



65th Engineer Battalion, US ARMY

TASK FORCE TRAILBLAZER NEWSLETTER

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Pushing Mounds of Support

By CPT Miguel Lima

It's sweltering hot and I'm standing behind the RG-33 bringing the camera strap over my helmet and taking the lens cap off. "Maybe it's just the exhaust from the vehicle," I think.

As I set out from my position, the air remains stifling hot. As the hot, dry wind wisps past, it feels like someone is following me with a blow dryer. I set out to take pictures and after a few minutes, my eyes are annoyingly drenched with drops of sweat that I can't blink away fast enough. My sunglasses and gloves make it difficult to wipe away the sweat long enough to snap a few shots before I have to repeat the whole process. I figure I can just deal with it by blinking until the sweat starts dripping onto my sunglasses. That made it near impossible to look through the eyepiece and get a good shot. As I move around the work site, Soldiers from the 95th are spread out providing security. I'm with the Battalion Commander while he visits the 95th Route Clearance Company's fourth platoon that has been given the mission of serving as an Assault and Obstacle

MOUNDS, *Continued on Page 2*

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A D9 bulldozer hefts a hulking amount of dirt to start the berm building process.

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asset within the battalion. Essentially, they provide horizontal construction services like that of C/84th's Earthmoving Platoon. In this particular mission, they are creating field expedient force protection for a nearby pipeline.

"Is it me, or is it hotter than normal, sir?" I look to my left and I see PFC Dagg from the BC's Personal Security Detail. "I was thinking the same thing. Thought I was the only one," I replied. I'm concentrating on not sweating and trying not to move too much. It was a silly notion but I was willing to try anything. While the sweat accumulated under my helmet and body armor, it ran freely down my legs to my bloused ankles. Within twenty minutes of being on site, folks from the BC's team are already

making trips back to the trucks to get cold water out of coolers. All the while, huge up armored bulldozers are pushing massive amounts of dirt to form a long berm that is growing in length by the minute. An Iraqi bucket loader moves in after the dozers to add more dirt on top and finish off the berm. This is a joint project that the 4th Iraqi Army Engineer Regiment has started and we've aided to expedite the process. As dirt is pushed or scooped up and dropped on top, dust clouds billow out from the activity and threateningly linger, waiting to dust anything or anyone in the nearby area. Usually in conditions like this, a unit may choose to work in the evening to at least avoid the heat. As a supporting element to the mission, we work alongside the IA and they primarily work during the daylight hours. This is the environment in

which 4/95th finds itself operating to complete the mission. Sweat and dust abound, and nearby, another commodity is found in abundance. The oil that runs through the pipeline that the 95th is working to protect is the life blood of the Iraqi economy. For that reason, its infrastructure has been a target throughout many of Iraq's conflicts. Even today, it remains a target for those that want to disrupt the Iraqi economy and incite dissidence against the Government of Iraq. And, that's why the 95th is on site to aid the 4th IA Engineers. While most of our missions tend to be of a reactionary measure like that of clearing a route from emplaced IEDs, conducting bridge repair on an eroded bank or building a SWAhut at the behest of a needy battlespace command, this mission is a preventative measure to keep any future harm from reaching

The D9 operator listens to the instructions SFC Kiehlmeier gives him before resuming his work; the powerful D9 carves into the hard ground and pushes dirt to form the berm.





Clockwise from Top, Left: The D9 pushes another huge mound to form the berm; Iraqi Jinood get ready to start up their bucket loader; the Iraqi bucket loader peeks out from behind the berm; 2LT Oney, 1SG Hurlocker and Huda the Interpreter speak with the 4th LA OIC.



and affecting the pipeline.

While on site, it's easy to see that the going is slow on the project. There are only so many pieces of equipment and the pipeline is rather lengthy. However, each meter is one step closer to a more secure oil infrastructure and therefore, a more secure economy. You might think it odd that a country that comes in as the world's third most oil-rich country would have to import gasoline

but due to attacks on infrastructure like this back in 2004 and 2005, the Iraqi government was forced to do just that. Even so, Iraq still suffered through fuel shortages and power outages as a direct result of the attacks. Our missions usually have a regional impact but this goes much further. While not directly contributing to anyone's immediate convenience like that of clearing a route for a day's worth of US forces' safe travel, the work that the 4/95th has done,

in less than favorable conditions, has improved the nation of Iraq as a whole with lasting effects. While on site, that might not be the first thing those Soldiers thought about as they wiped their brow for the third time within a minute. But those that know the history, also know that the work of 4/95th will help the development of this emerging democracy's economy and its stable future as a sovereign nation.

Leaders of the Pack

By 1SG Adam Hurlocker

The great strength of the United States is defended by a group of amazing men and women who selflessly strive to maintain and protect the freedom and liberty of its citizens. Over the past several years, I have had the privilege to meet these Soldiers, and I have shared in their honor to protect and defend our great country.

Today, the 65th Engineer Battalion has taken on this challenge in Iraq. The 95th Route Clearance Company serves beside its brethren by providing light construction, route clearance, area clearance, Iraqi Army partnership, and a variety of other supporting tasks to the battalion and brigade.

Over the past six months I have learned valuable lessons from some of the greatest leaders this Army has. CPT Darren Moniot, the former company commander, is a powerful leader who helped develop the Wolf-pack into a unit capable of virtually anything and limited by nothing. Current company commander, CPT John Sivley, has grabbed the reins and has already lifted the company to new levels. Both of these tremendous



leaders have given me their support and demonstrate their never ending passion for this unit's success every day. CPT Sivley's abilities are impressive, and his compassion for the needs of our men is amazing. His level of tactical understanding is of the highest level, and is incorporated in every mission and in every plan.

I have had the distinct privilege of working with a set of platoon sergeants who are powerful, knowledgeable, dedicated, and

professional. SFC Legg has grown in his abilities to lead and he definitely complements the unit through hard work and dedication. SFC Freitas has moved to 2nd Platoon and has already hit the ground running. 3rd Platoon will be at a loss as the strength and capabilities of SFC Wryn move with him to HHC. Fortunately, SFC Coleman will be moving into his slot and I am confident he will be successful. SFC Kiehlmeier uses his knowledge to take 4th platoon to new heights every day. He is



Top to Bottom: 1SG Hurlocker hangs out with Soldiers before a mission; CPT Sivley takes time to sit down and talk with Soldiers while at FOB Marez; SFC Kiehlmeier (center) and his Soldiers are covered in dust after a mission.

dynamic and capable, and he inspires his men to achieve more and effect positive change within their ranks.

These platoons travel hundreds of miles each week to accomplish their mission, and that is made possible because SSG White is relentless in the pursuit of maintenance success with our enormous fleet of vehicles. CPT Textor keeps all the wheels spinning from his position as company Executive Officer. He is dedicated beyond measure. 1LT's Joe Block, Eric Flood, Adam Kessler and Michael Campbell are all unique in personality, but similar in capability. They are fine officers who are technically sound and who continually strive to better themselves and their platoons. Their dedication is unquestionable, and I am fortunate to have them.

At this point, in most deployments I've been a part of, things start to change. Soldiers fall into a routine, and daily tasks and missions become second nature. In the Wolfpack, we focus on knowing our capabilities then working to exceed them. There is no better example of this than Soldiers like SPC Anderson and PFC Chapa. These fine young men have exceeded self-imposed limits and have demonstrated that they can achieve anything. I have not ever experienced the level of loyalty displayed by SSG McCarty and SSG Petersen. Competence is unparalleled by Soldiers like SGT Taylor and SGT Obleada. SPC Agee has personal courage beyond measure. The list continues, holding a common theme: Wolfpack Soldiers strive to excel! I am proud of this team and I stand behind their accomplishments, as they are the power and the true strength of the pack - of the mighty Wolfpack.

Top to Bottom, Left to Right: 1LT Kessler and SFC Freitas; CPT Textor and SGT Taylor pop off a few rounds; SGT Obleada gives a thumbs up; 1LT Flood speaks with Iraqi counterparts; 1LT Campbell at Ad Dawr; SFC Wryn and SFC Legg in front of their platoons.





Photo Fusion

By PFC Sardari-Kermani

These are a set of photos that were I selected for their visual interest. They are all photos taken by Soldiers in the 95th and enhanced with Photoshop.

Opposite Page, Clockwise from Top, Left: SGT Valles probes for mines; SGT Orellana dismounts to leads a patrol along a back road; PFC Luna sets his weapon in a blast crater as an indicator of its size; SSG Rodriguez and SGT Platt smile as they pose and cover each other's back; Clockwise from Top Left: Partnership PT with Soldiers from 3rd PLT and Jinood from the 4th LA EN Regiment; PFC McPherson and SSG Inch race against each other with the help of their Iraqi teammates; a Husky passes over a bridge with an unfinished Minaret in the background; Chukey the Interpreter is ready for a mission; an Iraqi sunset.



Hot or Not



Left: CPT Painter in his full kit while riding a helicopter for an inspection out at a site where C/84th is completing a project; Below: SGT Baughman and other C/84th Soldiers sport their versions of keffiyehs under their hard hats. Their Iraqi project partners smile at the new look for the Americans; Far Below: SPC Simmons, SPC Schneider, SPC Baker, SPC Basquez and SPC Jazinski take a rest underneath a newly built overhead shade for the range at COL Spider. Due to the partnership nature of the project, these Soldiers were working during the day rather than the night when the temperatures would obviously be cooler. As a result, water breaks and shade are a must to make sure Soldiers get some relief from the heat.

By CPT Matthew Painter

My wife told me how hot it was in Alaska the other day, a whopping 80 degrees Fahrenheit! That sounds like air conditioning to us. For those of you at home, if your Soldiers haven't told you yet, it is usually around 115 degrees Fahrenheit here every day and expecting to get 15 degrees hotter in July. The majority of our company now works at night, what we call "reverse cycle," to stay out of the hot and get more done without all of the other distractions. At jobsites you will see Soldiers wearing Camelbaks with coolers of cold water nearby that get consumed very quickly. Don't be surprised if a carpenter goes through 8 liters of water a day or an equipment operator drinks more than 2 Camelbaks worth. Maintenance works hard to get air conditioners fixed in vehicles and the life support personnel on Speicher work as fast as they can to have room and office HVACs in order. Sunscreen and chap stick have been provided by the medics for every Soldier so that they can work longer and stay protected.

Hot or less hot, dust or sand, far from

Speicher or close I just want to thank all the Soldiers and their families for the great work and support this deployment. As a commander I get a chance to travel all over Iraq to see the different projects. Sometimes we go by convoy and other times I get to fly in various helicopters. The end result is that I am always impressed with the hard work and dedication I see from C/84. I may not get to say it enough but I really do appreciate everything the Soldiers, NCOs and Officers of C/84th do every day here during our deployment.

Now go back to work. Charlie Rock!



What's in the CACE?

By 1LT Kathryn Walker

Deep inside the maze of cubicles of Al Faw Palace a mission is taking place. A mission so highly classified, that not even 70th EN CO knew it had Soldiers working there. By the end of this article, you still probably won't know what they do. The three Soldiers asked to speak to me on a condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the press. When told I was not technically the press and they would not receive any book or movie deals for their stories unless I used their names, they quickly changed their minds. I decided to learn a little about the Soldiers in the CACE so I can learn what it takes to work there.

SPC(P) Andrew Jolman was raised a military brat until he turned 14, when his dad retired from the Air Force. He also has two older brothers currently serving in the Air Force which is why his favorite color is navy blue. His hometown was Homestead AFB, FL, although, it was destroyed by Hurricane Andrew (no relation) on 26 August 1992. Since then, he's been hoping to see the day he can put the town back on a map

SPC David Bryce Nicholson, also known to the military police as "Nocolson," from Indianapolis, IN, is on his second deployment with the 70th. He joined the Army in August 2005 and was a man apart from

his mother's side of the family which is mainly Air Force and his father's side which is mainly in the Navy. His favorite colors are tan and brown which explain why he likes deployments in Iraq so much.

PV2 Alan Anderson is from Portland, Connecticut and came to the 70th early in 2008. His favorite color is grape, and his favorite thing to say is, "Yeah, Boy!" But his favorite quote is "You forgot Poland!" – George W Bush [during the 2004 election debates]

However, ask them what "CACE" stands for and they give you the run around.

SPC Jolman: "Can Anyone Call the Engineers? Although, I am pretty sure I have to kill you now for saying that.

PV2 Anderson: "Computers and Cubicles Everywhere."

Finally, SPC Nicholson came through with the sixth Army Value and confessed.

N: "The acronym stands for Coalition Analysis and Control Element, but the CACE in general stands for Truth, Justice and the American Way."

No matter how cleverly I tried to get information

from them, they evaded my sly inquires. What is the most top secret mission you have ever worked on? Please go into detail.

N: MI27YUQ12. If you don't know what that means, quit trying to figure it out.

J: You expect me to answer that? Ha! I don't think so. I like my clearance. I don't want to go to jail. I heard they make people like me cry in jail.

A: Trying to steal liquor out of my parents' refrigerator.

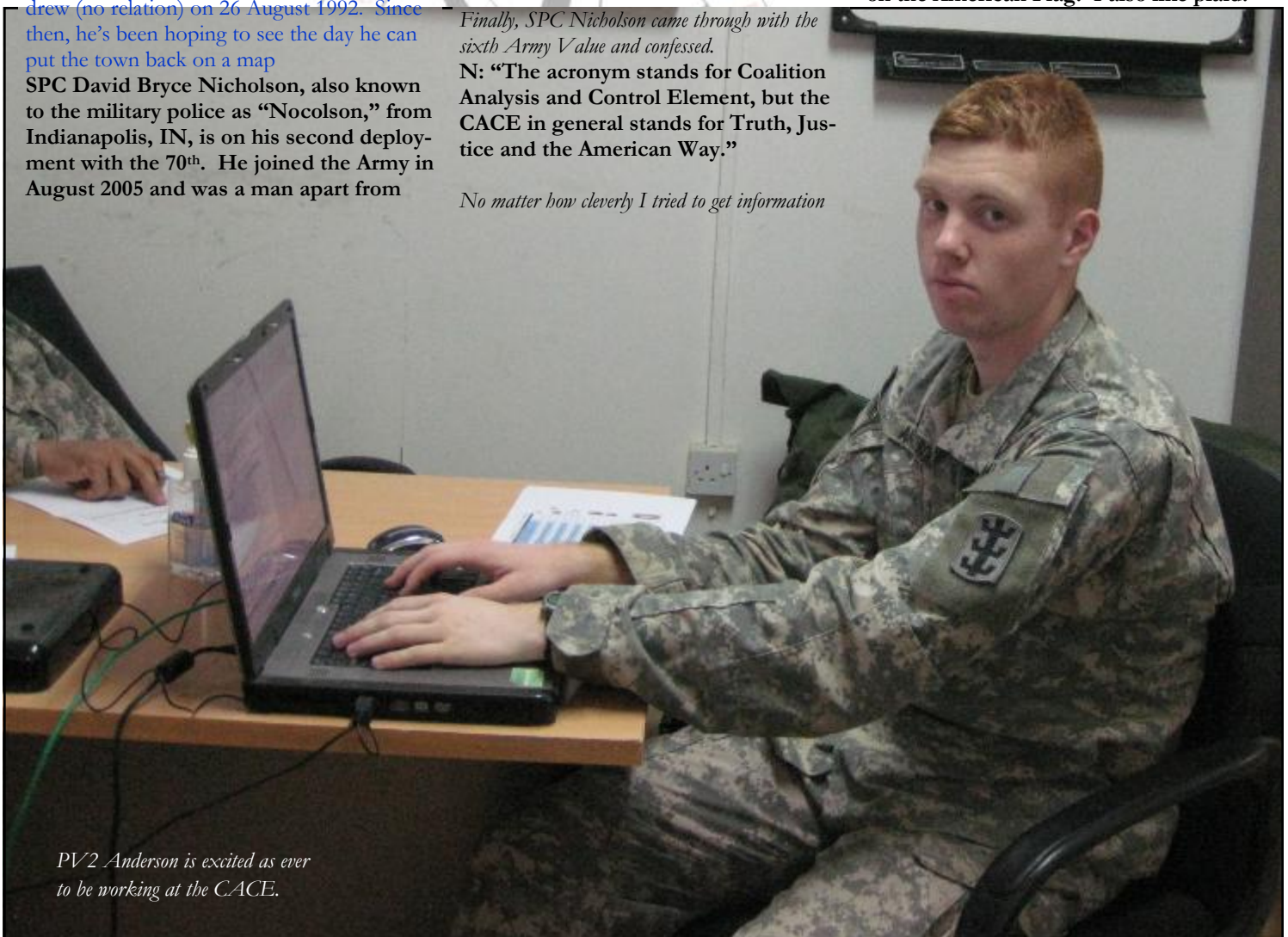
That last one is obviously a code phrase.

J: (whispering to Nich and Ando) I think she's on to us....

What is your favorite pattern?

J: I like number patterns...oh, and faux wood kind of like my desk here.

N: ACU digital pattern or stripes, like on the American Flag. I also like plaid.



PV2 Anderson is excited as ever to be working at the CACE.



SPC Nicholson and SPC Jolman show off their Soldier of the Month coins; Right: And again, but with feeling...and tattoos.

A: Stripes, like on a zebra...

What is your favorite quote by someone famous?

J: "To give anything less than you best is to sacrifice the gift" - Steve Prefontaine

Are you trying to earn brownie points with a running quote?

J: Brownies! Where?

N: Christopher Reeve - “I think a hero is an ordinary individual who finds the strength to persevere and endure in spite of overwhelming obstacles. They are the real heroes, and so are the families and friends who have stood by them.”

What is your favorite quote by you?

J: “Nicholson made me do it.” Used hourly.

N: Michael Scott said, “Abraham Lincoln once said that, If you’re a -“

That's a quote of someone else's quote.

N: How about, “If in the very end you don’t give it all of your heart, it wasn’t worth doing.”

Better. When you are famous, I'll quote you. What is it like working in the CACE?

J: Dark and spooky. Also, it seems like everyone has had a little too much coffee. FYI, intel people creep me out. No offense S2 shop.

N: Well, when I first got told I was going to work in the CACE I was a little nervous because I thought it was going to be a suit case or something which wouldn't work since I'm a big dude. Especially working with 2 other people. How on earth is that supposed to happen? Now that I'm here and I see the day to day operations, the suit case doesn't seem so

bad.

A: It's a perfect cure for insomnia. Just listen to the shift change brief for 20 seconds and you'll be out like Julius Caesar.

N: It's different. We don't just produce "wall paper" here.

How many products do you make everyday? How do you make them?

J: Every day I make about eight or nine products..... on Jib Jab. It is real easy, too. All you do is cut someone's head out of a picture you already have, and then add it to a file on Jib Jab - Oh, you meant real work. It depends on the day, but it averages between none and six. In order to make these products, I use my handy dandy DTSS Workstation. We use first hand Intel from multiple sources in order to provide geospatial intelligence and analysis products to support the fight.

[illegible]

What happens if you can't complete a product in time?

N: I make a few a day I mean... You get more flies with honey... I don't really know the whole expression, but if I can't do something on time that means it's not due yet.

A: If we don't make it in time the customer will get angry...unless they don't care.

I get the sense that your job is probably more important than other jobs, especially mine.

N: Who else will do our job? Our job is

more important for that reason, nobody else can do it. Well, that's not true, other teams...

J: Well I wouldn't say more important. Every Soldier's mission is important, but, yeah, I understand how you would think that it is. We work in a very high visibility, so to speak, area. Many of our products reach the desks of GEN Odierno, LTG Jacoby, and various other VIPs (i.e. The Secretary of the Army, The Honorable Preston M. "Pete" Geren, III).

So you're saying you're kind of a big deal?

J: Kind of? HA! Let's just say that when we walk in the Palace, people notice. They even do a check to make sure we are who we appear to be because so many people try to imitate us. So, yeah. We're "kind of" a big deal.

What contribution are you most proud of?

J: I am proud of the fact that I wasn't replaced as the team lead. That would have been embarrassing. Oh, and my team was able to number houses for addresses, so we get to leave our fingerprint in Iraq.

N: Anything that we make that is going to be used by anyone. Making the CCM (Cross Country Mobility) products was pretty cool and we even got to brief it to the entire CACE. They were used by everyone and were posted to the websites so anyone can get on there and check them out. We made multiple Cross Country Mobility products in terms of what vehicles would be restricted and where. This was in correlation with smuggling that had been taking place in certain areas. We wanted to determine where certain ac-

tivity was happening (IEDs, small arms fire weapon caches etc) and if it had a relationship with where terrain was restricted and unrestricted.

J: Dude! You shouldn't have said that. Remember what I said about jail. I bet they are on their way now.

N: Don't worry about that, dude. And stop grabbing my hand.

If could give one piece of advice to your replacements, what would it be?

A: Don't fall into the lake outside the palace. Those fish will eat you alive.

N: Be flexible. There have been times I went to lunch and 15 minutes into eating I got called back to work. There have been times that I had to come into work on my off time. Don't expect it to be easy but everyone here is willing to work with you.

J: I will be giving them lots of advice. That is part of the RIP/TOA. They will have a full SOP to understand what is expected of them, and how to try to emulate myself and SPC

Nicholson. Also, they need to know not to say, "Green Beans" too loud. I made that mistake once and then I had to carry 23 various types of coffee, lattes, and frappes back from the store. You should have seen it. There I was with coffee stacked five high on the four cup carriers, and then three in my cargo pockets. I got a coin for saluting this Captain as he passed without spilling a drop. That also earned me the nickname "Big Coffee".

I said one piece.

J: I was never good at spelling. J

N: Don't get married unless you know 100% that you at least like her/him. Also, look for windows of time in the CACE that you can be gone. People will literally stop in time if you aren't here.

Ok, enough. What is the first you are going to do when you get back to Hawaii (after all the mental and physical experiments evaluations are done)?

A: Step off of the airplane.

J: I won't lie. I am going to sit down, call my daughter, tell her, "Daddy is home from the desert", and then crack open an adult beverage and take a shower... at the same time. That's what she said!

N: I'm going to get a 21 and up drink, take a shower...and drink it in the shower. Then, wear civilian clothes and relax. Go fishing. And, go out to some bars with the guys. I can't wait to start watching the pre-season of the NFL and start packing my stuff. I'm PCS-ing at the end of October (tentative). Of course, I'm going to take my administrative leave and block leave, but that's a no brainer.



Top to Bottom:
SPC Jolman and
PFC Floyd at
work in the of-
fice; SPC Jolman
shaking hands as
he meets LTG
Jacoby; SPC
Nicholson and
SGT Faulk
hang out and
share a laugh.



Translating What It Means To Serve America

By SPC Trista Thornton, C/84th

Marwan is not a common name for an American, but he is not American. Marwan is a local national of Kirkuk, Iraq. He currently works as an interpreter for Coalition Forces. For professional reasons, he is named Wolf. This is to protect him and the safety of his family. Also, the contract company interpreters work for gives these names to make it easier on US military to pronounce a familiar word or name. Our unit has also given him the nickname of "The Zohan," due to his pretty boy image and his sort of suave, debonair attitude. He is a very muscular man, who stands 5'7" and weighs 174lbs. His slick black hair glistens and makes him kind of look like a wolf; and his bronze eyes sparkle with kindness. He just finished working out at the gym with some Military Police friends he had made. He still had sweat dripping from his forehead. Even though he was a little musty, the cologne he wears is so strong that I can taste it. It does not smell too bad.

Marwan is highly sought after as an interpreter. He is very high spirited and charismatic. When the battalion asks for support from the company for one of our four interpreters, they always ask for him first. He said that Iraqi people are taught English in school, but he did not become serious about learning our language until he worked alongside American Marines. The English that he does speak sounds a little broken, but it is still very easy to understand him. He also catches on very easily when he does not know a word. But, when you start explaining it to him, he gets it fairly quickly.

Before Marwan was an interpreter, he



served in the Iraqi Army. He joined in 2003, after it was made an option to join. He wanted to serve his country, so he volunteered. His unit served alongside the United States Marines Corps in many joint missions that brought him into the same danger that the American forces had to face. He's had some pretty bad memories. "I lost my best friend. We go on mission, like walk mission, patrolling. He stands on the [explosive] IED (improvised explosive device) and he got blown up and died. The same day we got a phone call from his family. His wife is pregnant." When telling me this story, I could see his eyes start to water over. I could tell that this really affected him; he really cared for his friend.

He was also injured while he was serving in the Iraqi Army. "We found like a lot of weapons, me and my officer. And then, we found three weapons caches the next day. Me and my unit were attacked a couple days later by the men whose weapons we found. I was almost killed by the enemy. They killed one Marine and five Marines got

shot, and I and one more Iraqi Army guy got shot." He showed me his two scars on his forearm. One is the size of a softball and the other the size of a golf ball. It is not only American troops that are getting hurt here. He was supporting American troops when this occurred. Nothing could make me prouder than his willingness to put his life on the line to help us fight the Global War on Terrorism.

Yeah, there were a lot of things that he has seen, but not all of which were bad. There was some good, also. He told me a story about this two year old boy who burned himself really badly on his feet. He was sent by his officer to treat the young boy. He put cream on the boy's feet then wrapped them for him. The boy's mother saw Wolf the next day and asked him to change the bandages for her. He did this everyday, for three days, until his unit left the area. His eyes sparkled and he smiled so big

CONTINUED Next Page



I could see his molars when he said, “I remember this kid and how beautiful he was.”

I liked listening and sharing stories with him. He continued, “We went to mission to like, you know, the border between Jordan and Iraq. It was a joint mission with American Marines. We found five females that were living in tents out in the middle of the desert, and they got 50 to 100 sheep, and no males live with these women. The wolves come in every night and eat from their sheep. They ask me for help and these women have AK-47 with no bullets. I told the women ‘I will give you 15 bullets but I need you to bring me 15

wolves.’ And she said ‘ok I can get you these wolves.’ The next day we went back again. She killed two wolves. I was happy. I told her she is a sniper.”

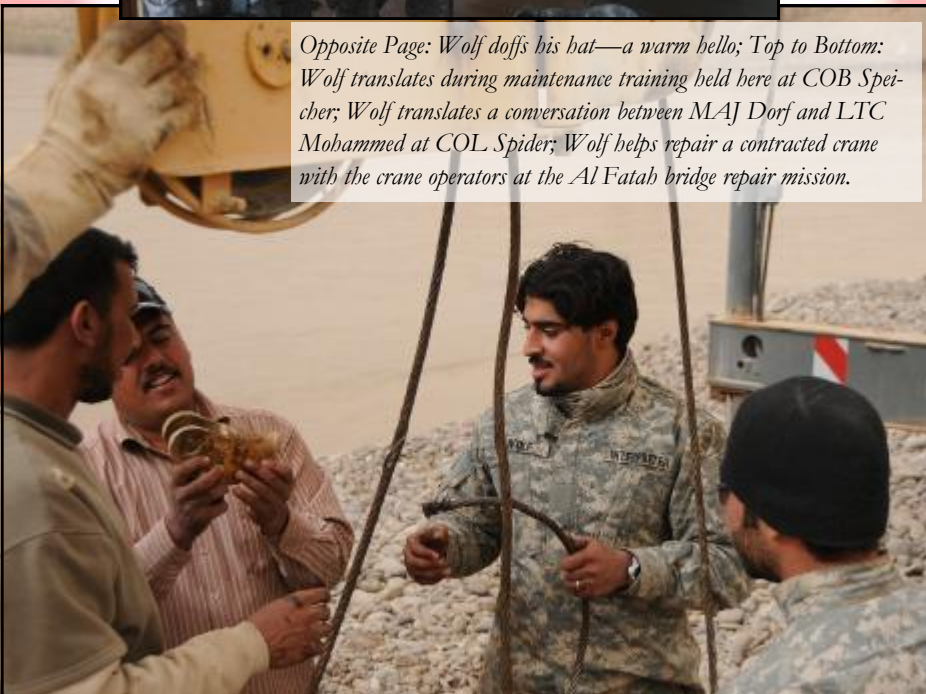
Marwan, like many other Iraqi contractors, would like to become an American. When asked why, he responded, “The life here is too hard...We can’t be free here in Iraq. We can’t study. You have to be with certain group, like rich people or political groups’ children.” With this being said, I asked if he thinks that we don’t have some of the same issues, because we do. I told him that he is going to experience discrimination by going to the states. He responded “Yes, I am ready. I need to

make a better life for my wife and child.”

He is willing to do whatever it takes to become a citizen, “I would like to be a Marine if that’s what it takes.” He has several goals for when he goes to the states. He would like to go to school to study philosophy. “I was studying philosophy here, but it became too much, and I need work. I want to become an American to be free.” I believe in my heart, with that profound comment he made and with all he has done serving alongside Americans and now, as he is interpreting for us, that he is an American at heart and understands our mission here.



Opposite Page: Wolf doffs his hat—a warm hello; Top to Bottom: Wolf translates during maintenance training held here at COB Speicher; Wolf translates a conversation between MAJ Dorf and LTC Mohammed at COL Spider; Wolf helps repair a contracted crane with the crane operators at the Al Fatah bridge repair mission.





By CW2 Jefferson Whipp

Upon arriving to COB Speicher, I was really anxious to get around to the supporting agencies to meet and greet and see what kind of maintenance support was currently available at Speicher. When meeting the Warrant Officers we were replacing, CW2 Holley and I quickly found out that they didn't have much of anything. No NTVs (non-tactical vehicle), Gators, or even Polarises. For the first week we were here, Chief Holley and I caught the shuttle bus to get around and soon realized that COB Speicher was a lot larger than we thought. We knew this would be a big problem because networking can't be done from behind a desk. The FSC Commander provided me with an M1151 (armored HMMWV) but it just wasn't a reliable source of transportation. Not because of maintenance problems but mostly because of the ongoing missions. I was constantly coughing up my M1151 to the company so they could use it for TCP's (traffic control points) and the BRF (base reactionary force). Of course I understood that mission was first so I gave it up when they needed it. The unpredictability wasn't working out for me or my Soldiers.

We work the farthest away from the battalion and we had little means of transportation. We were using Caimans as FOB runners which was like driving a moving van to work every day. There had to be vehicles out there that were damaged or not working that could be repaired. SSG Barrientos started the trend in January by finding two stripped down Kawasaki's ATVs (all terrain vehicle). They were beat up and in bad shape. Half the parts were missing and, to the average eye, it looked like they belonged at the local dump. SSG Barrientos had a vision and knew with a little effort anything was possible. He worked late every night for a week to get this little thing running but he made it happen. He got his transportation and is still driving it today. It was now my turn. So, on the prowl I went. I drove my M1151 around the whole COB looking behind motor pools, battalion areas, and everywhere else I thought I could find a broken down vehicle. SSG Peterson from 95th's motor pool found a Toyota that looked like it had been stripped and sold for parts. The truck had four different rims and tires, half a dash, no starter and no lights were working. He didn't have the parts to fix it or the time to invest. I asked him to give it to me so I could have a try at fixing it. With the help of many of my warrant officer friends around Speicher and looking in every corner of post, I found what I needed and had it assembled and running



Right: CW2 Whipp stands next to his set of wheels.





in just a week. I was good to go but I had to get something for my Joes (nickname given to Soldiers that are loved by their leaders). One thing you should know about Warrant Officers is that we can bargain and make a deal to get pretty much anything we want or need. With that said, it wasn't but a few days later I came across an old Air Force van we refer to as the Paddy Wagon. The bargain was that I had to promise to fix a flywheel on a HMMVW and the van would be ours. I brought it back to the motor pool and my Soldiers were looking at me like, "What are we suppose to do with this?" I told them that I would get the parts, they could fix it and it would be all theirs. With a few cans of spray paint, some major repairs on the engine, and the installation of some seats the van was complete. We still have some electrical kinks once in awhile but the wheels are spinning and the Soldiers are happy.

After fixing the Paddy Wagon, other units had seen what we can do and they just started giving me vehicles. I currently drive my Nissan which is known as the "Horse with No Name". The unit who gave it to me had it in the back of their motor pool for 7 months. They tore it apart to try to fix it but were unable to. No suspension, brakes, dash, seats, or back window. The only thing there was the engine. It was clean and good to go. SSG Barrientos was going to push it into the

maintenance bay but I said no way. We are going to drive this bucket into the bay. It took us no longer than 20 minutes to get it started and we drove the "Horse with No Name" into the maintenance bay. Three weeks later it was running with air conditioning and registered on Speicher. Since arriving we have acquired, fixed, and registered four vehicles. My Nissan, the Toyota, 1SG George's Mitsubishi (also equipped with A/C), and the Paddy Wagon.

By the way, most of, if not all work, was performed after hours and on weekends. I currently have two projects in the making. A Silverado that myself and Chief Holley are rebuilding and a CUCV (looks like a Blazer from the 80's) for my NCO's. These two will be up and running in less than a month guaranteed. I guess the moral of the story can be described by an old quote Thomas Edison once said. "Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work."

And if there is ever something you need but can't get,



Top, Left: CW2 Whipp and his ride after a tune-up and a wash at the motorpool; Above: SPC Harness and SPC Vidal next to the Paddy Wagon.



Left: SSG Barrientos stands next to his set of wheels; Right: CW2 Whipp poses next to his current project.



18th EN BDE—130th EN BDE Transfer of Authority (TOA) Ceremony

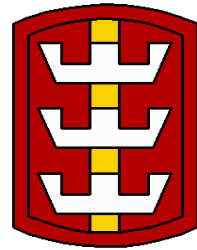


By MAJ Aaron Dorf

On 15 July 2009 at Contingency Operating Site (COS) Marez in Mosul, the 18th Engineer Brigade from Heidelberg, Germany, commanded by COL Matthew Russell and CSM David Clark relinquished operational control of as the functional engineer brigade headquarters for Multi-National Division North. They were replaced by the 130th Engineer Brigade from Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. The 18th EN BDE served for 15 months in Iraq, were relocated twice, and had the unique distinction of being stationed at COB Speicher, FOB Warrior, and COS Marez. This afforded them the challenge of working in the Salah ad Din, Kirkuk, and Ninewa provinces all across northern Iraq. The 130th EN BDE was Task Force Trailblazer's previous higher headquarters while stationed in Hawaii and will serve again in that capacity until the Battalion's redeployment at the end of the year. The 130th EN BDE is currently commanded by COL Fabian Mendoza and CSM Dale Moran.



Above: Friends of the Engineers attend the TOA ceremony in one of the giant K-Span buildings. The ceremony was attended by the 25th ID Commander, MG Caslen, and ADC-S, BG Brown. This is denoted by the 1 & 2 Star red flags stage right; Left: Front row of seats adorned in Engineer Red; Opposite Page, Top: COL Russell and CSM Clark case the 18th EN BDE Colors signifying the formal transfer of authority; Top, Right: The 18th EN BDE Insignia "Swords Up" (top) and the 130th EN BDE Insignia "Sappers In" (bottom); Bottom Left: SPC Vega, SGT Miller, PFC Robinson from HHC, serve as part of the TOA Ceremony Color Guard; COL Mendoza and CSM Moran unfurl the 130th EN BDE colors and assume formal control of the 65th and 84th Engineer Battalions.



Expectations

By 2LT Elliot Bruzek

What I expected Iraq to be like and what it is actually like are so far apart that it boggles the mind. As a fresh second lieutenant, brand new to the Army and the 65th when I arrived in Hawaii, I learned that we would be deploying very shortly after arrival. At first I was shocked, and then I was excited. This will be my chance to validate all the training I had been through in the last year of my life. From day one of basic training till graduation day of the Quartermaster Officer Basic Course I had been preparing to get deployed. I went through Officer Candidate School with many former enlisted Soldiers, almost all of whom had been to either Iraq or Afghanistan. I would constantly ask them what to expect over here since I knew it was just a matter of time before I, too, would get deployed. After that, I had a pretty good idea of what to expect; so I thought. Upon getting off the plane all I see is dirt and dust. This is going to be a long year I thought. Almost immediately that perception changed. On the drive from the plane to the Town of Vengeance, I see a ton of people, buildings, the PX, two chow halls. All these buildings are massive and not in tents as I had imagined. Equally weird to me is seeing all the civilians and civilian vehicles driving around post.



Expectation



Reality

(“high” speed internet), a fridge, and a/c all built in. Simply amazing when compared to, once again, my expectations. At home while gearing up for my deployment I am only imagining the worst. I am thinking that I will be living in a tent with twenty other guys. I will have to eat MRE’s for twelve months straight. There will be no internet, TV, A/C; it will be like the Stone Age. I almost feel like I am cheating; this is too nice.

Next up on list of expectations is the sheer size of COB Speicher. It’s literally huge. It is necessary to take a bus to get most places on post, including where my soldiers work in the motor pool. I never in a million years would have thought that this was possible. There are actually civilian busses running around, on time, on a military installation, in theater...shocking.

Now, let’s get to the living conditions. They are awesome. I live in a CHU, as most everyone knows, is basically a trailer. But this trailer has AFN (cable TV), SniperHill



Expectation



Reality

As the former Combat Security Team platoon leader I was able to go to other FOBs and see the differences in every post. COB Speicher is clearly one of the best. Other smaller FOB’s truly met my expectations. Everyone on COB Speicher and in the 65th should feel especially lucky to be stationed here because our brothers and sisters in arms are truly out there living in the suck in this country and Afghanistan. I will always remember my expectations prior to this deployment and compare them to reality. My expectations will never be the same.

All of the photos represent the expectations and the reality while deployed into the Iraq war today. While some smaller bases barely have running water, COB Speicher and other well-established bases have a lot of accommodations that make the deployment more comfortable.



Reality



Expectation

**FSC at work**

Clockwise from Top Left: SPC Ramos-Fee and SPC Vidal stand inside of the test fire pit cover that they recently completed welding; CPT Amsdell takes the lead as loadmaster at PB Wolf; FSC Soldiers hook up a skid load generator for transport to COB Speicher; A group of mechanics provide an inbrief to COL Mendoza during his orientation to COB Speicher; a typical scene from the motorpool.

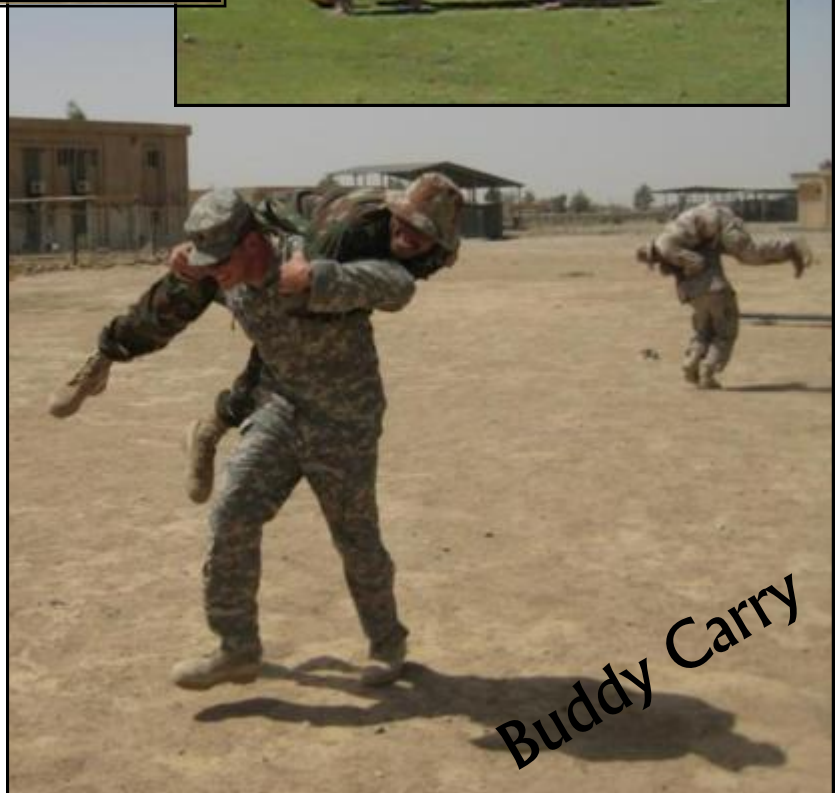


Partnership Update

Training at K1



The 511th Sapper Company continues their partnership efforts with a full complement of individual and collective training at the squad level. During these past several weeks, the Reapers have expanded their partnership effort in an attempt to train many of the new Jinood that have recently been received by their partner unit, the 12th Field Engineer Regiment (FER) based out of a large Iraqi Divisional base know simply as K-1. As the 12th FER prepared to go through Unit Set Fielding, a large logistical effort where they receive all of their units' new equipment, the 511th is preparing the Jinood and their leaders with the skills on how to employ this equipment. The following collages of photos depict their successes. [EIC]



Buddy Carry

Previous Page, Clockwise from Top: Members of 3rd PLT/511th test their mettle in a series of litter races against their Iraqi counterparts; Team 511th performs the high carry with the Iraqi Flag in the background; Several of the exercises involved mixed teams with the both US and Iraqi Soldiers being carried; the Iraqis demonstrate how not to carry their buddy; Center: Soldiers and Jundi perform buddy carry drills and races as part of a team building exercises.

Right: An Iraqi Engineer takes the challenge, successfully picks up SGT Slotnick and performs the buddy carry; Bottom Collage, Clockwise from Top, Right: PV2 Germain from 3rd PLT/511th EN helps a Jundi from the 12th FER place a tourniquet during a first aid practical exercise ; SPC Conrad evaluates a casualty that may require a tourniquet; Platoon Sergeant, SFC Reed, 3rd PLT/511th, assists an Iraqi Engineer in applying a tourniquet; After demonstrating the task, PV2 Germain serves as the training aid for his Iraqi counterpart



Tactics



Right: SGT Knea from 2nd PLT/511th teaches the 1st PLT/1st Field Engineer Company (FEC) different types of movement formations; Middle Row, Left to Right: An Iraqi Engineer from 3/1st FEC signals to his team to switch to a 'V' formation; SGT Knea and members of his team watch over the Iraqi's during a tactical movement drill; Platoon sergeant, SFC Millare, 2/511th directs the formation to take a knee and pull security; Bottom: Sappers from 2/511th and 1/2nd FEC hold up their arms to show their sectors of fire during the crawl phase of tactical movement training.



Battle Drills



Above: Sappers from 2nd PLT/511th rally around the Iraqi Flag Pole as they demonstrate how to form an objective rally point while on a dismounted patrol; Above, Inset: The Iraqis follow suit; Left: Jinood learning how to maneuver through an urban area; Left, Inset: SSG Fooket leads a squad of Jinood through an urban environment during an exercise in tactical movement; Bottom, Left: Jinood prepare to move as the Reapers oversee their movement; Below: Two Jinood cross an open area as their squad prepares to fall in behind them.



Postcard: Eternal Flames of Baba Gurgur, Kirkuk, Iraq

As TFTB members run missions over a large territory of Iraq, we come across interesting, historical landmarks. Stationed at FOB Warrior, MSG Kosier, the battalion's POInT OIC, has visited The Eternal Fire of the Baba Gurgur oil field. This phenomenon is fabled to have been around for more than 4,000 years. The literary references of this landmark goes as far back as being cited by ancient Greek authors and the Old Testament. The effect is created as natural gas is released through cracks in the rocks in the ground. The flames have been known to be used by sheep herders for warmth in the cold months as they travelled with their flock.

This was the backdrop that MSG Kosier chose to re-enlist. MSG Kosier travelled with the BDE CST out to the site of the eternal flames and had COL Mendoza re-enlist him.



2 Page Spread: The area known as The Eternal Flame; Left: MSG Kosier poses next to entrance sign; Opposite Page, Top to Bottom: COL Mendoza and MSG Kosier on their way to the site; MSG Kosier's re-enlistment; MSG Kosier treads lightly as he crosses The Eternal Flame.



Across the Taskforce...



Clockwise from Top Left: CSM Morse presents CSM Clark with the NCO's plaque as a going away gift; LTC Petersen gets ready to promote 2LT's TiCondra Swartz and Chris Davis at ToV; 1LT Swartz is congratulated by PFC Goodwin with a self portrait shot; CPT Mark Kubar shows off his new Sparks Roller kit; LTC Petersen reaffirms the oath of office with 1LT Jones as he was promoted to Captain on top of the mighty D-9 Dozer at the C / 84th Motorpool; CPT Martin, 12th LA MiTT Advisor, on bike with an Iraqi Officer and 2LT Douglas in the sidecar pose for their version of the 'Great Escape' at K-1.



Clockwise from Top Left: 95th EN CO prepares for a Route Clearance Mission—Soldiers body armor and helmets sit in the vehicle light; PFC Groves, PFC Geary, and PFC Dagg at COL Spider; Huda Fredrick, an interpreter, 2LT Taylor Oney, CPT Juliana Biggerstaff, and CPT Chris Hallett pose for a shot at COL Spider; SSG Eason (red shirt), 95th EN CO leads a PT session at COL Spider with a group of Jinood as part of their partnership efforts; Mechanics SPC Gomez and PFC Mc Isaac from the 95th EN CO take a break to beat the heat while performing services at the motorpool.



Clockwise from Far Left: SGT Pease rides his unicycle. There's a rumor that he is able to ride this unique mode of transportation from the company area all the way to the motorpool; 1LT Vu at the DFAC in Balad shooting a chaka while getting a picture taken with one of the local national workers; LTC Hameed presents COL Mendoza with a plaque on behalf of the 4th LA EN Regiment as a welcoming present during his visit to COL Spider.



TFTB "Quote" Replies

During a trip to FOB Warrior, these vehicles were a photo opportunity because of their distinct look. Unlike anything other vehicle seen before in theater, the CST took turns to take photos in front of the foreign vehicles. This is what some TFTB folks had to say in reaction to seeing the photos.

CPT James E. Jones, S-3 Construction Cell OIC:
"It looks like a Hungry Hippo."

MAJ Dale Snider, BN S-3:
"When driving this vehicle, resistance is futile—Borg transport One of Two"

CPT Brian Burch, 65th LNO:
"I thought Mad Max was supposed to be set in the distant future..."

CPT Eric Etter, PPO MRT:
"When did Mad Max start doing funerals."





Determined!

PFC Thayer from 95th Engineer Company performs maintenance on the Buffalo Route Clearance Vehicle to prepare it for mission.

Brigade Photo Contest Winners

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This month, Task Force Trailblazer has been fortunate to snag two wins in the 18th/130th Engineer Brigade Photo Contest.

Congrats to the winners!

First Place
MAJ Martin D Snider, HHC 65th



“A Bridge is Saved, A Mission Complete”

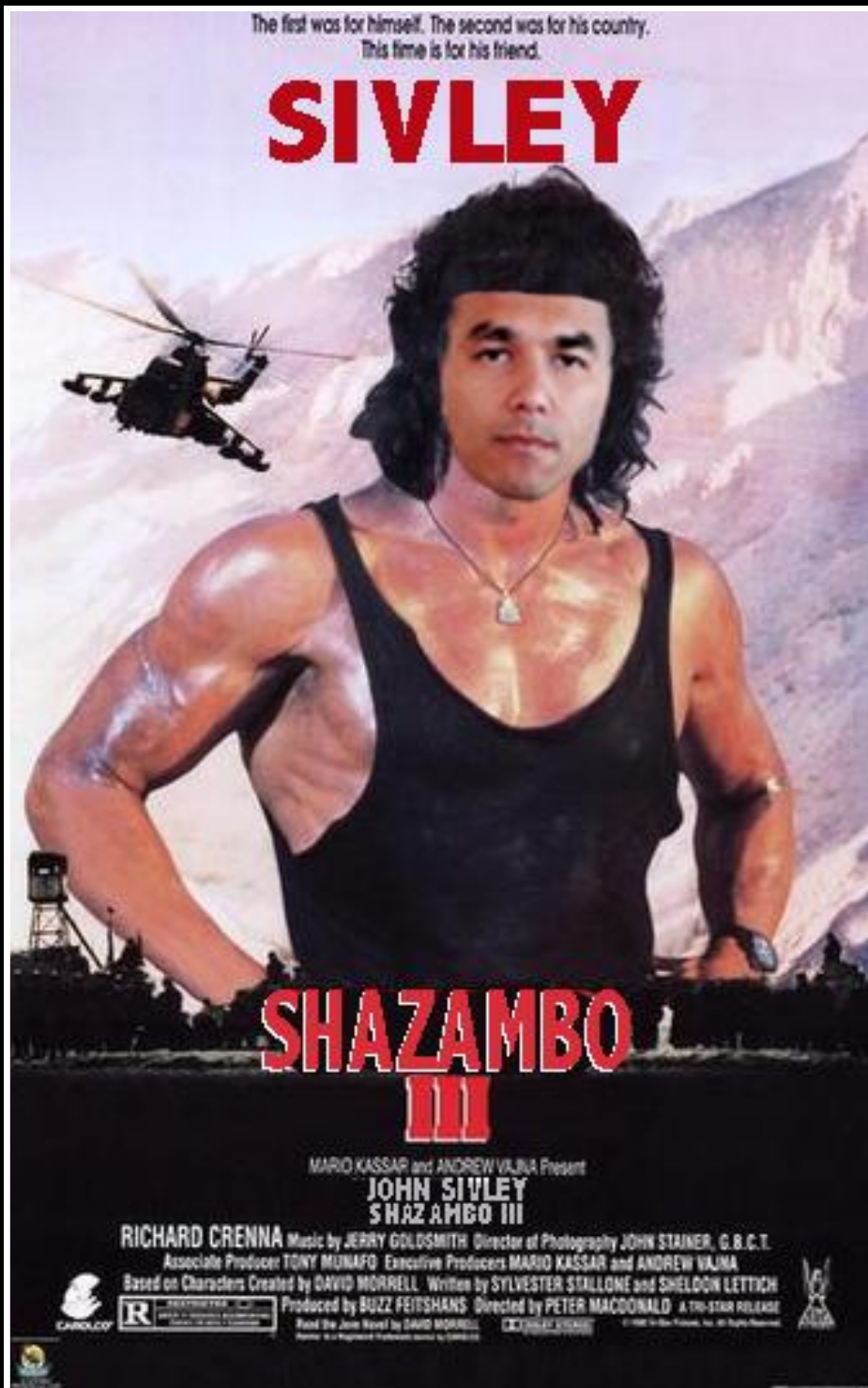
Second Place
2LT Jason P Carney, 511th



“Teaching the 5 Cs”

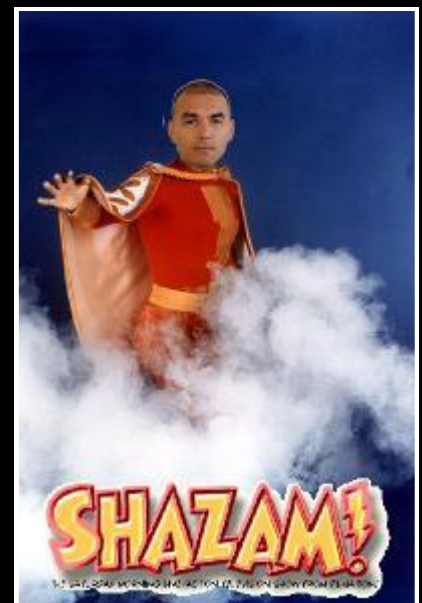
**We’ve now
snagged more
wins than the 84th
Keep it up, 65th
Turn in your
photos to your
CoC, today**

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



SNEAK PREVIEW

Coming This Winter...



Ex-counter IED expert, CPT John Sivley wanders into COB Speicher, Tikrit armed only with his bayonet and his survival instinct in search of a worthy fight. In an attempt to detain and domesticate him on COB Speicher, CPT Sivley was reassigned as the 95th Engineer Company (Route Clearance) Commander. While captive on COB Speicher, LTC Petersen took delight in abusing him several times a week with long Breeze BUBs/ CUBs and targeting meetings. Without his chain of command's knowledge, CPT Sivley escaped nightly, stowing away underneath the floor a Buffalo in order to combat and eliminate Insurgents. In an attempt to obscure his nightly adventures, CPT Sivley misleads his chain of command into thinking the 95th Route Clearance Company has been inspecting culverts and conducting emergency crater repair. Insurgents beware! BAM!

MAILING ADDRESS FOR SOLDIERS ON COB SPEICHER

Rank, First and Last Name

Company Name

65th Engineer Battalion

COB Speicher, Iraq

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Editor's Notes

Salaam,

Man, these things are getting pretty long! Usually, this is the last part that I do. By the end of editing 30 pages or more, I'm pretty fried and I don't look forward to writing any more than is necessary. I did want to share the observation that we've come a long way in our publication. It started out with a small 6-page spread and now it's over five times that and going strong. As stated earlier, it's getting evident as the work load slightly increases with every issue. But, with every issue, we also get more interest and folks that are willing to contribute. I can remember in a past issue when I mentioned that the newsletter was growing and I hoped that it continues to get larger. I'm not saying I'm tapping out, but I definitely am feeling the strain every two weeks to get the next bigger and better newsletter out to the masses. It's a good strain though because it's full of our missions and stories to send back to you all. As the deployment continues, I urge you to poke your Soldier in the ribs and tell them to get out there, take pictures and write something up. After six months, it'd be a shame to say I've had enough. So, bring it on and keep those stories and pictures coming.

- CPT Miguel Lima



Commander's Corner

Aloha Families and Friends of Task Force Trailblazer,

I've recently returned from R&R and getting caught up on things. As you can tell from this newsletter and the previous issue, great things continued despite my absence. That didn't surprise me a bit. The great Soldiers and Leaders in the battalion are the ones who make things happen every day. Just today, I was interviewed by an Iraqi television reporter and proudly shared the great progress we've made in partnership with the Iraqi Engineers in route clearance, construction, and bridging—all resulting in improved security and confidence in the Iraqi Security Forces. I simply can't express how proud and humbled I am to serve as commander of the 65th.

We are now back under our parent brigade, the 130th Engineer Brigade from Hawaii since they took over from 18th Engineer Brigade a couple of weeks ago. It's nice to see many friendly faces and familiar leaders we left in Hawaii 7 months ago, but it was also bitter-sweet to see the 18th Engineers return to Germany after their 15-month deployment...but as the song goes, the Army keeps rolling along.

Since June 30th, when the "out of the cities" phase of the Security Agreement between the U.S. and Iraq took effect, we've continued

our focus with our Iraqi partnership efforts. They keep getting better and better, so rely on us less and less. Just what we are trying to achieve. C Company, 84th Engineer Battalion will be re-deploying this fall to Alaska, but they remain focused on completing a number of projects for US forces and with our Iraqi Partners. Some Soldiers in 95th will receive some training from C/84th Soldiers so they can be ready to operate some of the construction equipment we'll need. I expect some eager sappers to learn those skills easily. Many Soldiers in Task Force Trailblazer earned some kudos in the past few weeks, notably MAJ Dale Snider was selected for promotion to Lieutenant Colonel, and SSG Iwai and SPC Vickers (both from FSC) were selected as the Brigade NCO and Soldier of the Quarter. SSG Iwai and SPC Vickers are participating in the Division's Best Warrior competition right now, and I'm confident they will excel. The 511th Sapper Company is also doing some tremendous training with their Iraqi partners, and will be very busy for the last few months of our rotation in the Kirkuk area because that unit is scheduled to get their equipment this month.

In August, the unit who is scheduled to replace us is sending some key leaders to

visit us here in Iraq in preparation for their deployment this winter. Another sign that the end of the deployment is nearing. I expect to know the approximate dates for our redeployment sometime in September so that we can plan our reunion back in Hawaii. We'll share that information with your FRG leaders when we can, and I'll believe it when the temperature here starts to come down.

That's all for now!

First In, Last Out,

Trailblazer 6

