in plain sight as I pass them.

It was completely unintentional but it's incredible how much those things really do seem to tick one off when trying not to eat or drink. I even caught myself indulging in a bad habit of biting my nails in anticipation for the BUB to end and jerked my hand away from my mouth. Included in the side effects of abstaining from food and water all day was an indulgence in self pity for what was happening to me. I know it was just because I was lacking the energy to motivate myself that made me feel contrary to how I would normally feel any other day. The day grows agonizingly long but every minute that passes brings the sun closer to the horizon.



## 1048, 09 SEPT 09

I'm in CPT Adrian Biggerstaff's office trying to talk him into joining me in fasting the next day. As Adrian is known to do so well, he rattles off a completely sensible list of the causes and effects of fasting one day. He notes that there could be a reverse effect on our partners. Rather than seeing this as a bonding gesture, they could see this as an erroneous observance of an important Muslim holiday.



## 1845, 10 SEPT 09

2LT Oney has picked up our Iraqi partners and escorted them onto post. The Iraqis were given an opportunity to wash their hands and feet while staff and command teams gathered in the center of Town of Vengeance. I was sure to welcome the Iraqis to COB Speicher and wish them a Happy Ramadan. Huda the Interpreter let the Iraqis know I had been fasting before I got a chance to say so out loud. They were delighted to hear that I had tried to fast. LTC Hameed smiled and said I was becoming more of a Muslim every day. I was very glad that they were appreciative of my dedication for this one day. Some light conversation ensued and minutes passed like hours. I could feel the anxiety in me well up and bubble to the surface in an irritated state. I remember CPT Kuhar's advice to the CST as they were planning on hitting the road one afternoon.



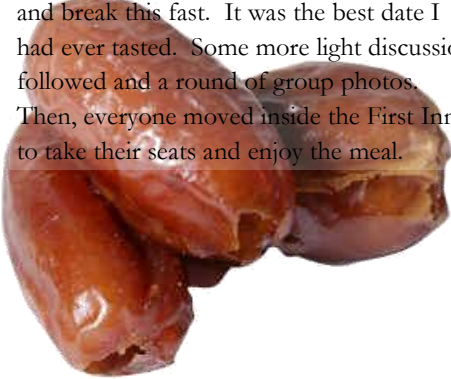
## 1752, 27 AUG 09

"Be careful for the other drivers on the road. They are hungry and tired and want to get home as quickly as possible."

## 1846, 10 SEPT 09

Now, I could totally relate to those Iraqi drivers. If I was in their place, I'd totally have a lead foot on the gas to hurry home and start my own iftar as soon as the sun set.

Finally, Huda checked outside to look for stars in the sky. That's usually the tell-tale sign to break the fast. Soon after, bowls of dates were passed around. I reached for a date as calm as possible but inside, I was completely elated. I couldn't wait to bite in and break this fast. It was the best date I had ever tasted. Some more light discussion followed and a round of group photos. Then, everyone moved inside the First Inn to take their seats and enjoy the meal.



*Opposite Page, Top: Tiger goofs around as Hawk fills some pitchers with shanena. Shanena is a drink made from yogurt and water and some salt. Its served along with the dates as the traditional way to break the fast; Far Left: The places are set for the head table and all the different foods of the Iftar (sans dessert) are on display. Left: CSM Qisar, MAJ Adnan and LTC Kamel enter the First Inn after it was officially determined the time to break the fast. As guests of honor, they were the front of a long and hungry looking line.*

"I'm hungry, too."



*Left: CPT Kubar just before a mission espousing advice as he's well known to do. CPT Etter is in the background; Far left: a picture of some dates; Below: The scene before the Iftar meal started. Everyone took their seats and waited for the official word. Starting the actual meal began with everyone getting their seats first and then waited on the head table to start eating. 1LT Thorell, 1LT Frehulfer, CH Ferrell, MAJ Adnan, LTC Petersen, CPT Amsdell, Ben the Interpreter, LT Peter Glynn, CPT Conley and CPT Hallett. Bottom, Left: CPT J. Biggerstaff and A. Biggerstaff coincidentally say near their movie spoof picture.*





## 1921, 10 SEPT 09

I'm delighted to have eaten a lot of food. A wife of one of our interpreters offered to cook the entire spread for us and have it ready for the evening so that it would be fresh and warm. They delivered the food flawlessly from her kitchen to our table. It was a great spread that included the traditional lentil soup, an okra soup, mixed rice and a different kind of flat bread that looked like it was made from wheat flour. We had

some roasted chicken from our own DFAC as well as fruit platters. We also had extra dates and shanena drink on the tables if folks wanted to help themselves to seconds. My favorite part of the meal was the sweets. For dessert, we had baklava and zalavia which are traditional for this meal. And, of course, we also made sure to have a large supply of ice cream on hand, as that's always a popular dessert.



*Moments before the entire group started eating, everyone took their seats. On the left sits 1LT Bruzek, 1LT Block, CPT Vutbi, MSG Montano, and Santiago the Interpreter; And, on the right sits CPT A. Biggerstaff, CPT J. Biggerstaff, 2LT Oney, 1SG Hurlocker, CSM Qisar.*





*An Iraqi Jundi shoots pool after dinner in the First Inn; Right: Tiger serves up some baklava for dessert.*



## 2002, 10 SEPT 09

The Jinood that accompanied the Iraqi officers played a few games of pool after their meal. Some of them showed real talent when playing. The main party stayed at the tables and talked to each other in small social circles. As we waited for the chai to brew, a slide show that SPC Conway had put together was played. It consisted of a bunch of pictures from around the battalion from partnership missions and engagements. As a special gift, we presented some framed pictures to LTC Hameed and CSM Qisar from that same evening. Tiger the Interpreter brewed the chai to his specifications with fantastic results that we all enjoyed along with the desserts. I didn't have ice cream but I had to have had at least eight pieces of baklava. I justified eating so many because I hadn't had anything to eat all day and I didn't know when I'd have baklava again (at least while in country). As I helped hand out ice cream to the dinner's attendees, it was very clear that everyone was smiling and happy to be in good company with good food. It was fun to be a part of such a rousing social event.



## 2056, 10 SEPT 09

As the evening came to a close, we said our goodbyes to our Engineer partners who left happy. We also recognized those that were the responsible for pulling the whole thing off. CPT Juliana Biggerstaff was the main planner. She was helped immensely by the efforts of our two interpreters, Tiger and Hawk, as well as Hawk's wife.



## 2131, 10 SEPT 09

I'm back in my office and my belly is totally full. The iftar was a fitting end to a long but eventful day for me.

*Above, Left: CPT Kubar and a tray of chai; Above: LTC Petersen presents gifts of gratification to our interpreters; Left: CPT Jones, working late in the office, taste tested some baklava and d zalavia.*





## *A Wolfpack Salute*

By 1SG Adam Hurlocker

As the days come and go, one thing is for certain in the WOLFPACK's neighborhood: we're busy! 4<sup>th</sup> Platoon just returned from an extended mission where they used precise coordination to build a earthen berm 26 kilometers long to help protect an oil pipeline out of the city of Baiji. SSG Isham used his unique ability to operate heavy equipment and was still able to return to Speicher for a brief period to help train 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon Soldiers on heavy equipment. SFC Keihlmeier managed the coordination's that ensured his men had adequate living conditions. 4<sup>th</sup> Platoon performed superbly, never leaving any doubt about their capabilities. PFCs Rodkey, Sutherland, Smith, and Sanders took the challenge head-on and executed the mission without incident. SSG Devere, SGT Taylor, SGT Villas, SGT Walker, and SGT Rodriguez provided the NCO support needed to execute a mission stretching across such a large amount of the country. Hats off to 4<sup>th</sup> Platoon for a solid job well done!

2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon will surely miss their Platoon Sergeant, SFC Freitas, while he enjoys R&R. But, the mission doesn't stop, and 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon shows that they are more than capable of executing a very demanding Route Clearance schedule under the leadership of competent and dedicated NCOs like SSG Church and SSG Daige. SGT Fultz has

demonstrated a unique ability to perform at levels typically seen only in more seasoned NCOs. He has definitely set the tone as a competent and trusted leader. SGT Tenorio just returned from mission specific training involving our Raven. This training will allow us an added capability during our route clearance patrols. PFC Montano continues to lead the way as a vehicle operator-driving for hours on end while searching for IED's is a difficult task he does every day without complaint.

2<sup>nd</sup> platoon performs! They accomplish the mission above standard, clearing the way for American forces every night.

As time passes, our mission evolves. This is definitely demonstrated as 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon takes on an added role with new responsibilities. SFC Coleman has taken on the tough task of training his men to accomplish vertical and horizontal construction tasks while maintaining the capability of route clearance. Balancing these two very different tasks isn't easy, but you'd never know it by the way SSG Eason and SGT Ngiraidong execute. 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon manages late night training with reconnaissance missions and route clearance while maintaining their equipment and administrative requirements. This is all possible because of the dedication of men like SPC Miller, PFC Morrison, PFC Ranson, and PFC Allen. We can't forget that 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon is also supporting the Brigade by providing a team to FOB Marez for additional taskings up there. It is simply amazing! This platoon performs and ac-

complishes the most difficult tasks with superior results consistently and efficiently.

One of the key tasks outlined by the Battalion Commander is to provide necessary training to the Iraqi Army. The 95<sup>th</sup> accomplishes this training support by rotating different platoons down to Patrol Base Wolf. Currently, 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon is executing this task with SFC Legg and 1LT Block. The men of 1<sup>st</sup> platoon have to communicate instructions and training through the use of an interpreter which can be extremely challenging. SSG Rodrigues and SGT Roach manage effective training with the help of their great Soldiers. SPC Lucio and SPC Downard are definitely a big help, along with PFC Gama and SPC Anderson. This team is amazing and adds to the overall success of the WOLFPACK.

Daily, we rediscover that you can't accomplish anything without maintenance. The 95<sup>th</sup> Maintenance team, headed by SSG White, has led us to success by providing mechanical support and equipment repair for a huge fleet of 42 vehicles. Their job doesn't end with just vehicles...SPC Bloise has been instrumental in the repair of more specialized equipment like night vision devices and communications equipment necessary for 24 hour operations. You can't fix vehicles without repair parts and SGT Isabell ensures the parts keep coming. The whole maintenance section is simply the best, and men like SSG Petersen and SGT Washington prove it every day. SGT Giardina is the "go-to" guy and





PFC McIsaac and PFC Vinyard are just a couple of the many hard-working Soldiers the WOLFPACK counts on to keep us operational.

To keep the whole thing together, CPT Textor and SFC Workman run the Operations section. SSG McCarty, SGT Lovato, SGT Wilson run shifts while SPC Wilburn, PFC Aragon, SPC Marshal and PFC Wirtz provide direct assistance with DTS, weapons, interpreters, and a whole slew of additional responsibilities. The Operations Section typically receives very little recognition, but they are definitely a very important part of the great success of the WOLFPACK.

The extremely high motivation of the WOLFPACK is built upon by all of its members. These great Americans take the tough conditions and demanding missions in stride while they continue to remain positive. The separation from our families and friends is in small degree filled with tight camaraderie and strong bonds from their Sapper buddies. Family cannot be replaced, but having a Sapper standing next to you is the next best thing.

In the WOLFPACK, we strive to “effect positive change” in everything we do. I am constantly reminded of just how dedicated the Soldiers of the WOLFPACK are, and how strong the spirit of the PACK lives within us.

The WOLFPACK continues to achieve, as the men and women of this great company continue to prove they are the best at what they do. Our success as a company is measured directly against their desire to be professional and maintain the highest standards. Their accomplishments are great and I am extremely proud and privileged to be their First Sergeant.

*Opposite Page: First platoon hones their marksmanship at the range; Top: Fourth Platoon is loaded and ready to roll to their next mission; Center: Third Platoon gets suited up and prepares for a one of their final route clearance missions. This platoon also cross-trained with some of C/84th's Earthmover Platoon Soldiers to convert from route clearance to horizontal construction. Right: SPC Jones shows off his new ink. 1SG Hurlocker wants to point out that as you can see in this picture, sometimes that WOLFPACK spirit runs just a little deeper than expected.*





## *SFC Reed It Could Only Be Done with a Strong Leader*

By 1LT Paul D. Brownhill

The 511<sup>th</sup> Engineer Company's, 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon is a platoon unlike most in the Army. It's young. Very young. I knew upon completion of my last deployment with the 326<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion, that I would come home to become the Platoon Leader of 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon. What I did not know was there were no plans to stand up a 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon for quite some time once I took the job in early June 2008. Shortly after my arrival, Sergeant First Class Reed reported to the company to be the Platoon Sergeant for 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon, but he was the only new arrival to the platoon for several months.

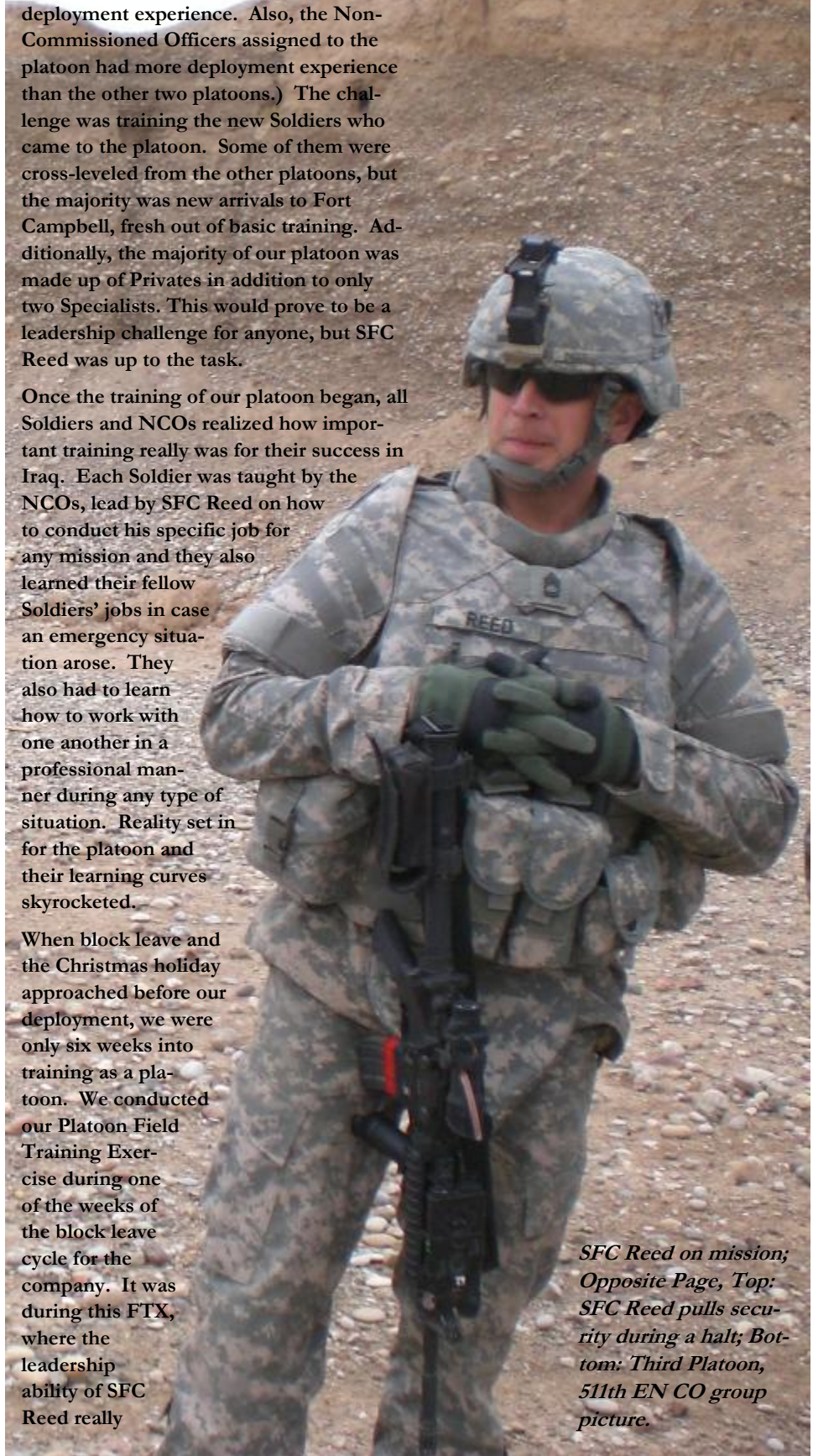
With only the capability to stand up two platoons at that time, the 511<sup>th</sup> Engineer Company geared up towards deployment to Iraq. Since we did not have a 'platoon', SFC Reed and I ran numerous weapons and demolitions ranges and provided observer-controller oversight during training exercises, which prepared the company's Soldiers for their mission in Iraq. While between company taskings, SFC Reed began teaching me how to be an effective leader by ensuring my knowledge of Engineer tasks were solid. He used his years of experience to help guide and shape the leadership abilities I already possessed to closely mirror his proven leadership style. Just before the company left for its culmination training event in September to Hawaii, we found out that in less than a month we would have 24 Soldiers to begin training from step one. SFC Reed and I were finally getting our Soldiers to create 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon and see just how much of an effective leader he was. Quickly, we both realized we had to train these Soldiers at an extremely fast pace in order to catch up with the level of training of the other platoons, who have been training together for over six months.

On 15 October 2008, 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon officially was formed and began training and preparing itself for the deployment which would take place in just over two months. The challenge was not myself, SFC Reed, or Non-Commissioned Officers (NCO) to train. (SFC Reed and I were the only Platoon Leader / Platoon Sergeant pair with

deployment experience. Also, the Non-Commissioned Officers assigned to the platoon had more deployment experience than the other two platoons.) The challenge was training the new Soldiers who came to the platoon. Some of them were cross-leveled from the other platoons, but the majority was new arrivals to Fort Campbell, fresh out of basic training. Additionally, the majority of our platoon was made up of Privates in addition to only two Specialists. This would prove to be a leadership challenge for anyone, but SFC Reed was up to the task.

Once the training of our platoon began, all Soldiers and NCOs realized how important training really was for their success in Iraq. Each Soldier was taught by the NCOs, lead by SFC Reed on how to conduct his specific job for any mission and they also learned their fellow Soldiers' jobs in case an emergency situation arose. They also had to learn how to work with one another in a professional manner during any type of situation. Reality set in for the platoon and their learning curves skyrocketed.

When block leave and the Christmas holiday approached before our deployment, we were only six weeks into training as a platoon. We conducted our Platoon Field Training Exercise during one of the weeks of the block leave cycle for the company. It was during this FTX, where the leadership ability of SFC Reed really



*SFC Reed on mission; Opposite Page, Top: SFC Reed pulls security during a halt; Bottom: Third Platoon, 511th EN CO group picture.*



began to show. He made sure everyone understood our tasks and purposes, and our field training exercise was completed with great success, despite temperatures in the single digits and wind chills below zero. After its completion we were able to spend time with our families one last time before our yearlong tour in Iraq.

3<sup>rd</sup> platoon continued to be the main effort of the company once we arrived in Kuwait. The platoon was finally ready for its mission. The Soldiers and NCOs began working together like they had been training together for years, even though it had only been eight weeks. We were coming together as a team and more importantly, as a family. Trust was strong amongst the Soldiers in the platoon and the cohesion secure. This is a difficult task for any leader, but with his sound leadership style, SFC Reed was able to complete this task with ease. We were now beginning to rival the other two platoons in our training and skill levels.

Now that we have been in deployed to Iraq for eight months, 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon has accomplished some amazing feats. Our platoon has gone above and beyond the call of duty and has done things that no other platoon in the 511<sup>th</sup> can say or match. We have the only 2 Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) that have been granted approval to be

blown-in-place, and we have the highest IED Discovery to Detonation ratio in the company. We keep leading the way with new ideas and performance / safety standards, resonating from throughout our platoon from SFC Reed to the lowest private, we are constantly striving to improve.

Our performance during this tour is a real testament to the leadership abilities of every NCO and Soldier in 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon; especially SFC Reed. Without everyone working together as well as we have thus far, despite

the limited time we've been together, we would not be where we are today. For me, this is the only time I will work and interact with Soldiers on a daily basis. Never could I have asked for a better working environment or better Soldiers and NCOs to work with. They are the reason the Army is as strong and powerful as it is, and, more importantly, SFC Reed and the rest of the platoon are the reason I will always look back on my experience as 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon Leader with nothing but pride and admiration.





## *The Almighty SWAHut*



By CPT James E. Jones

If you've read any of the Task Force Trailblazer Newsletters or spoken with any Soldier here in Iraq, you've no doubt heard reference to the SWAHut. While many may have heard the term in passing, few people have a true appreciation for the South-West Asia hut, or its profound impact on thousands of Soldiers around Iraq. Whether it's the 120+ degree heat and the mile-high dust storms of the summer, the torrential rain of the fall, or the bitter cold of the winter, any Soldier who has been forced to live or work in the Middle East will tell you about the comfort that these wooden structures provide. I can personally attest to the value of a SWAHut. As a matter of fact, I'm writing this article from an air conditioned 30'x100' SWAHut, cooled to a chilly 65 degrees, while it is a cloudless, 110 degree day outside.

A vast majority of 65<sup>th</sup> EN BN Soldiers have been involved in the construction of, lived in, or worked out of a SWAHut. A large portion of the construction support requests the battalion receives are for these huts. To-date, the 65<sup>th</sup> EN BN has been responsible for the construction of more than 25, valued at over \$750,000 across an area of 13,000 square miles, with 11 more in the plans. There is not a more versatile shelter around. The sizes vary from 20' by 40' up to 30' by 100' or more and can be used for just about anything. We've built a SWAHut kitchen, barracks, Tactical Operations



*The various stages of building a SWAHut.*





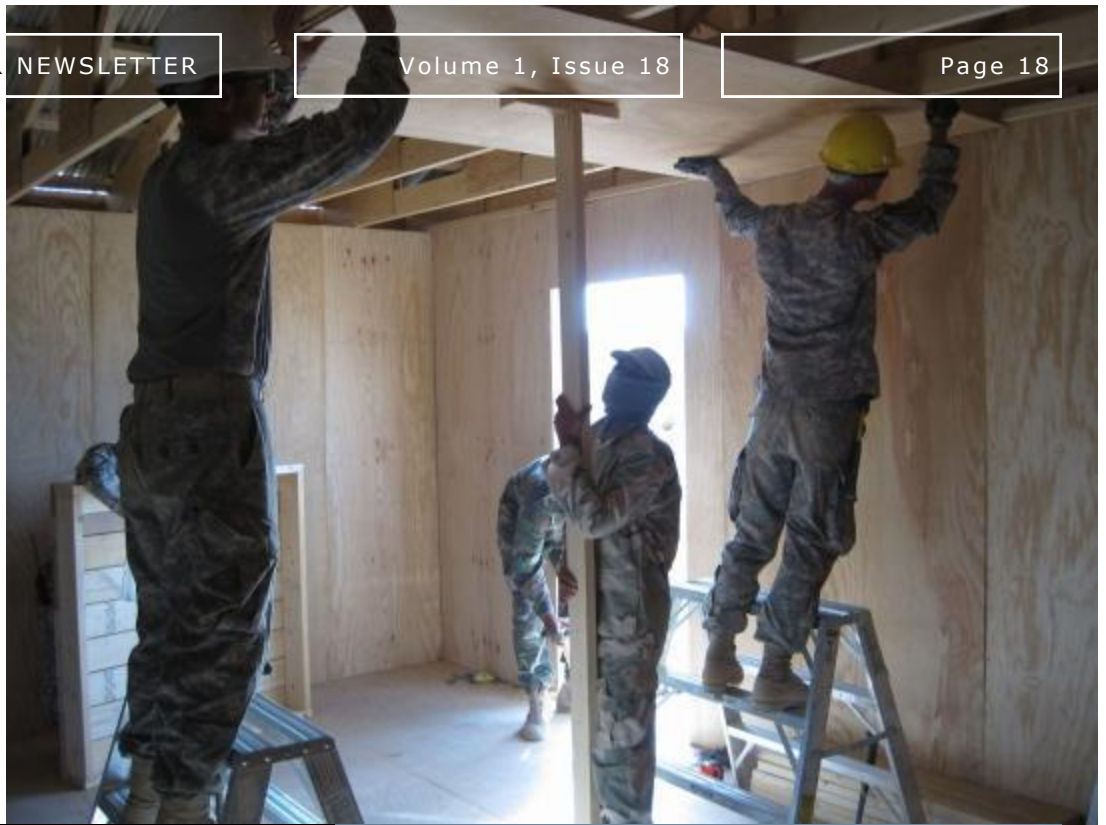
Centers (TOCs), office buildings, classrooms, a close quarters “shoot-house”, a gym, a Morale Welfare and Recreation lodge, and completed a Military Working Dogs (MWD) kennel. Each of these structures has improved the combat effectiveness of the Soldiers who utilize them by providing them a place to work, play, eat, and train.

So what goes into a SWAHut? Well, to use an open-bay 20' by 40' hut as an example, about 385 boards of 2x4's, 218 boards of 2x6's, 233 sheets of plywood, 29 boxes of screws and nails, 31 sheets of tin, 2 doors, 3 air conditioners, 16 rolls of insulation, 8 light fixtures, 1 panel box, 16 electrical breakers, 1500 feet of wire, innumerable smaller accoutrements, and 1600 man hours of blood, sweat, and tears... But, who is counting? If you are a big-shot, you may even get a window or two for your office, although these are overrated because of the cool air they let out, the dust they let in, and the shrapnel hazard if there is a nearby blast.



With the tempo of U.S. military operations in Iraq winding down, we are sure to see a decline in requests for these huts, but by no means will the ability to design and construct them become obsolete. Where there is a need for an expedient, semi-permanent shelter for Soldiers to operate out of, the SWAHut will be there. Hand some wood, nails, and electrical components to a squad of high-speed U.S. Army Engineers and you'll get your SWAHut!

*Right: Soldiers from C/84th and 4th LA JInood build SWAHuts at COL Spider; Below and Next Page: C/84th Soldiers build a SWAHut at COP India.*





## *Building Up for the Drawdown*

By 1LT Garland English

From 21 June to 21 July, 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon Charlie Company went to Mosul to help our brothers and sisters in 84<sup>th</sup> EN BN with their time-sensitive mission of providing billeting for an influx of Soldiers to FOB India.

As many know, 30 June was a deadline for US Forces to be out of Iraqi cities as per the Status of Forces Agreement. Well, this partly resulted in the need for urgent housing for 250 Soldiers. 2/C/84 convoyed up to FOB Marez and met up with 643<sup>rd</sup> Engineer Company and immediately went to FOB India, an outpost Northeast of Mosul.

It was such an important mission that 4 out of the 5 vertical platoons in all of Multi National Division-North were on the same location pitching in on the effort.

In total, 10 SWAHUTs measuring 30' X 60' and 4 measuring 16' X 32' were constructed in a little over 4 weeks.

The Platoon lived in two of those 16'X32's and slept during the day and worked at night. At first, the air conditioners were not working well, so we weren't able to sleep for the

first two days, but Specialists Wilson and Lewis, really were worth their salt, by either fixing or repairing numerous air conditioners.

During construction, a few Soldiers really stepped up. SGT Wheeler and SGT Hamilton took on managerial roles providing quality assurance and quality control. Some senior Specialists stood out as well. Specialists Burrell and Brown constructed a floor system, framed walls, and emplaced the roof system. Specialists Haulbrook and Brunt were primarily in charge of framing and installing doors and the steps to each room.

All the platoons pitched in together to build all the trusses needed. There were three jigs in total, and all were being manned. In total, 310 trusses were assembled.

Also, on a construction note, 2/C/84 used a different technique for leveling the floor system. We are fortunate enough to have a laser level at our disposal, which tells us if each footer, stringer, and joist are level to each other. We were happy to show the other platoons how the tool works, as they were still using the time consuming batter

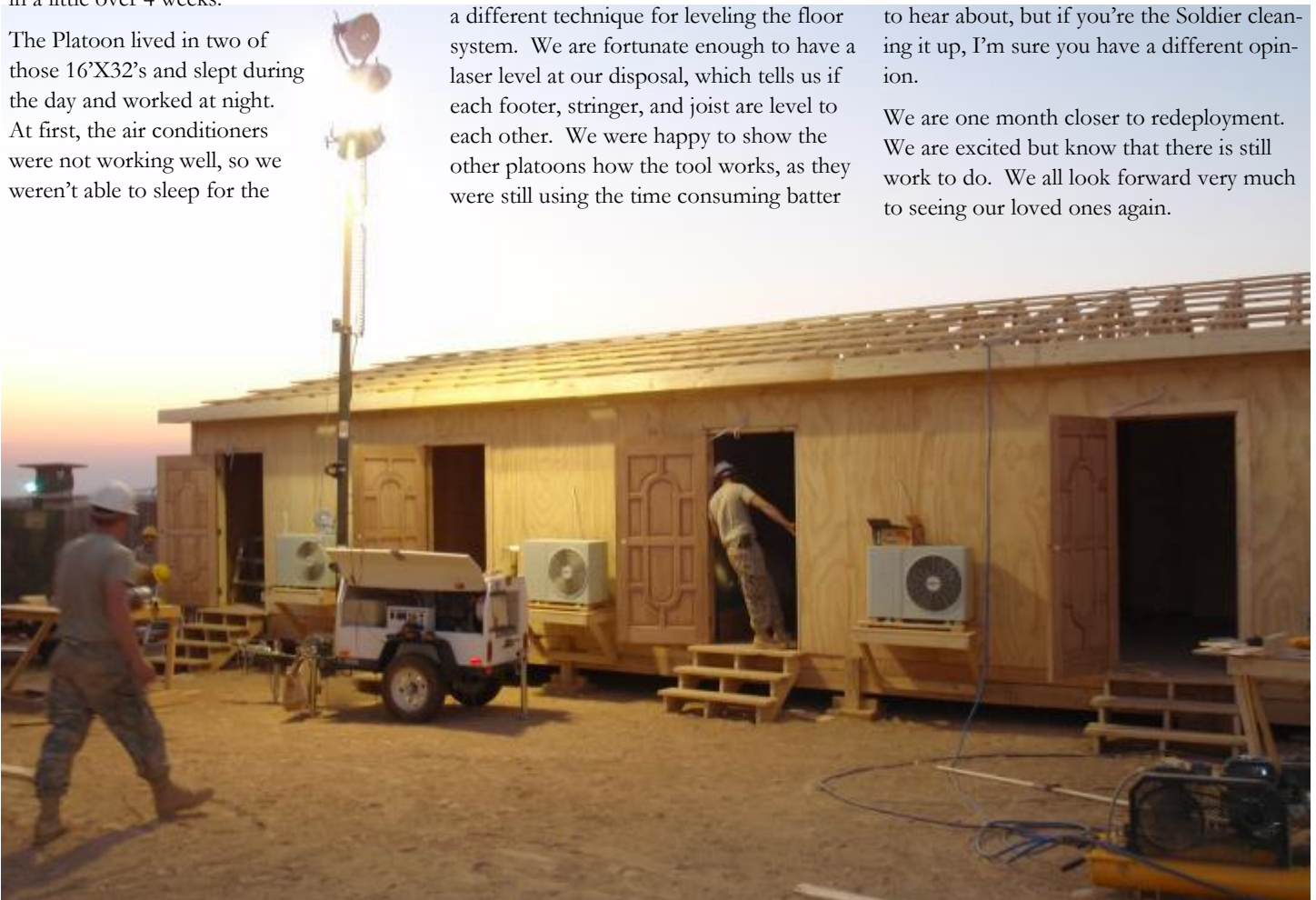
board method.

For a morale boost SFC Lynch helped to give Specialist Tello, Specialist Galindo, Private First Class Alvarez, and Second Lieutenant English mohawks.

For about a week the septic tank was overflowing, making us collectively limit our latrine and shower use. That notwithstanding, the living conditions weren't that bad, but they did make us appreciate what we have here at COB Speicher. The biggest differences are that we have a consistent dining facility, our own CHUs, and air conditioners that are pretty reliable.

In addition to building the Southwest Asia Huts, we also had to construct portable latrines, gravity fed showers, and urine soak-age pits. In a funny, but not-so-funny, incident, a Soldier utilized one of the stalls of the portable latrines before the 55 gallon drum section was placed in there. It's funny to hear about, but if you're the Soldier cleaning it up, I'm sure you have a different opinion.

We are one month closer to redeployment. We are excited but know that there is still work to do. We all look forward very much to seeing our loved ones again.





*I know what you're thinking, not ANOTHER SWAHut, but this is the perfect way to show off some of the skill and talent that resides in TFTB. SGT Hunnicutt is standing by his own carpentry masterpiece that graces the wall of a newly built SWAHut. Also, every now and then we'll get submissions from our Soldiers that showcase their creativity. These two pages are just a glimpse into the incredible talent that help make TFTB unique. Read on and enjoy. Also, look forward to more highlights of the Soldiers' of TFTB creativity.*



## The Values of the Army

*Submitted during the Soldier of the Quarter board, 1SG Hurlocker tipped TFTB NL about SGT Giardina's insightful essay. Check out what this Soldier (that 1SG Hurlocker considers one of his great NCOs) has to say.*

By SGT Christopher Giardina

The job of a Noncommissioned Officer encompasses such a huge variety of duties and responsibilities making it one of the most demanding, rewarding and difficult positions in the Army. My name is Sergeant Christopher Giardina, and I am assigned to the 95<sup>th</sup> Engineer Company, 65<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion.

Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity and Personal Courage are not just the Army Values, they are my values. I live them to the best of my ability, support them with my full commitment, and teach them to my Soldiers through demonstrated action, spoken word, and direct training. Noncommissioned Officers are presented with challenging situations and circumstances on a continuous basis, especially while deployed to Iraq. It is vitally important that those situations and circumstances are handled efficiently, effectively, ethically, and morally. Every decision must be addressed with the Army Values as the foundation to the solution that will enable us to avoid possible mission failure. I use the Army Values in my day to day duties; practicing this technique is what shapes me as a Noncommissioned Officer.

The seven Army Values represent my leadership characteristics and guide my leadership style. My interpretation of the seven Army Values is as follows:

**LOYALTY** is a key component to success because it enables Leaders and Soldiers of all levels to be supported in the decision making process. It provides the cornerstone to successful delegation of command and provides the support necessary through which command is exercised.

**DUTY** is a commitment to accomplish all tasks to the best of our ability, never settling for anything less.

**RESPECT** is given equally regardless of rank. Noncommissioned Officers must provide the same level of respect to seniors, peers and subordinates. Respect must not be confused with protocol, and must not be regarded with less attention than any other Army Value.



**SELFLESS SERVICE** to my men and my country come before my own personal needs. I strive for excellence so that I may serve the Army better, and so that I may provide better leadership to my Soldiers.

**HONOR** guides me to make moral decisions on a daily basis and in the face of adversity. Having the strength to do what is right, no matter how difficult, is a challenge I embrace and practice without hesitation.

**INTEGRITY** is having the fortitude to separate what is right from what is wrong regardless of the personal cost.

**PERSONAL COURAGE** to face fear and to make decisions based on values, principles and convictions regardless of popularity demonstrate true personal courage. I have true PERSONAL COURAGE. I live the Army Values.

The Seven Army Values shape leadership and they shape me. By practicing the Army Values throughout my duty, I am able to provide leadership to my men that is of the highest standard, and of my highest capability. The Army Values provide background to my strengths, and offer contemplation to my weaknesses. They allow me to see shortcomings and find ways to improve my own personal characteristics, ultimately enabling me to provide Soldiers with the best leadership I have to offer. The Seven Army Values are standards I choose to live because I know that by living the Army Values I am performing to the best of my ability, and I am providing my Soldiers and the Army with the best Noncommissioned Officer I can offer.



## Poetry

By PFC Sahand Sardari- Kermani

*It's hard to explain  
And so, and yes it's like pain  
And so we decide (me and my mind)  
To write something,  
Something alright.*

*I love you, I love me  
You test me, I love you  
Yes, hate me, I hug you.*

*People love, people love  
Get the feeling of it don't think of it.  
It is easy and beautiful and smooth so natural  
Yes Oh, I think of it, day in  
And wake my lids so the eyes  
Another day, another surprise*

*People be good, so people  
Step on the "weak" to be the best  
It's even worse than the pest  
Too so sad  
It makes me mad.*

*But I stand  
Stand on it so firm  
Philosophy to the end of it  
Does not answer it's sickening  
Feels like it's ripping my soul, my heart with it.*

-DNIHLON-

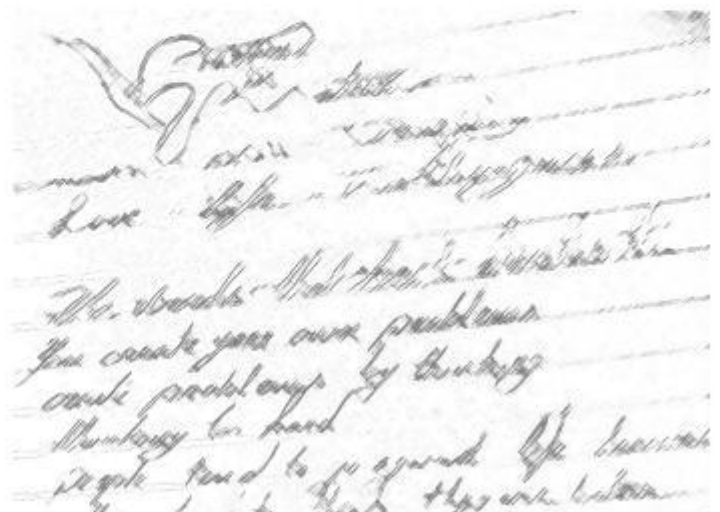
Listen, please listen  
Live the pleasure and beauty of life  
Don't think, don't stress  
And if you think about the rest  
It's natural, a life flow  
A wind, a breeze  
I care about you ... please

Natural world taken  
Everything to the human mind depicted  
So and just so  
Your children will see  
What the world will never be

Rules and Laws  
So shall there be regulations  
None of it does mean a bit  
Be the right of it  
Feel the good in it  
Give more than you have  
Ask for none of it back  
I give you right  
Also give you some light in your mind  
Just don't take me as a fool that is blind  
I can see, see even trough you  
You must be out of glass  
Cause otherwise I see me  
The mirror is sacred  
Please, believe me.



*Sah*







## *The HHC Company Picture*





2 Page Spread of the HHC Company pictures, Clockwise from the Top, Left: The S-6 shop—PFC Walker, SSG Rosas, SFC Perro, SPC Rule, SGT Sisco; [Some of] The CST—PFC Spikes, PFC Robinson, SPC Vego and PV2 Green; The Medical Section—SGT Zavala, SPC Haney, SSG Johnson, CPT Vuthi, PFC Cardona, SGT Givens and 1SG Azucena; The Headquarters Section—SSG Henzlerling, 1SG Azucena, CPT Jeeves, PFC Dagg, SSG Cobb, SGT Dilworth, PV2 Green; The HHC company picture.





## For Such a Time As This

By CPT Miguel Lima

*"The desert and the parched land will be glad;  
The wilderness will rejoice and blossom.  
Like the crocus, it will bloom;  
It will rejoice greatly and shout for joy."  
— Isaiah 35:1-2*

In northern Iraq, near the city of Tikrit, 6 months have passed and it hasn't rained. Dry season doesn't even do it justice but that is, in fact, what they call the spring, summer and fall in Iraq. But, from the 28<sup>th</sup> to the 30<sup>th</sup> of August 2009, there was

a religious revival which brought a desert rain on COB Speicher unlike we have experienced before. Chaplains from ten different units on COB Speicher from division to battalion level began planning for a base-wide spiritual revival. CPT Keith Ferrell, Battalion Chaplain, 65<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion from Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, was the visionary for the revival and the lead organizer. His vision hinged on Isaiah 35; the passage from the Bible which spoke about desert rain. "There are several verses that talk about thunder storms in the desert. Rain is always used as a metaphor in the bible for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. An awakening," said CPT Ferrell. During a planning meeting, CPT Keith Ferrell had asked each of the Chaplains to provide a title for their sermons. "I don't really have a title. I have a message," said MAJ David Shoffner, 3rd Brigade, 25th Infantry Division Chaplain. Smiles broke out amongst the meeting attendees. The comment was playful but serious in tone to express that these men and women were spiritually charged and ready to spread the feeling to their fellow Soldiers. That was the



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vibe of the meeting and, the vibe was palpable. "We should expect a desert rain. And, we should prepare for a revival" said LTC George Matthews. Mostly through word of mouth during Sunday services, the Chaplains began to inform their respective units' Soldiers.

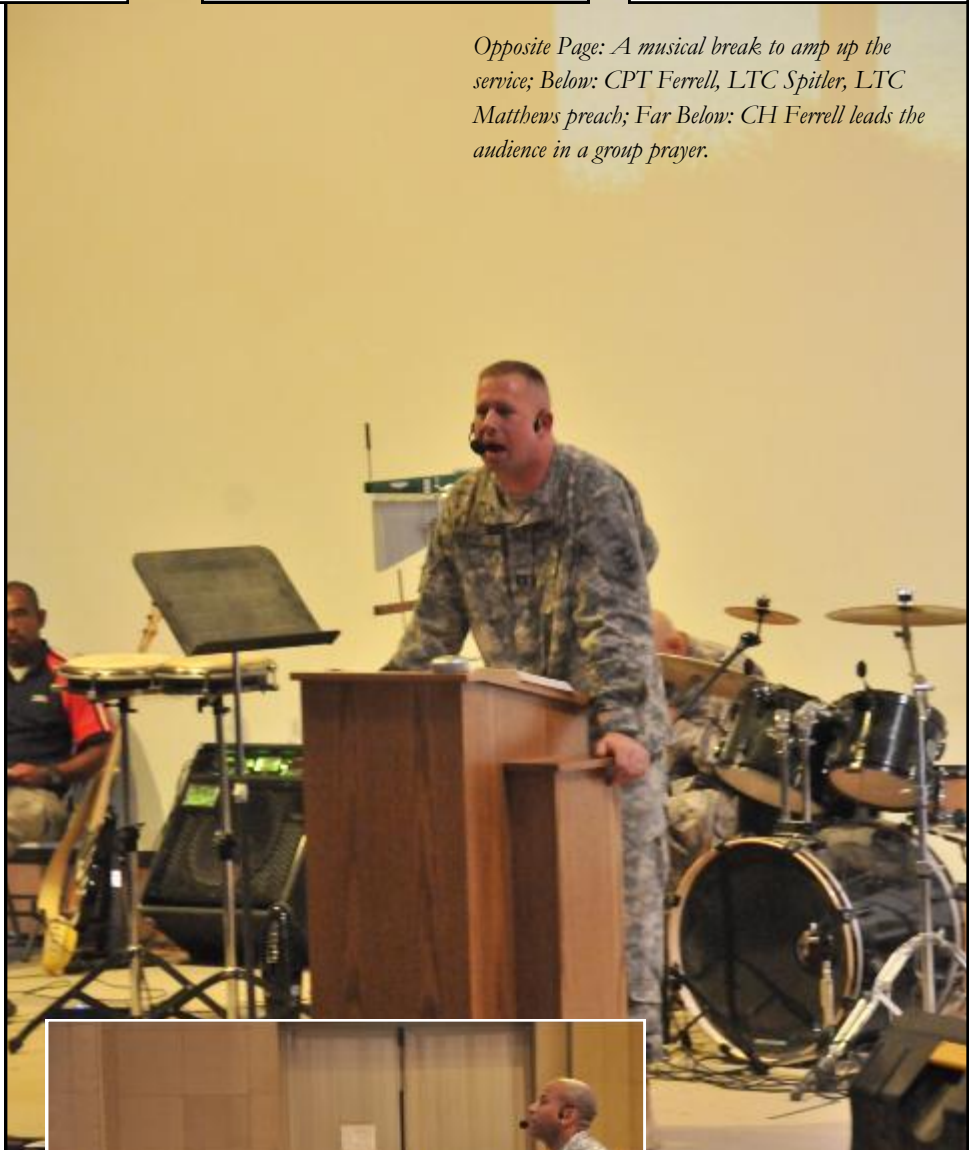
*...say to those with fearful hearts,  
"Be strong, do not fear.  
Your God will come,  
He will come to save you."*  
— Isaiah 35:4

Deployments can be a difficult time for Soldiers. Chaplains are on the front lines of the emotional front for the unit and play a critical role within the unit to counsel and mitigate the range of emotions that a Soldier may perceive during the course of a deployment. Strong faith in one's beliefs helps Soldiers in their daily life whether in garrison or deployed. Although services are held on a regular basis each week, this special event was planned to refresh and strengthen that faith to encourage Soldiers through their deployment. SPC Larry D. Wesley Jr., Chaplain's Assistant, 2-64 CSSB Ft Bragg, volunteered to serve as an usher for the service. "We have units coming in that need to be encouraged and units coming home that need to finish strong" Wesley said.

*They will enter Zion with singing;  
everlasting joy will crown their heads  
Gladness and joy will overtake them,  
and sorrow and sighing will flee away.*  
— Isaiah 35:10

Held in the post theater over the course of three evenings, the revival was scheduled to appeal to a variety of different faith backgrounds. Each evening featured two separate messages from two different Chaplains. All of the messages were delivered in each Chaplain's own unique style but struck similar notes of hope, strength and spiritual refreshing. Each evening's service was its own experience, and, while open to everyone, had its own focus. Friday night was focused on singles while Saturday was focused on married individuals. Sunday was meant for a general audience featuring two evangelistic messages to bring newcomers into the faith as well as renew and strengthen those in attendance. Each day saw an increase in audience attendance with the third day seeing its largest mass. To accompany the mes-

*Opposite Page: A musical break to amp up the service; Below: CPT Ferrell, LTC Spittler, LTC Matthews preach; Far Below: CH Ferrell leads the audience in a group prayer.*







*Left: CH Ferrell conducts a group prayer; Above: The contemporary rock band plays some well known songs. SPC Chauncey is in the background on the drums; Right: The audience listens as LTC Matthews preaches; Below: The audience stands during a moment of praise.*

sages, a spirited choir was arranged to celebrate the word with singing. There was also a small contemporary praise band that played popular worship songs as the audience joined in and sang along.

*Then will the lame leap like a deer,  
And the mute tongue shout for joy.  
Water will gush forth in the wilderness  
And streams in the desert.  
— Isaiah 35:6*

Revivals have been considered an awakening for believers and non-believers alike. The true measure of the success of a revival is not only its immediate effect but its lasting

effect on the attendees. It's not every day something like this comes along and its ripples still pass through the daily lives of those involved. The effects of which were felt half a world away. "My wife thinks is amazing that people come up to her in Hawaii and say that they were blessed by it," said CPT Ferrell of the response from the home front as spouses had related their revival experience to their significant others back home. CPT Ferrell further related his experience, "I grew a little bit more because I got to see the heartbeat of other Chaplains and see their desire to see Soldiers get stronger. I did see the Soldiers' desire and hunger for great change in their lives."



"That's why they came.  
They came for such a time as this."  
— CH (CPT) Keith Ferrell





*The lighter side of Iraq.....now showing...*



CPT Matt Amsdell has always dreamed of driving fast--real fast. Early on, his mother worried that her boy was destined to end up as a professional daredevil on wheels. He joined the Army with hopes of driving for the Army NASCAR team. Little did he know that the Army driver is not actually in the Army! Distraught, CPT Amsdell rose through the ranks, deploying to Iraq as the FSC Company Commander. Acquiring a fleet of stripped-down 'racing' Caimans, his Distro and Maintenance platoons had a string of victories from Diyala to Mosul. Receiving endorsements from the Rusty Nail, SniperHill, and KBR, CPT Amsdell had mucho wasta. CPT Amsdell's "win at all costs" approach was put in check when he was relegated to delivering Ice Cream to the Battalion's Iraqi partners for Iftar. Determined to get back to the top, CPT Amsdell began planning the JBB 500 to showcase his talents and beat 1LT Elliot "The Bruzer" Bruzek at his own game.



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## Editor's Notes

Salaam,

If you were to come and visit me at my office, I might greet you with, "Welcome to the PE-COC." Pronounced "peacock" like the bird, it's an acronym for the four separate offices located on one side of a SWAHut: Plans Effects Construction Operations Cell. While its name denotes some sense of technical know-how, we are easily defined as a bunch of guys that really just knock out work in a fun environment. Our AO is rife with insides jokes, internal office pranks and snacks. Lots of snacks (Special thanks to my Mom and Dad as well as CPT J. Jones' folks for sending cookies on the regular). It reminds me of living with college roommates as we all have to share the workspace as well as a refrigerator.

The best part of working in this environment is even though we all have very different jobs, we all work as a team to support each other. Whether it is a friendly reminder about "mandoatory [sic]" training or help with taking a picture of one's back, the gentlemen of the PECOC are top notch. Thanks for all of your help when I'm in "newsletter mode"!



## Commander's Corner

Aloha Families and Friends of Task Force Trailblazer,

I hope you enjoy this installment, another filled with great stuff. I'm trying to find out where CPT Lima got his cool tat and see if I can get a discount. Anyway, you have probably heard by now that we know a bit more about our redeployment timeline, and it looks fairly promising that we will be back in Hawaii by Christmas. I certainly can't guarantee that, I we really won't know which specific day in December until we actually start the journey. Lot's can change, and does often, so please don't make any plans that can't be postponed if our Nation calls or the plane gets a flat tire. Also, please understand that although we will likely be back to Hawaii before Christmas, there are a number of things to get done prior to departing for some well earned and anticipated leave. So, trips to the mainland won't be possible until 11 January 2010. In the meantime, please take advantage of some of the good programs offered by Army Community Service to mentally prepare for the reunion. I don't have to tell many of you that it's exciting but also sometimes frustrating and stressful since we've become accustomed to getting things done in separation. Your



FRG Leader has a lot of information regarding the available classes and activities that are worth your time. Especially if this was your first deployment, I strongly encourage you to take advantage.

The battalion continues to thrive and improve the quality of life for our Soldiers

and the Iraqi population over here. I think much in the news overshadows the tremendous gains we have had in Iraq this year. I guess good news doesn't sell as well. Nonetheless, we are proud that our Iraqi partners take more and more responsibility for the security of their Nation and that we too benefit from a diminishing enemy effort. There are still plenty of bad actors out there meaning to do us harm, but the professionalism, training, courage, and competence of all of the Soldiers in Task Force Trailblazer keeps us safe while accomplishing our missions.

Congrats to CPTs Scotty and Barbara Autin on the birth of their first son. LT Ryan Losonsky is standing in until CPT Autin comes back to welcome us home. You will hear more about redeployment activities and our Battalion Ball in February very soon. Hope you enjoyed this

issue, and thanks for all you do for your Soldier, our unit and our Country. That's all for now!

First In, Last Out,

Trailblazer 6