



# Iron Soldiers assume responsibility for Baghdad operational environment

Story by Sgt. 1st Class Kristina Scott  
366th MPAD, USD-C

**BAGHDAD** – On a blustery, overcast day, the commander of 1st Armored Division assumed responsibility of the U.S. Division–Center operational environment in a transfer of authority ceremony conducted in front of the division headquarters building at Camp Liberty Jan. 13.

Maj. Gen. Terry Wolff succeeds Maj. Gen. Daniel Bolger, who will redeploy to Fort Hood, Texas, with 1st Cavalry Division after a 12-month deployment in Baghdad.

The ceremony, attended by many dignitaries to include Gen. Ray Odierno, the top U.S. commander in Iraq and senior leaders of the Iraqi Security Forces, began as Bolger stepped forward. With the assistance of Command Sgt. Maj. Rory Malloy, Bolger placed the 1st Cavalry Division flag, which has flown over Baghdad since Feb. 10, 2009, into its protective case, signifying that their term of responsibility had ended.

Wolff then stepped up to the 1st Armd. Div. flag and, with the assistance of Command Sgt. Maj. William Johnson, removed the protective case and unfurled the



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Kristina Scott, 366th MPAD, USD-C

**Assisted by Command Sgt. Maj. William Johnson, the senior enlisted noncommissioned officer in charge for 1st Armored Division, Maj. Gen. Terry Wolff, commander of 1st Armd. Div., unfurls the division flag during a transfer of authority ceremony conducted at Camp Liberty Jan 13. The ceremony was conducted to signify that 1st Armd. Div. has assumed responsibility for the U.S. Division–Center operational environment from 1st Cav. Div.**

division flag, signifying the assumption of responsibility over the U.S. Division – Center operational environment.

Lt. Gen. Charles Jacoby, the deputy commanding general for U.S. Forces – Iraq and commander for I Corps, presided over the ceremony.

“Not so long ago,” he said, “the streets of Baghdad were simmering in violence and chaos. In many circles, the complexity of the issues here appeared unsolvable. However, when looking at Baghdad today, you cannot help but immediately recognize that this is not the same city as just a

year ago. The violence has dramatically decreased. The citizens of Baghdad are out in the streets, mosques and marketplaces. People are optimistic about the future, and this is especially significant, because Baghdad is Iraq’s face of

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## What's inside?



# Trash talk: think before you toss

## OPSEC chief guides Soldiers on remaining safe

Story and photo by Spc. Daniel Schnieder  
366th MPAD, USD-C

**BAGHDAD** – While most people might think it is just trash going into a dumpster, Soldiers must remember operational security before throwing controlled items into the trash.

Gen. George Casey, chief of staff of the Army, has decreed in Army Regulation 530-1 that OPSEC is everyone's responsibility. Failure to properly implement OPSEC measures can result in serious injury or death to our personnel, damage to weapons systems, equipment and facilities, loss of sensitive technologies and mission failure.

So, what are these OPSEC items, and how can you dispose of items when they are no longer needed?

One example of the many items that should not be casually thrown into the trash includes military uniforms, said Master Sgt. Mario Dovalina, the OPSEC program manager assigned to Company A, Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division.

"This includes the blouse, pants, boots and shirts," Dovalina said. "PT uniforms are also military uniforms and should be treated the same way."

Anything with the Army Combat Uniform pattern on it should be incinerated as it can be used by the enemy to imitate a U.S. Soldier, said Sgt. 1st Class Dawn Copeland, the supply sergeant for Co. A, DSTB, 1st Cav. Div.

Additionally, supply sergeants can take items that cannot be disposed of by burning or shredding to the Central Issue Facility or Mayor's Cell, said Copeland.

Other items that should not be



**Stirring the fire will help to ensure that documents are completely destroyed.**

thrown into a trash can include mailing labels and boxes with your address or full name still intact.

"Someone can take a mailing label, Google your full name, and find out all kinds of information about you and your family," said Dovalina. "This information can later lead to potentially harming both you and your family."

The easiest way to answer the question of what should and should not be thrown away is to err on the side of caution.

"If you have to think twice about what you're throwing away, then you should think twice about who might be able to see it," said Maj.


Brian Adamson, OPSEC officer for U.S. Division–Center and assigned to Co. A, DSTB, 1st Armored Division. "When in doubt, burn it or shred it."

Among 1st Armd. Div. personnel, Adamson has trained representatives within each section on basic OPSEC criteria to help provide easier access to Soldiers who might have questions about what violates OPSEC policy. He also urges Soldiers who cannot obtain their OPSEC answers from these representatives to utilize their chain of command.

Paper mail isn't the only mail that needs to be protected. Email also needs protection.

"Any email with personal information, location or identification should be encrypted," Adamson suggested. This protects both your physical security as well as preventing identity theft.

Cell phones are another high security risk.

"With the right software and computer viruses, someone can turn on your cell phone remotely and listen in on your conversations and even take pictures with your phone," Dovalina pointed out. "When used properly, operational security can save lives and prevent information from falling into the hands of those who will cause harm." 



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# Soldiers bring smile to Iraqi boy's face

Story and photos by Sgt. Mary Phillips  
30th HBCT PAO, USD-C

**BAGHDAD** – From behind his father, a 3-year-old Abdullah plays peek-a-boo with the Soldiers of 252nd Combined Arms Battalion, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team.

The Soldiers are there to check on the child, who is recovering from a recent cleft palate surgery; a surgery that happened thanks in part to the efforts of the Soldiers who are there to see him.

It all started with a trip to a trash dump.

Second Lt. Charles Duggan said he visits the area south of Baghdad regularly while on missions with his Soldiers.

"I was talking to the people there and I asked who the shaykh was," said Duggan, of Jacksonville, N.C. "I went to talk to him, and this guy showed me his kid."

Arhim Shakban's son, Abdullah, was born with a cleft palate, a birth defect that happens when a child's mouth does not develop properly during pregnancy.

"It's one thing that I felt like I was in control of, that I could help out," said Duggan. "[Arhim] did not ask me spe-

cifically about his son, but his son was there and I wanted to help his son. I had to act."

Duggan got on the internet after that first meeting with Abdullah and tried to find a way to help the boy. The first organization he contacted did not have doctors in the area that would be able to help him, but they referred him to a group who could.

"They referred me to Smile Train," said Duggan. "Smile Train told me they had an associate who worked in the area."

Duggan was soon e-mailing Dr. Ahmed Nawres, a plastic surgeon working in Babylon, south of Baghdad.

"[Dr. Nawres] told me he'd be happy to do the surgery on any child that I found, free of charge," said Duggan.

Dr. Nawres has worked with Smile Train since 2006 and has completed more than 150 cleft palate surgeries. Abdullah received his surgery, Dec. 14.

Duggan and the other Soldiers in his platoon were excited to visit the boy, and they said they were happy to be able to help Abdullah.

"I did this because it was the right thing to do," said Duggan. "It was only a small effort on my part, but I am glad to do what I can to make this wonder-



Ahmed holds his 3-year-old brother, Abdullah, at their home, south of Baghdad, Dec. 23. Abdullah recently underwent surgery to repair his cleft palate free of charge, thanks to an organization called Smile Train.



Second Lt. Charles Duggan, of Jacksonville, N.C., a platoon leader with Company C, 252nd Combined Arms Battalion, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, receives a kiss from 3-year-old Abdullah, in the boy's home, south of Baghdad, Dec. 23.

ful event possible."

"We're just glad to be able to help," said Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Boyette, of Southern Pines, N.C.

Abdullah's father was the happiest of all.

"Every day I would worry about it and not know what to do," said Arhim. "He would not want to go outside with the kids, he stayed inside. Now he opens the door and plays with everyone. He can feel that something is different now. It goes away and he looked in the mirror and said, 'I look cute now' after the surgery."

The father smiled as he watched Abdullah laughing and playing with the Soldiers. Boyette showed him how to turn the light on his helmet on and off. Eventually, Abdullah was taking it off of the Soldiers head, and putting it on his own. The boy kissed the Soldiers and made his way around the room, playing laughing and smiling.

"There are not enough words in any language to express how happy I am feeling right now," Arhim said. 🇺🇸

# FPs, Soldiers celebrate graduation after culmination exercise

Story and photos by Pfc. Kimberly Hackbarth  
4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div., USD-C

**BAGHDAD** – Like a family reunion, Soldiers with 2nd Platoon, Company F, 52nd Infantry Regiment, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division and Iraqi Federal Police Explosive Ordnance Disposal Directorates greeted each other with hugs, laughter and eccentric handshakes.

While a normal welcoming for the two groups, there was also a sense of excitement

Dec. 31 as the five trainers from Co. F prepared their eight EOD IFP trainees for a culmination exercise that would

*The bottom line is they came in here with a little bit of skills and now they're leaving here three weeks later feeling more confident in themselves and their ability to handle any situation.*

– Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Gomez

lead to the first graduating class of Co. F's Violator EOD Security Training Course held at Contingency Operating Location Prosperity.

After three weeks of training, Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Gomez, a platoon sergeant with Co. F, said he and his Soldiers are confident in the skills of the EOD FPs.

"[My Soldiers] trained them to the point where they can actually feel comfortable fighting side-by-side with these guys," said Gomez, a Den-

ver native. "I wouldn't have a problem doing a joint mission with those guys."

The EOD FPs showed their eagerness and willingness to learn every day of the course by training long hours and even staying late to make sure they learned all they could. They regularly asked the Co. F Soldiers to teach them more.

Training began with roping off sections of the platoon's area with cord and tape but progressively evolved into an intricate training exercise around COL Prosperity.

The final exercise included such tasks as reacting to enemy contact, mounted and on foot, and clearing buildings.

The EOD FPs kicked in doors, eliminated enemy threats and disarmed a suicide bomber as a part of the exercise.

During a react to enemy contact scenario and a flank exercise lane, a policeman was required to perform first aid on a fellow policeman by placing a tourniquet around his wounded leg.

Pvt. Laith Mohammed, a policeman with the EOD FP, said he'll miss training with the Co. F Soldiers, but he is happy with the new skills and



A policeman with the Iraqi Federal Police Explosive Ordnance Disposal Directorates defuses an 'improvised explosive device' dropped by a 'suicide bomber' at Contingency Operating Location Prosperity, Dec. 31, during a training exercise.



Policemen with the Iraqi Federal Police Explosive Ordnance Disposal Directorates react to 'enemy contact' during the final exercise Dec. 31.

lessons he learned.

"My favorite part was reacting to an ambush and maneuvering because of the teamwork with security and EOD," said Laith.

At the end of the exercise, after the EOD FPs successfully completed their tasks, everyone regrouped at the platoon living area and held a graduation ceremony, where the 2nd Bn., 12th Field Artillery Regiment commander, Lt. Col. Kevin Murphy, spoke.

"This is the first class, but there will be many more," Murphy said, adding that the success of the first class has paved the way for future classes to be given by the Co. F Soldiers.

"The bottom line is they came in here with a little bit of skills," said Gomez, "and now they're leaving here three weeks later feeling more confident in themselves and their ability to handle any situation that they may encounter out in sector." ▲

# Shadow program creates experienced ISF

Story and photo by Staff Sgt. Jeff Hansen  
366th MPAD, USD-C

**BAGHDAD** – American officers at Joint Security Station Doura have been working diligently to assist the Iraqi Security Forces in their training, operational planning and leadership skills.

As part of the transition, ISF officers work alongside U.S. Army officers during patrols and day-to-day operations to observe and interpret U.S. operations.

Second Lt. Sam Burrow, a platoon leader assigned to 252nd Combined Arms Battalion, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, has been part of the Iraqi officer shadow program for more than two months now. He said he is impressed with the way the program has been working.

“We teach them our way of doing things. It gives them the option to use our techniques in their day-to-day operations,” said Burrow, a native of Edenton, N.C. He added that several Iraqi junior officers have taken part in this program.

Iraqi 1st Lt. Abbas Lateef, a platoon

leader assigned to 1st Battalion, 7th Security Brigade, 2nd Federal Police Division, shadowed Burrow during a security patrol outside of JSS Doura, Dec. 29.

Lateef was part of the planning process, mission execution and after-action review, which Burrow said is essential to junior officers’ experience. He stated the best way for ISF junior leaders to become more efficient is to be hands-on with operations.

“Prior to going out, we discuss operational security, establishing 360-degree [security] perimeters and targeting high-value individuals,” explained Burrow.

Burrow added that this is the most efficient way for junior officers to learn, as only so much can be absorbed from a classroom environment. In this one-on-one situation, ISF officers have plenty of opportunities to ask any questions as they arise.

During the patrol, Burrow and Lateef met with leaders of the Kurdish Specialized Presidential Guard, whose area of operations is in the vicinity of JSS Doura. Local leaders provided information on water points in the area and advised the junior officers how to



While on a patrol outside Joint Security Station Doura, 2nd Lt. Sam Burrow (left), a platoon leader with Company A, 252nd Combined Arms Battalion, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, assists counterpart, 1st Lt. Abbaas Lateef, with establishing a security perimeter, Dec. 29. The shadow program is aimed at teaching Iraqi Security Force junior officers troop leading procedures and operational planning techniques.

utilize those points for future joint operations.

Spc. John Stricklin said most of his unit’s missions are focused on improving the quality of life for the Iraqi people.

“That’s what we’re here for, to help the populace establish a good infrastructure,” said Stricklin, a native of

Laurinburg, N.C.

Burrow said his ISF counterpart gained leadership experience and established rapport with local military leaders. He also stated that the experience goes both ways.

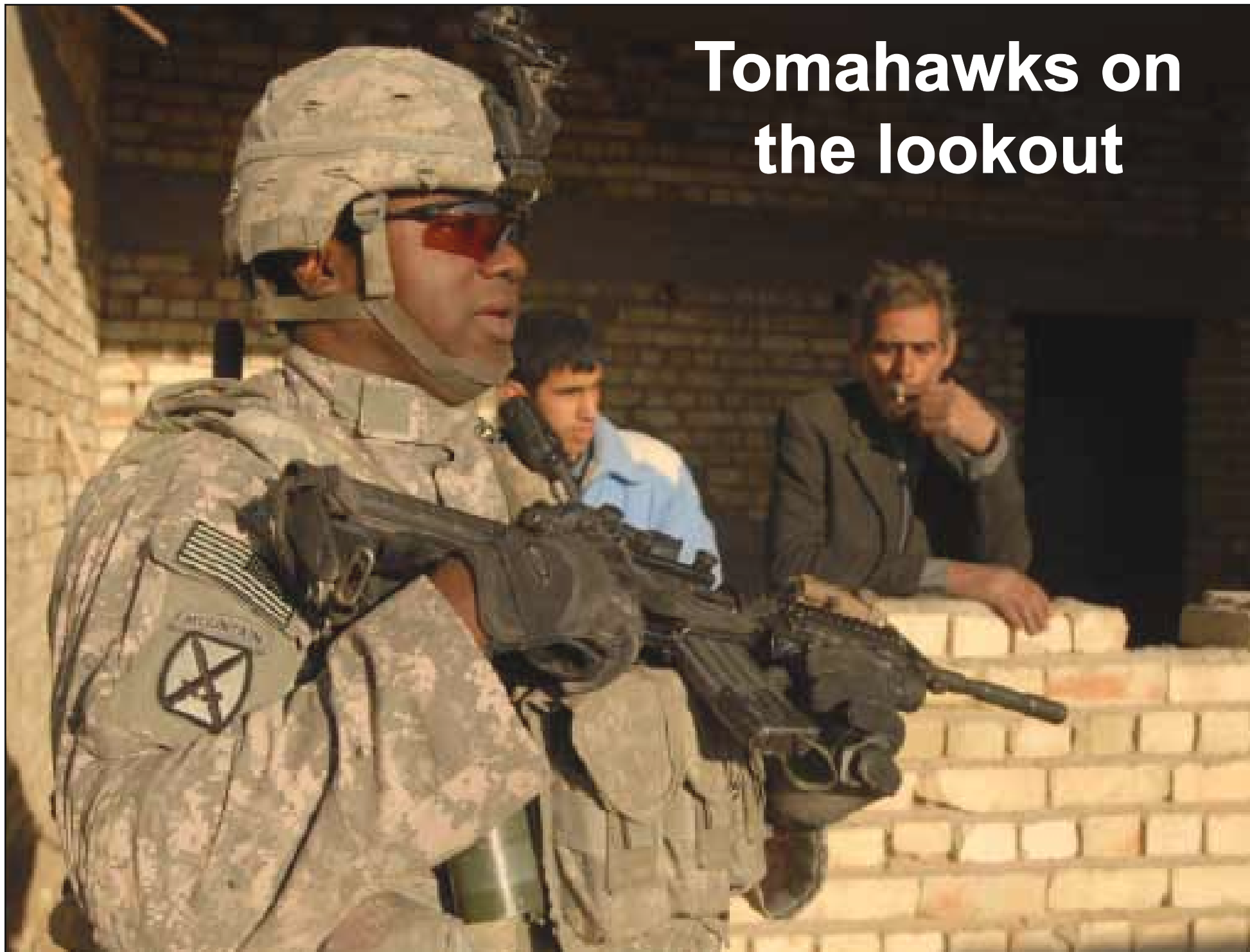
“I’ve learned a lot from the Iraqis, and I hope they’ve learned a lot from me,” Burrow said. ▲

## Shaykhs assure partnership, continued support to USD-C leaders



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Kristina Scott, 366th MPAD, USD-C PAO

**BAGHDAD** – Maj. Gen. Daniel Bolger (left), commander of United States Division - Center and the 1st Cavalry Division, meets with prominent area tribal shaykhs from throughout the greater Baghdad area during a recognition luncheon, Jan. 5. With the 1st Cav. Div. handing control of USD-C over to the 1st Armored Div., the meeting provided the Iraqi leaders a chance to re-affirm their commitment to U.S. forces and the security and stability of Iraq.



**Staff Sgt. Baharri Weston, a 4th Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division squad leader from Palm Bay, Fla., stands guard as his Soldiers search a building for bomb making materials southeast of Iraq.**

**Story and photos by Spc. Luisito Brooks**  
4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div., USD-C

**Taji, Iraq** – As scavenger birds circled their position near a small community southeast of Taji, Soldiers from 4th Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division navigated seemingly endless hills of trash, searching for materials that could be used to make improvised explosive devices.

“The insurgents like to use these less fortunate areas to hide and make IEDs,” said Sgt. 1st Class Eric Richardson, 2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry Division platoon sergeant from Grass Valley, Calif. “By attacking these insurgents at their starting point, we could prevent attacks that could threaten the surrounding areas.”

The Soldiers met with a few of the local leaders in this small com-

munity to develop a good relationship and let them know they would be searching through the area to provide security for their people.

“The people seemed very accommodating and they let us do our job,” said Spc. Robert James, a infantryman, from Detroit. “As we walked through, the children watched us for a while then they started playing soccer.”

The area had many terrain issues for the Tomahawks to overcome in order to accomplish the mission.

“My guys looked through the village and searched through knee deep trash,” said Staff Sgt. Baharri Weston, a squad leader from Palm Bay, Fla., “The search even took everyone of us through a field of wild bamboo, which was very challenging to navigate.”

As the sun set over the pile of trash and the end of the mission drew near, Soldiers said the peo-

ple’s security brought the most reward for them.

“The threat of having insurgents near these guy’s families was something the people in this

village took very seriously,” said Richardson. “I see that we are affecting this area with a positive message and it is really getting through.” ▲



**Soldiers from 4th Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division look for materials used to make improvised explosive devices among small hills of trash southeast of Taji.**

# U.S., FP conduct patrol, search

Story and photos by Sgt. 1st Class Kristina Scott  
366th MPAD, USD-C

**BAGHDAD** – For U.S. Soldiers and Air Force military dog handlers working jointly with Iraqi Federal Police, the mission was clear: conduct a cordon and search of the Abid Allha ibn al-Khabib graveyard, near the town of Abu Roesh, east of Baghdad, Dec. 29, to either confirm or deny that some sort of cache was there.

It was rumored that in 2007, the same graveyard had been the site of a cache, which produced over two tons of dynamite and C4 explosives.

With the FP taking the lead, followed closely by the dog handlers and their dogs, Bak and Chukky, the search began. Walking carefully across the densely crowded, dusty cemetery, the FP scoured the ground visually as Bak and Chukky ran off-leash, sniffing mounds of dirt, stone sarcophagi and simple gravestones. Each tomb and mound of dirt received a cursory inspection by the working dogs and FP. As the FP found areas they considered suspicious, they yelled to the dog handlers, who directed the dogs to search a specific area.

“We are here with the dogs to deny the enemy the advantage of using explosives against Iraqi civilians, security forces and U.S. forces,” said Staff Sgt. Joshua Webster, of Fayetteville, N.C., assigned to the 732nd Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron.

The search lasted approximately one hour, but no explosives or weapons were uncovered.



Members of the 2nd Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 1st Division Iraqi Federal Police move toward a housing compound in an effort to question a resident, and possibly confiscate contraband, Dec. 29.

However, American commanders consider the mission to be a good way for FP, U.S. forces and military working dogs to train together in a real-world experience.

First Lt. Jeff Johnson, a native of Shreveport, La., was tasked with working side by side with his Iraqi counter-parts, Iraqi Lieutenant's Hussein and Ihman, to jointly coordi-

nate the mission.

“It was a great experience,” said Johnson. “We showed them how to use their assets – we showed them what right looks like and how to use the working dogs”

Once the search of the graveyard was complete, the troops loaded back up into their Humvees; the FP in brightly painted blue and white; U.S. troops in the traditional desert tan. The FP then led the convoy to a small housing compound in the area of Umm al-Abid. Dismounting from the vehicles, the FP took the lead, with the working dogs and U.S. Soldiers directly behind.

As the working dogs searched the palm grove in front of the compound and other areas, the FP engaged one of the male residents of the compound, as women and children looked on anxiously. The mood was serious, but not overly so, and as the U.S. Soldiers and FP returned to their vehicles after speaking with the resident for about 15 minutes, the women and children smiled, laughed and waved good-bye.

Nothing of consequence was found by the working dogs, at the compound, nor by any of the FP or U.S. Soldiers. However, overall, the mission was a success, said Capt. Steve Chadwick, commander for A Troop, 1st Battalion, 89th Cavalry Squadron.

“The FP did a good job of searching – they got experience with working dogs,” said Chadwick. “They’ve already asked to use [the dogs] again.” ▲



Senior Airman Mark Bush, a native of Chicago, Ill., assigned to the 732nd Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron, points to an area of interest, for Chukky, a military working dog, to search at the Abid Allha ibn al-Khabib graveyard, Dec. 29.

# 501st MPs test-fire weapons



*Photos by Sgt. Samantha Beuterbaugh,  
366th MPAD, USD-C PAO*

**BAGHDAD** – Soldiers of the 501st Military Police Detachment, 1st Armored Division, ensure their rifles and crew-served weapons are properly zeroed at the Caughman Range, at Victory Base Complex, Jan. 2.



**Sgt. Josh Locke**, an Indianapolis native and military police truck commander for the 501st Military Police Detachment, 1st Armored Division, guides his comrades in tightening their shot groups.



**Spc. Zachary Parks** (right), a Sugar Grove, Va. native and military police gunner for the 501st Military Police Detachment, 1st Armored Division, looks at his zeroed shot group on a paper target. The 501st MPs were the first to use the newly, re-opened Caughman range.



The 501st Military Police Detachment, 1st Armored Division, utilizes the newly, re-opened Caughman range. The 501st ensured their weapons were zeroed at the range.

# ‘Rollover, Rollover, Rollover!’ Soldiers learn how to quickly, properly exit an MRAP

Story and photo by Sgt. 1st Class Kristina Scott  
366th MPAD, USD-C

**BAGHDAD** – ‘Rollover, Rollover, Rollover!’

In a real-world situation, it’s the last thing you ever want to hear. But it’s probably one of the best training opportunities you might ever experience.

The Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected vehicle is a monster. It’s big, it’s bad, and it’s not the easiest vehicle from which to get out, especially in a moment of panic. So the Army is training Soldiers how to properly exit the MRAP with a rollover simulator called the MET, or MRAP Egress Trainer.

The MET at Camp Liberty is normally run by contracted civilians, but Soldiers who have completed a 40-hour training course are also allowed to instruct, said Sgt. 1st Class Nakia Way, the current instructor, a native of Andrews, Texas, and the battalion operations night battle captain assigned to Company B, Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Armored Division.

“It’s all about safety. It gives a realistic understanding of what can happen,” said Way.

Each course rotation can accommodate nine Soldiers; two in the front seats, six in the back seats and one in the gunner’s turret.

Soldiers who participate are briefed by the instructor on how exactly the simulation will occur. Initially, the simulator is rotated 360 degrees in order to ensure that all seatbelts are tightened properly. After the first rotation, the MET is brought back to the upright position, and the Soldiers re-tighten all straps and belts. The simulator then goes through a “side drill” in

which the MET is rolled onto its side, and all Soldiers are instructed to exit through the gunner’s hatch. As the Soldiers exit the MET, they must assume they are exiting into a hostile environment, which means immediately establishing a secure perimeter and communicating to the truck commander that all have exited by calling out, in sequence, “one up, two up ...”

The third simulation concludes with the MET upside down, and Soldiers must again figure out which door they will use to exit.

The MET is equipped with items specifically designed to simulate equipment that might be in an MRAP, but in accordance with safety requirements, the items are made of Styrofoam.

“It shows them how to secure stuff inside the vehicle,” said Way.

The MET also has realistic items, such as the gunner’s restraint system, which is designed to keep the gunner inside the protective interior of the MRAP.

“It does the job,” said Pfc. Simeon Nunnally, a native of Atlanta, Ga., and an all-wheeled vehicle mechanic assigned to the 501st Military Police Company, DSTB, 1st Armd. Div. Nunnally also added that the restraint system did not allow him to go anywhere.

Sgt. Melissa Florence, a native of Tampa, Fla., and food service sergeant assigned to Company B, DSTB, 1st Armd. Div., found the training to be beneficial. “I’ve never even seen an MRAP, so I don’t know what to expect,” she said, before entering the MET. After the rollover training Florence proudly exclaimed, “we successfully maneuvered two worst-case scenarios, and we did it without injuries!”



**Pfc. Simeon Nunnally, a native of Atlanta, Ga., and an all-wheeled vehicle mechanic assigned to the 501st Military Police Company, Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Armored Division, grasps the shoulder straps of the gunner’s restraint system, as Sgt. 1st Class Nakia Way, the Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected vehicle Egress Trainer instructor assists him in the proper method of strapping himself in, Jan. 2. Way, a native of Andrews, Texas, is assigned to Co. B, DSTB, 1st Armd. Div.**

*The MET is operated daily, and is available to all commanders who would like their Soldiers to go through the training. Training can be scheduled through Sgt. Maj. Dale Sump, the 1st Armd. Div. Future Operations training sergeant major.*

## Training keeps convoy security team proficient



**BAGHDAD** – Members of 101st Engineer Battalion Convoy Security Team pull Pfc. Jeramie Burgos, of Worcester, Mass., a simulated casualty, from a vehicle during casualty evacuation training, at Victory Base Complex Jan. 2. Members of the CST routinely practice their battle drills to maintain proficiency for missions.

Photo by Staff Sgt. April Mota, 101st Eng. Bn. UPAR, 16th Eng. Bde., USD-C

# Step aerobics class a 'step above'

Story and photos by Spc. Daniel Schnieder  
366th MPAD, USD-C

**BAGHDAD** – Fifteen Soldiers gathered inside the dance room of the Camp Liberty Morale, Welfare, and Recreation gym complex to exercise with lively music, Jan. 7.

The step aerobics class, offered on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday mornings, provides an intense workout for Soldiers.

Sgt. Genisha Johnson attached to 376th Finance Management Detachment teaches the class three times a week. She has taught step aerobics several times

in the past including her last deployment to Iraq in '04-'05, said Johnson.

Sgt. Tiro Waters, a heavy construction mechanic assigned to the 659th Maintenance Company, assists Johnson by walking around the class showing students how to improve their form.

"[I] walk around the class and help people with the steps. I'm happy to be in a support role," said Waters, a native of Detroit, Mich.

"I want to give back to the Soldiers," said Johnson, a Long Beach, Calif., native. "I'm good at [physical training], and want to use that to help get everyone on the same page."

Physical training can also be a good pastime while here in Iraq.

"In a deployed environment, it is good to get the adrenaline flowing and take your mind off of the deployment," said Johnson.

Step aerobics is not your run-of-the-mill exercise; it provides intense cardiovascular training. The class lasts about an hour with constant movement, using steps to augment the workout.

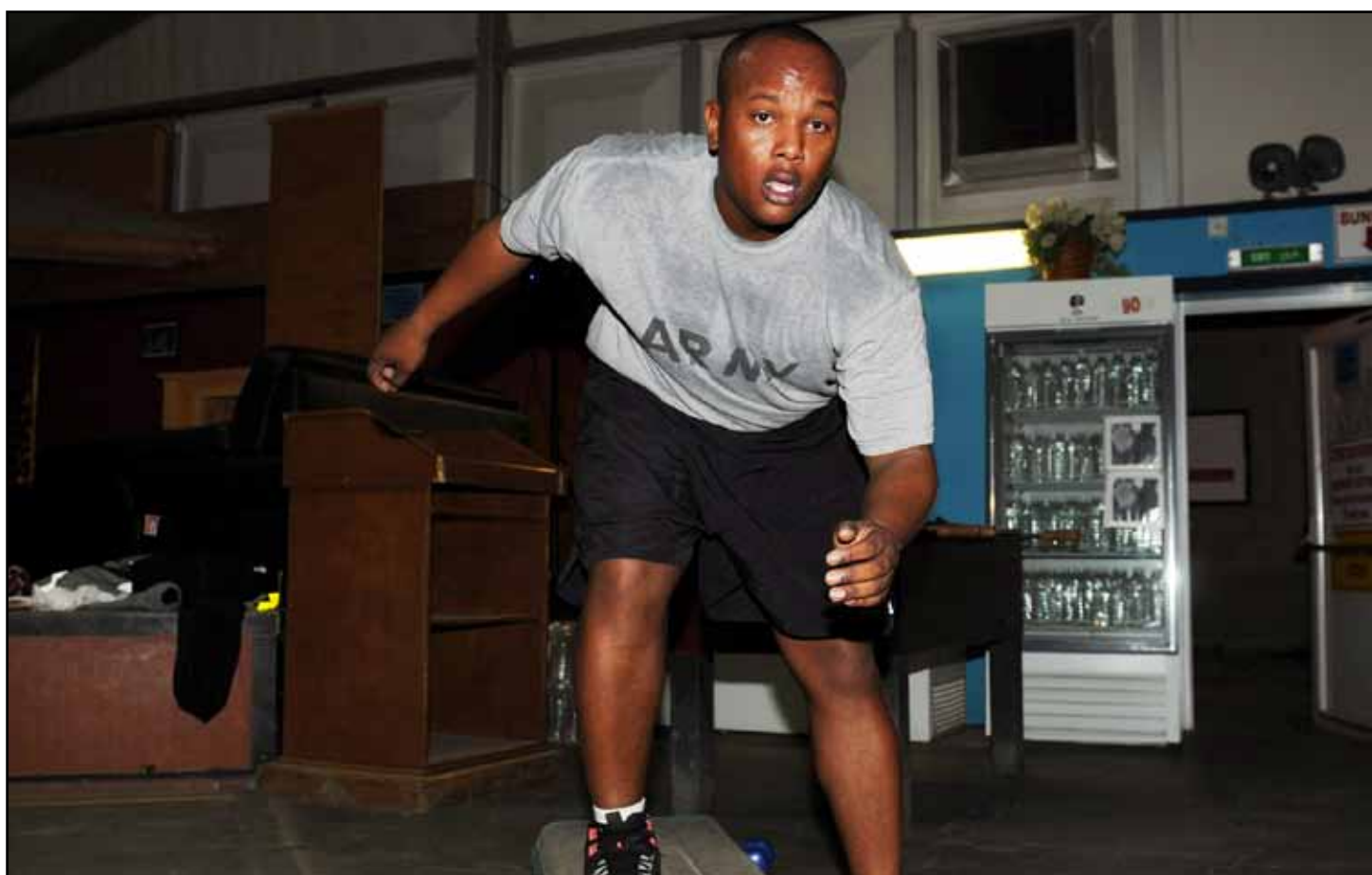
"This class is awesome, and I wouldn't change a thing about it," said Staff Sgt. Donnell Daniels, assigned to Company A, 702nd Brigade Support Battalion,

*In a deployed environment, it is good to get the adrenaline flowing and take your mind off of the deployment.*

– Sgt. Genisha Johnson



Sgt. Genisha Johnson, assigned to 376th Finance Management Detachment and native of Long Beach, Calif., signals to her class during the step aerobic workout at Camp Liberty's Morale, Welfare, and Recreation gym, Jan. 7.



Sgt. Tiro Waters, a heavy construction mechanic for 659th Maintenance Company, performs a crouching exercise during a step aerobics class held at Liberty's Morale, Welfare and Recreation gym, Jan. 7.

ion, 4th Stryker Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division. "My cardio has improved a lot in the month-and-a-half since I started this class."

To become an instructor, Johnson had to be a student first, and moved up to an assistant instructor position once she mastered all the moves of the class. Eventually, when she became comfortable with teaching others the steps, she became an instructor.

"Consistency is the key to being a good instructor," Johnson said.

Soldiers attending the step aerobics class were drenched in sweat, yet awake and energized after the hour-long exercise.

"The hardest part of participating in this class is putting on your shoes," said Johnson. "The exercise is intense, but you have music and fellow Soldiers here with you, and afterward, your PT is already done!"

## ‘Iron Soldiers’ take reins from ‘Mavericks’



From left, Command Sgt. Maj. Sal Katz, Lt. Col. Lane Turner, Command Sgt. Maj. Clinton Joseph, and Lt. Col. Matthew Karres, shake hands after a transfer of authority and color casing and uncasing ceremony conducted Jan. 9. Katz and Turner are the senior leadership team of the 1st Armored Division Special Troops Battalion. The two are replacing the 1st Cavalry Division Special Troops Battalion senior leadership team of Joseph and Karres.

Story, photos by Sgt. 1st Class Kristina Scott  
366th MPAD, USD-C

**BAGHDAD** – The 1st Armored Division Special Troops Battalion commander, Lt. Col. Lane Turner, took the reins from the 1st Cavalry Division STB commander, Lt. Col. Matthew Karres, in a transfer of authority and color-casing and uncasing ceremony conducted at Camp Liberty Jan. 9.

Under a cloudless blue sky, Karres and his battalion senior noncommissioned officer, Command Sgt. Maj. Clinton Joseph, marched forward and formally cased the battalion’s heavily decorated colors.

Following tradition, the casing of the outgoing battalion’s flag was followed by the uncasing of the incoming battalion’s flag.

Under the Army’s modern concept of the modular brigade combat team, Karres found himself the commander of a diverse combination of troops, collectively known as the Mavericks. The DSTB spent the last 12 months in Baghdad performing a variety of missions – an achievement for which Karres is justifiably proud.

“We accomplished much more than we ever thought we would,”

he said during the ceremony. “We have a rock solid reputation throughout Baghdad.”

After uncasing his battalion’s colors Lt. Col. Lane Turner thanked the Mavericks for their outstanding performance during the relief-in-place, signaling that the time had come for the mission of his troops to begin.

“Iron Soldiers of U. S. Division-Center, I formally accept and certify that we are ready,” said Turner.

After the brief ceremony, the incoming battalion senior noncommissioned officer, Command Sgt. Maj. Sal Katz, said that he, too, was impressed with the way the relief-in-place was handled.

“First Cavalry did an awesome job of heading us in the right direction,” he said. “The leadership here treated us like we were one of their own.”

As for the future, we are excited about this phase in the history of the battalion. We’ve worked extraordinarily hard in training our Soldiers for this mission,” Turner said. “Now, it is time to test our mettle. We are looking forward to this next year.”

“This will be a very focused and engaged deployment,” Katz added. “We just want to bring everyone home, safely.”



Lt. Col. Matthew Karres (left) and Command Sgt. Maj. Clinton Joseph, the senior leadership team of the 1st Cavalry Division’s Special Troops Battalion, case their battalion colors in a transfer of authority and color casing and uncasing ceremony Jan. 9.

# Engineers help protect the force

Story by Spc. Brian Johnson  
101st Eng. Bn. UPAR, 16th Eng. Bde., USD-C

**BAGHDAD** – After more than two months away from the rest of their unit and thousands of man-hours worth of work, the 1192nd Engineer Company completed a major mission just in time to return to Camp Liberty for New Years Eve.

The mission at Contingency Operating Station Camp Taji, helped to improve security for Soldiers that are stationed there by adding additional Hesco protection barriers to the perimeter of the COS.

Increased force protection is just one of the important missions the engineers have taken on. This mission is particularly important as they begin their drawdown, moving troops to different locations and sharing the bases with the Iraqi Army.

Capt. Joseph Ayers, commander of the 1192nd Engineer Co. and a Luna Pier, Mich. native, said the work at Taji was quite involved.

“Our mission at Taji required us to improve the

perimeter of the base. This proved especially difficult due to limitations placed on how we were permitted to execute,” said Ayers.

While at Taji, the 1192nd had a second mission: help improve the approach to a floating bridge that U.S. and Iraqi forces use to cross the Tigris River. This bridge is significant because it helps keep both military forces from having to travel greater distances through the surrounding communities.

“We laid gravel, graded, rolled and compacted the gravel, so that the bridge could better support vehicles going on and coming off,” said Ayers.

“We had to overcome days of inclement weather and equipment breakdowns,” said Staff Sgt. Trevor Harlow of Huron, Ohio.

“When the inclement weather hit, it made it harder for us to haul dirt to fill the Hesco barriers due to the soft ground,” said Harlow.

Another one of the challenges faced by the engineers was mechanical breakdowns.

Mechanical breakdowns can delay the completion of a mission. To help mitigate the effects of a break-

down, Sgt. Curtis Hoffman from Leavittsburg, Ohio, was called in to help. He was the mechanic on the job site.

“The problem that we ran into is that Taji does not have any military construction equipment on the base,” said Hoffman. “If something broke, we had to have the parts delivered to us by our unit back at Camp Liberty.”

The 1192nd had a lot of help keeping their vehicles in working order from another Ohio unit stationed at Taji; 2nd Battalion, 107th Armor Regiment.

“The 2/107th [was] instrumental in helping in any repairs that we had to make,” said Hoffman. “Without them, it would have taken a lot longer to fix any mechanical breakdowns because we did not have the facility. They did.”

Glad to be done with the project at Taji, Hoffman reminded the Soldiers not to take their living quarters at Camp Liberty for granted.

“I have slept on a cot for the last two months,” Hoffman said. “I will be glad to get back to Camp Liberty and my bed there.” ▲

## Soldiers ensure high standards for new Iraqi construction

Story and photo by Spc. Brian Johnson  
101st Eng. Bn. UPAR, 16th Eng. Bde., USD-C

**BAGHDAD** – Local contractors are a key component of the rebuilding process in Iraq because their work contributes to the construction efforts, generates local business and promotes growth.

Other key components are quality assurance and quality control measures, which ensure that construction projects are completed to a high standard of safety within a reasonable time frame and with quality materials.

One valuable set of skills offered by the engineers of 16th Engineer Brigade is their ability to ensure those high standards are met when projects are completed by local contractors. Responsible for this QA/QC process is the 16th Eng. Bde.’s Survey and Design team.

“Quality assurance and quality control of construction projects is one of our most important missions,” said Capt. Dolph Watts of Marion, Ohio, a civil engineer with the team.

Use of local contractors contributes to the construction efforts, generates local business and promotes growth. Watts said he and the rest of the Survey and Design team visit construction sites to make sure no problems arise during construction.

“Our team tries to ensure that a contractor is not cutting corners or delivering an inferior product that could cost someone’s life,” said Watts.

The Survey and Design team is currently working on a QA/QC mission at a school just west of Baghdad. A local Iraqi contractor has been hired to renovate existing classrooms at the school, as well as to construct six new rooms.

Sgt. 1st Class Kyle Markel, a senior technical en-



**Curious to see the visitors, students at a school west of Baghdad peer around the corner to get a glance at U.S. Soldiers conducting a quality control and assurance mission there Jan. 4. Together with 1472nd Civil Affairs Company, Civil Affairs Team 722 and engineers from 16th Engineer Brigade’s Survey and Design Team visited the school to ensure local contractors maintained high standards during construction of the new classrooms.**

gineer non-commissioned officer for the team and a native of Chillicothe, Ohio, said he works in partnership with 1472nd Civil Affairs Company, Civil Affairs Team 722 to ensure projects are done to standard and equitably.

“The civil affairs teams set up many reconstruction projects, they establish rapport with the locals, keep the project moving, and make sure everyone is happy with the end result,” Markel said.

When doing quality control checks, Markel looks for specific benchmarks and whether the contractors adhere to the construction timeline.

“There is an agreed upon timeline by all parties involved. I help the civil affairs teams to accurately assess if a construction mission will be done by a certain time,” Markel said. “If we were told that the walls

would be up by a certain day, or the roof would be installed on a building by a certain day, those are some of the things that I look for.”

During a visit of one local contractor, Soldiers listened as the contractor explained that while he has made great progress, he will need a few additional days to finish the project to standard.

As he returned to Camp Liberty, Markel discussed the day’s events with the civil affairs team. This time, they said they were very pleased by the progress.

Markel is keenly aware that his window of opportunity to affect high standards among local contractors is short.

“What is being constructed has to be a lasting structure,” said Markel. “The building cannot fall apart months after we leave.” ▲

Using the grader, Spc. Thomas Modica, of Merrville, Ind., 317th Engineer Company, smooths out a portion of the road to mitigate standing water at the ammunition supply point, at Victory Base Complex, Dec. 28. Soldiers from the 317th Eng. Co. worked to redistribute soil to improve the drainage system.



## Engineers improve ammo supply point

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. April Mota  
101st Eng. Bn. UPAR, 16th Eng. Bde., USD-C

**BAGHDAD** – Engineers from the 317th Engineer Company, 101st Eng. Battalion, have spent the past week working to improve the drainage system at the ammunition supply point, at Victory Base Complex. The ammunition supply point distributes and stores ammo for a num-

ber of units located in and around the Baghdad area.

Warrant Officer One John Jordan, of Huntsville, Ala., with the 60th Ordnance Company, mans the ammunition point. He was frustrated that every time it rained the ammunition point turned into a swamp, bogging down the heavy equipment needed to load the ammunition.

“The standing water made it much harder to execute our missions. We would have to hand

load the ammo, which takes a lot more time, and it is pretty stressful on the Soldiers,” said Jordan.

Staff Sgt. Dan Arens, of Faribault, Minn., served as the engineer’s supervisor on the project. He was pleased with the work done by his Soldiers and the completion of their first horizontal project together in Iraq.

“There was a lot of standing water. We created drainage ditches and temporary holding areas for the water. The hands-on experience with hauling, loading, and grading was a perfect first project for these Soldiers,” said Arens.

The Soldiers of the 317th Eng. Co. also improved the entry way to the ammunition supply point. The original entrance was very narrow, which forced units to stage on the road while waiting for their ammunition.

“In and out traffic through the entrance was impossible. With no defined external staging area, vehicles would block the road and make it difficult for the heavy equipment needed to enter the ammo point. We would have to call in each vehicle, one at a time, and that was very time consuming,” said Jordan.

Stagnant water and mud made the environment unsafe and inefficient for the ordnance Soldiers. With the improvements made by the Soldiers of the 317th Eng. Co., the ammunition supply point dried up tremendously within forty-eight hours, making the area safer and more efficient.

“These guys have done some amazing work. If it wasn’t for the Soldiers of the 317th, we would be weeks behind on our timeline,” said Jordan. ▲



Spc. Leo Jewett, of Duluth, Minn., 317th Engineer Company, fills the dump truck with another load of soil to be distributed at the front entrance of the ammunition supply point at Victory Base Complex, Dec. 28.

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progress turned toward the world.”

He went on to say, “We are here to pay tribute to one of the United States Army’s elite combat divisions – The 1st Cavalry Division – which over the past year was instrumental in obtaining this phenomenal progress.”

After much lauding of 1st Cavalry’s accomplishments over the last year, Jacoby welcomed the new commander of USD-C.

“Old Ironsides is no stranger to Operation Iraqi Freedom,” he said. “As the First Team departs and Old Ironsides assumes authority, our commitment to the Iraqi people remains unchanged. I am confident that in the year ahead, together we can set the conditions for the next decade to be one of peace and prosperity for Iraq.”

Bolger then took the podium.

“Today, the 1st Cavalry Division departs, and we do so with honor,” he said.

Honoring the memory of those who made the ultimate sacrifice, Bolger said, “Thirty-eight of our comrades gave their lives in this mission; 190 were wounded. We have brought home every one of them – their duty is done.

“But, the American mission continues, and that is why the 1st Armored Division stands here today. They are tough, ready and able. They will continue this mission and they will do it right,” said Bolger. “First Team; Iron Soldiers; Courage!”

Wolff then took the podium, thanked all who attended the ceremony, and gave a special thank you to Bolger and members of First Team – as 1st Cavalry is known – for all they had done to prepare the 1st Armored Division, staff for their tour. Moreover, Wolff recognized the efforts of key First Team members: Brig. Gens. Fred Rudesheim and Mike Murray, the deputy commanding generals of support and maneuver, respectively; Col. Tim Parks, the chief of staff; and the division senior enlisted noncommissioned officer, Command Sgt. Maj. Rory Malloy.

Wolff then complimented First Team on their partnership with the Iraqi Security Forces throughout Baghdad, expressing his desire to continue that partnership. Furthermore, he articulated that he and his team look forward to continuing to work with the Baghdad Provin-

cial Reconstruction Team in their effort to improve civil capacity.

Wolff also gave a special thank you to “the Soldiers, leaders, and civilians of USD-C who continue to answer the call and get the job done.”

Wolff concluded with the division motto: “Iron Soldiers; Army Strong!”

Wolff has served as the commander of 1st Armored Division since May 2009. Prior to assuming command of 1st Armored Division, he served nearly two years on the National Security Council as a special assistant to the president and senior director for Iraq and Afghanistan.

Additionally, Wolff commanded 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment for three years, leading the regiment through a tour in Iraq in March 2003. He returned to Iraq for another tour in 2006 as commanding general of the Coalition Military Assistance Training Team.

Today, however, Wolff wasn’t looking back.

“As we move forward, we understand the importance of the next six months in Iraq,” said Wolff. “The USD-C team has dedicated ourselves to that mission and the tasks ahead.” ▲



Photo by Sgt. Samantha Beuterbaugh, 366th MPAD, USD-C

**Maj. Gen. Daniel Bolger, 1st Cavalry Division, U.S. Division—Center commander, and Command Sgt. Maj. Rory Malloy, 1st Cavalry Division senior enlisted noncommissioned officer, were presented a glass pyramid as a memento from 1st Armored Division. The gift was given for the transition of authority before the ceremony Jan. 13 at Camp Liberty.**



Photo by Sgt. Samantha Beuterbaugh, 366th MPAD, USD-C

**Command Sgt. Maj. Rory Malloy, 1st Cavalry Division, U.S. Division—Center, senior enlisted noncommissioned officer, leads the color guard to their positions as the transfer of authority ceremony begins at Camp Liberty Jan. 13.**



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Kristina Scott, 366th MPAD, USD-C

**(From left) Maj. Gen. Terry Wolff commander of 1st Armored Division, Lt. Gen. Charles Jacoby, deputy commanding general of U.S. Forces—Iraq, and commander of I Corps, and Maj. Daniel Bolger, commander of 1st Cavalry Div., grin and clap to the beat of the 1st Cavalry Division theme song “Garry Owen” during a transfer of authority ceremony conducted at Camp Liberty Jan. 13. The ceremony was conducted to signify that 1st Armd. Div. had assumed responsibility of the U.S. Division—Center operational environment from 1st Cav. Div.**



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Kristina Scott, 366th MPAD, USD-C

**Distinguished visitors watch as Lt. Gen. Charles Jacoby speaks during a transfer of authority ceremony conducted at Camp Liberty Jan 13. The ceremony was conducted to signify that 1st Armored Division has assumed responsibility of the U.S. Division—Center operational environment from 1st Cavalry Div.**



Photo by Spc. Daniel Schneider, 366th MPAD, USD-C

**Maj. Gen. Terry Wolff, commanding general of U.S. Division—Center, and his senior enlisted non-commissioned officer, Command Sgt. Maj. William Johnson, uncased the colors of the 1st Armored Division symbolizing taking command of USD—C operational environment Jan. 13.**

## Medics build aid station at Taji



The 2nd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division's aid station treatment room provides ample space to examine injuries.

Story and photo by Spc. Luisito Brooks  
4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div., USD-C

**CAMP TAJI, Iraq** – The hands of medics that normally heal Soldiers' injuries were also used to build a facility to treat them.

The medics from 2nd Squadron, 4th Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division constructed an aid station last week, located inside of a large building shared by staff sections within the squadron.

2nd Sqdn., recently completed a move to Camp Taji because of an expansion of the brigade operational environment, part of a responsible drawdown of U.S. forces in Iraq.

"After we moved here, it was our goal to build ourselves an aid station that would provide our Sol-

diers with the best (treatment)," said Capt. John Alvitre, a division physician's assistant with 2nd Sqdn. "Our previous aid station was good but now we have more room to conduct our mission."

The unit moved from a space of about 1,200 square feet to one of about 1,700 square feet.

The building of the aid station was no easy task, requiring a team of medics in order to complete it.

"It took the effort of every Soldier in the section working tirelessly for three days to build the aid station," said Staff Sgt. Fernando Esteves, the aid station non-commissioned officer in charge, from Yona, Guam. "We used hammers, nails, wood and a lot of determination to build it."

The new station not only provides patients great treatment, but also comes with a few perks.

"I've got to admit that this place looks really nice,"

said Spc. Chris Cotton, a Soldier with Company B, 702 Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Bde., 2nd Inf. Div., who was there to receive treatment at the aid station. "I felt really comfortable here, and the waiting room is really cool because the television and magazines helped pass the time as I waited."

"The aid station was designed with the purpose of providing maximum patient privacy," said Esteves. "A Soldier can come here and is able to discuss their health information with full disclosure."

The medics said the aid station was an important accomplishment for them.

"We wanted to make the building of this aid station and the transition to this location a smooth one," said Alvitre. "Being a medic not only means taking care of Soldiers in the field but also providing a location where they can come and get checked out." ▲

## Joint training on close air support, close combat attack

Story by Capt. Christopher Ophardt  
4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div., USD-C

**BAGHDAD** – American Soldiers and Airmen assigned to the 4th Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division were afforded a unique opportunity to train with F-16 Fighting Falcon fighter jets and AH-64 Apache helicopters, Dec. 29, east of Baghdad.

"The purpose of today is to refresh the Joint Tactical Air Controllers and Joint Forward Observers on close air support and close combat attack procedures," said Senior Airman Jacob Torwick, a JTAC with the 4th Bde., 2nd Inf. Div.

JTAC's are Airmen who are trained to communicate with and control fixed wing aircraft, directing them to engage enemy targets that are in close proximity to friendly ground forces.

These ground pounding Airmen are a critical asset to the Army and Air Force and shortly after the war began, it was identified that there were not enough JTAC's to go around.

To help bridge this shortage, the Army organized the Joint Forward Observer Course located at Fort Sill, Okla.

"I attended the two week course at Ft. Sill and am excited to refresh my memory on CAS," said Spc. Charles Danna, a native of Madisonville, La..

During the training, the radio crackled as Apache pilots from the 1st Cavalry Aviation Bde. came on station, ready and willing to deliver their lethal fire.

After the CCA report was sent, and the Apache's started their approach, the final step was executed. "Cleared for engagement," said Danna over the radio.

On the ground, the anticipation built as the attack helicopters launched their rockets toward their intended target.

The explosive boom from the rockets' impact was followed by a second explosion – one of cheers from the Soldiers and Airmen watching the scene.

"The whole point of being out here is to see and engage targets," said Capt. Michael Holl, an F-15E pilot currently serving as an air liaison officer with 2nd Bde., 10th Mountain Div.

Not to be outdone by their rotary wing counterparts, two F-16 fighter jets roared on station, ready to participate in the training, although because of range restriction their strafing runs would have to be dry.

On their final run of the day, the F-16's came out of the sun, low and fast, reminding everyone of the supporting firepower in the sky. ▲

# Football legends visit Iraq, play a game with service members

Story, photos by Pfc. Kimberly Hackbarth  
4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div., USD-C

**BAGHDAD** – Service members had sprinted, intercepted and juked their way through hours of flag football practices for the opportunity to appear on national television.

For the first time ever in Iraq, veteran football players and coaches provided the troops that opportunity, Jan. 1, when they played a flag football game at Liberty Field alongside

Iraq and the troops and get into their lives a little bit (to learn) what they're going through," said Ty Detmer, former quarterback for the Philadelphia Eagles and the Detroit Lions.

Detmer, a resident of Austin, Texas, said there are aspects of a deployed Soldier's life that most people are unable to see because they are not over here.

One aspect is the threat of enemy forces.

Though attacks have died down in the area, Switzer heard insurgent attacks firsthand

*Football is a common denominator for all Americans.*

– Coach Barry Switzer

the service members in celebration of New Year's Day.

Coach Barry Switzer said he jumped at the chance to coach a team for the New Year's game when he was asked by the United Service Organization.

"Football is a common denominator for all Americans," said Switzer.

The game, organized by the USO, was broadcast during half-time at the Tostitos Fiesta Bowl, Jan. 4.

"It was more about being able to come over here and experience

the night of New Year's Eve.

"Everyone seems to appreciate the fact that we're spending time away from our families during the holiday season to be here with the troops," said Switzer; "except the insurgents who dropped (mortars) on us last night."

The rocket attack reinforced the reality of life here.

The football veterans had willingly travelled far away from their homes to spend a few days in the shoes of Soldiers living here and began to realize the



Players on Team Freedom huddle before a New Year's Day flag football game at Liberty Field, Jan. 1. Veteran football players and coaches participated in the game.



Tony Casillas wrestles with a player on the opposing team during the New Year's Day flag football game.

dangers in Iraq and as a result how hard it is being away from their family.

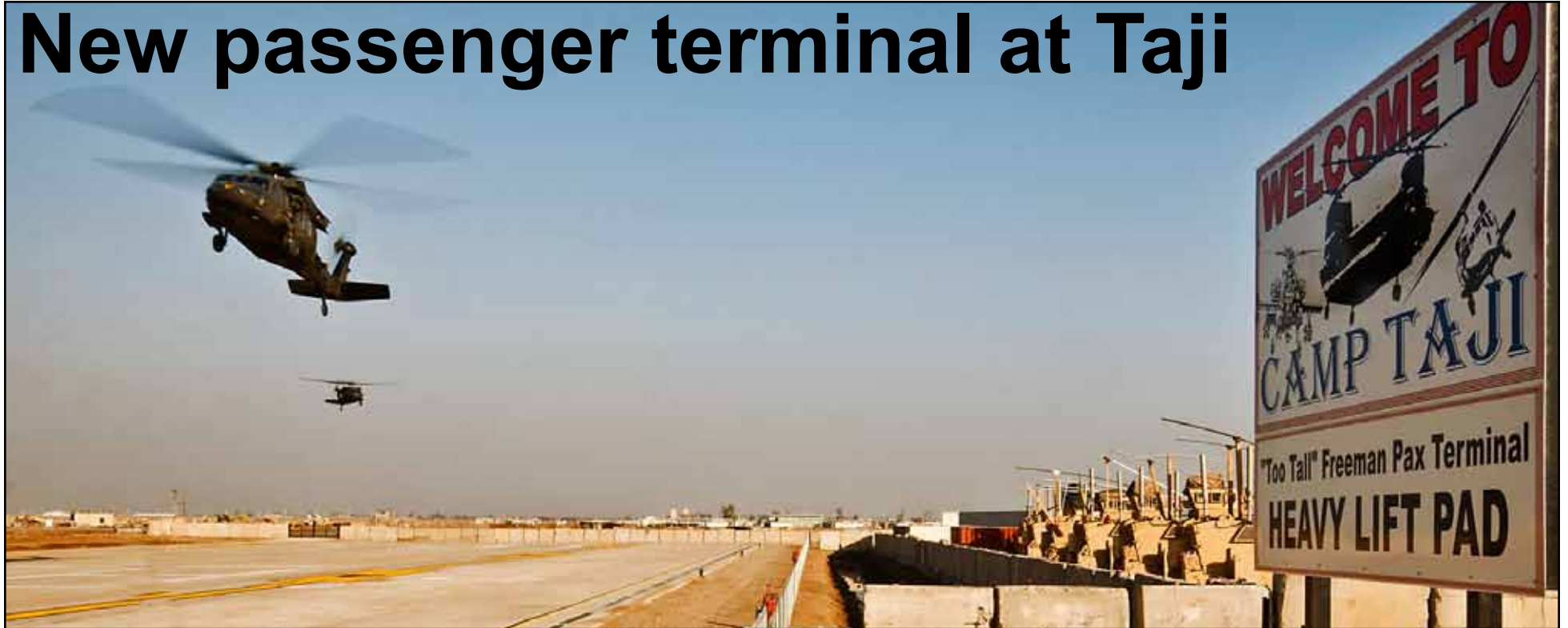
Sgt. 1st Class Michael Garcia, security manager for Task Force 1st Medical Brigade, said he was appreciative of the players and coaches coming to visit.

"I'm a big Cowboys fan," said Garcia. "I think it's great that they came out. I think it really lifts the spirits of the Soldiers."

Switzer, who won a Super Bowl with the Dallas Cowboys and a college football national championship with the University of Oklahoma, is one of only two football head coaches to win both titles.

Claiming victory on New Year's Day as well, Switzer expressed sincere gratitude toward the Soldiers in his acceptance speech and said his team would return next year to defend their trophy. 🏆

# New passenger terminal at Taji



Two UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters from 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, approach for a landing at the new passenger terminal Jan. 5.

Story by Staff Sgt. Nathan Hoskins

Photos by Sgt. Travis Zielinski

1st ACB PAO, 1st Cav. Div.

**CAMP TAJI, Iraq** – Soldiers and civilians traveling to and from here by aircraft now have a more comfortable place to wait for their flights with the grand opening of Ed “Too Tall” Freeman Passenger Terminal, Jan. 5.

The immense terminal, a project which has been in the works for nearly two years, will now be the main hub for all passengers arriving and departing by fixed-wing or rotary-wing aircraft.

With two large buildings where passengers can in-process for flights, wait and relax, and a vast helicopter pad, the terminal can facilitate approximately 300 people at one time, said Capt. William Bailey, commander, 384th Movement Control Team, 49th Transportation Battalion, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary).

The former passenger terminal, which consisted of two trailers with a couple of gazebo-like structures to keep the travelers from the elements, fell short when there was inclement weather, said Bailey a Huntsville, Ala., native who oversees the daily operations of the terminal.

“The new [passenger] terminal provides a sustainable area for the Soldiers to travel through so they’re not out in the summer heat, winter rain, or any type of bad weather,” Bailey said.

The facility was dedicated to Ed “Too Tall” Freeman, who was a UH-1 Huey helicopter pilot in Vietnam and Medal of Honor recipient. Freeman received the Medal of Honor for his acts of valor and heroism during the Battle of Ia Drang – the first air assault in military history and first major battle in the Vietnam conflict.

The Freeman terminal came together this past fall with the combined efforts of 155th Brigade Combat Team, the 384th MCT, and 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, U. S. Division –Center.

Taking on the brunt of the project was 155th

BCT, which funded, planned and built the facility with the help of civilian contractors.

To ensure the facility would properly support aviation operations safely and smoothly, Chief Warrant Officer Gary Bottger, airfield manager, 1st ACB, provided technical aviation advice, which included expanding and improving the helicopter landing pad.

“The new terminal features a specially designed heli-pad for multiple, concurrent helicopter landings,” said Bottger, of Salado, Texas. “It will safely host around-the-clock, large-scale passenger movements.”

The first full day of operations at the Freeman passenger terminal, Jan. 4, revealed dozens of Soldiers with sleepy dispositions waiting to go home on leave during the early morning hours. But that didn’t stop them from noticing the major upgrades.

“I like the new [passenger] terminal because it takes you out of the environment; it brings you inside where it’s warmer,” said 1st Lt. Nora Soto, of

1st ACB, from El Paso, Texas. “Even during the summer it will be cooler in here,”

“It feels like an actual airport terminal – very professional,” Soto said.

Others revealed their satisfaction without saying a word; simply having benches to sleep on said enough.

However, the Freeman passenger terminal is more than two empty climate-controlled buildings. The 384th MCT made sure travelers would have plenty to occupy their time while they waited.

There are flat screen televisions, books, phone booths, internet stations and wireless internet.

Among other improvements are covered outdoor areas for the passengers to wait under and a designated restroom facility – not the portable toilet shacks of old.

Although operations are running smoother from the Freeman terminal than from the old terminal, the goal of the new facility is to take care of travelers, said Bailey; exactly what is happening. ▲



Lt. Col. Jeffery White (left), deputy brigade commander, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Lt. Col. Peter Haas (center), from Fleetwood, Pa., commander of 49th Transportation Battalion, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), and Col. William Glasgow (right), commander of 155th Brigade Combat Team, Mississippi National Guard, cut the ribbon to officially open the new Ed “Too Tall” Freeman Passenger Terminal Jan. 5. The terminal is dedicated to Medal of Honor recipient Ed “Too Tall” Freeman, a pilot during the first major battle of Vietnam.

# Air Cav crew chief returns home to Panama after 20 years

Story by Sgt. Alun Thomas

1st ACB PAO, 1st Cav. Div., USD-C

**CAMP TAJI, Iraq** – After the U.S. Army invaded Panama in 1989 to oust the dictator Manuel Noriega, the country's people went on to rebuild their lives after "Operation Just Cause".

It would be 20 years before one Panama citizen, who had left before the war began to live in the U.S., would return to his homeland.

The road back to Panama for Sgt. Nicanor Garcia, from Killeen, Texas, a crew chief with 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, was worth the long wait, despite being gone for two decades and starting his life over elsewhere.

Garcia, 34, said growing up in Panama was mostly pleasant with little to worry about in his early years.

"I was living in Panama City in a decent neighborhood. It wasn't middle class, but it wasn't lower class, it was something in between," Garcia said. "Economically, it wasn't so good, but I had the love of my mother and I had a lot of friends, so it wasn't that bad."

Things remained calm up until the stronghold of Noriega and his followers began and continued throughout the 1980's, Garcia explained.

"We had an elected president, things were going well, but slowly it started deteriorating and a dictatorship was established by General Noriega," Garcia said. "Suddenly there would be no buses to take us to school ... so I couldn't go to school because it was too far to walk."

As the move toward war intensi-

fied, Noriega began to resort to desperate measures to recruit for his army, Garcia said. Which his mother would have no involvement with.

"It got to the point where Noriega was recruiting kids between the ages of 11 and 13," Garcia said. "I was 13 at that point so my mom said, 'No, you're not going to be in Noriega's army to defend him.' She wanted to get me out of the country, so we went and applied for a visa and thankfully I got approved."

In April 1989, at the age of 13, Garcia went to live with his grandmother in Brooklyn, N.Y., avoiding the war that would destroy his country.

"God knows what could have happened if I'd stayed. Back then there was so much con-



Photo by Sgt. Travis Zielinski, 1st ACB PAO, 1st Cav. Div., USD-C

**Sgt. Nicanor Garcia, from Killeen, Texas, an AH-64D Apache attack helicopter crew chief in Company B, 4th Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, left his native Panama in 1989 before the invasion by the U.S. Army and didn't return until 20 years later.**

fusion in the country during the hours of the invasion that anything could have happened," Garcia said. "Shots fired could have gone through our window or doors, things like that. It could have gone bad. So I'm glad my mother got me out of the country."

Joining the Army was an easy decision after seeing the destruction of the twin towers on 9/11, said Garcia.

"I love New York City and I used to see the towers every day. When they came down

*I love New York City and I used to see the towers every day. When they came down I said to myself, 'I have to do something.'*

– Sgt. Nicanor Garcia

I said, to myself 'I have to do something,'" Garcia continued. "Another reason I joined is this country has given me so much ... in Panama I would

never be working on Apaches and I would never have the lifestyle the U.S. offered me."

After joining the 1st ACB, he dreamed of returning to Panama.

"I had to delay going back to Panama in part because of my Army career. Also I wanted to take my mom, who eventually came to the states and became a citizen," he said. "I wanted to take my family with me so we could experience it together because I hadn't been back there for so long."

Garcia took his mother, wife and his five-year-old daughter back to Panama while he was on leave from Iraq this past year. Once he was there he found himself reliving his childhood and remembering things long ago forgotten.

"From the moment I landed, memories started coming back ... I remembered leaving that airport and it looked pretty much the same," Garcia said. "I saw the rest of my family that were there to greet me at the airport. A lot of them were older, of course, and I met brand new cousins that I had never seen before."

Garcia visited his former neighborhood and said although Panama City has become modernized, the people there remain the same as he remembers them.

"I went back to my old neighborhood where I grew up and it had totally changed," Garcia said. "There were still a few buildings that were there from when I was young; a mechanic and car repair shop with the same owner."

"I went in and said hello to the owner and he actually remembered me ... It was funny and interesting because the country has changed so much, but the people haven't," he added.

The experience left Garcia realizing that while war had changed many things, a lot of the changes had improved Panama significantly.

"It has changed for the better definitely, because if it wasn't for the invasion there wouldn't be democracy in Panama," Garcia said. "I liked the whole experience because it brought me back to when I was a kid but at the same time reminded me where I came from."

"I wanted to stay, but I had to come back and complete the mission," Garcia said with a laugh. ▲

# Brothers reunite during deployment

Story by 1st Lt. Josh Risher

1st BCT PAO, 1st Cav. Div., USD-C

**BAGHDAD** – Wartime service often separates Soldiers from their families, but when family members serve near each other in the war zone there can still be family time. Two brothers assigned to U.S. Division–Center and U. S. Division–North spent time together in Iraq after their units coordinated the family reunion.

It was not the first time that Capt. Jordan Enger, commander of A Troop, 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division got to see his younger brother during this tour. The armor officer from Houston, flew from Contingency Operating Location Istiqlal to Combat Outpost Cobra on Oct. 18 to administer the oath to his younger brother, Spc. Jared Enger, a cavalry scout in C Troop, 1st Sqdn., 14th Cav. Regt., 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Div., who re-enlisted for six more years of service.

“I’m really proud of him and what he’s accomplished,” Capt. Enger said of his younger brother. Spc. Enger feels the same towards his older brother. “I think he’s a good commander, he really looks out for his Soldiers.”

With both brothers serving their second tour, their family is evenly split. They have no other siblings, and their parents back in Houston are glad that the brothers saw each other.

“The Squadron commander and command sergeant major really worked hard to get him out here to COL Istiqlal,” Capt. Enger said as the two brothers worked together.

His participation in the Squadron’s activities did not end there, though. On his first night at COL Istiqlal, Spc. Enger accompanied his brother to the station’s firebase, where he hung rounds with the mortar section during the unit’s final planned fire mission of the deployment. The next day he boxed alongside other A Troop Soldiers in the Squadron’s boxing tournament.

Opportunities to see each other



Photo by Capt. Jordan Enger, 1BCT PAO, 1st Cav. Div., USD-C

**Capt. Jordan Enger (left), commander of A Troop, 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division reunites with his younger brother, Spc. Jared Enger, a cavalry scout of C Troop, 1st Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, at Combat Outpost Cobra.**

have not been frequent. Both have now served in the Army, at different duty stations, for several years. During their first tour, they only saw each other in Kuwait as they passed through the theater gateway, one heading into

combat, the other on the way back to the United States. They are both optimistic, though, that the relatively small size of the armor branch will give them opportunities to serve near each other in the future. ▲

## ‘Centurions’ commemorate partnership with Iraqi Army counterparts



Photo by Sgt. Jessica Reeves, 1BCT PAO, 1st Cav. Div., USD-C

**CAMP TAJI, Iraq** – Staff Sgt. Darian Ford, a human intelligence collection team leader assigned to Company A, 1st Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, arm wrestles a soldier from the 11th Iraqi Army Division during a partnership dinner at Camp Taji Jan. 4. Ford works with 11th IA at the FER compound, located at the old Ministry of Defense. The partnership dinner was a chance to celebrate all of the work accomplished during the deployment.

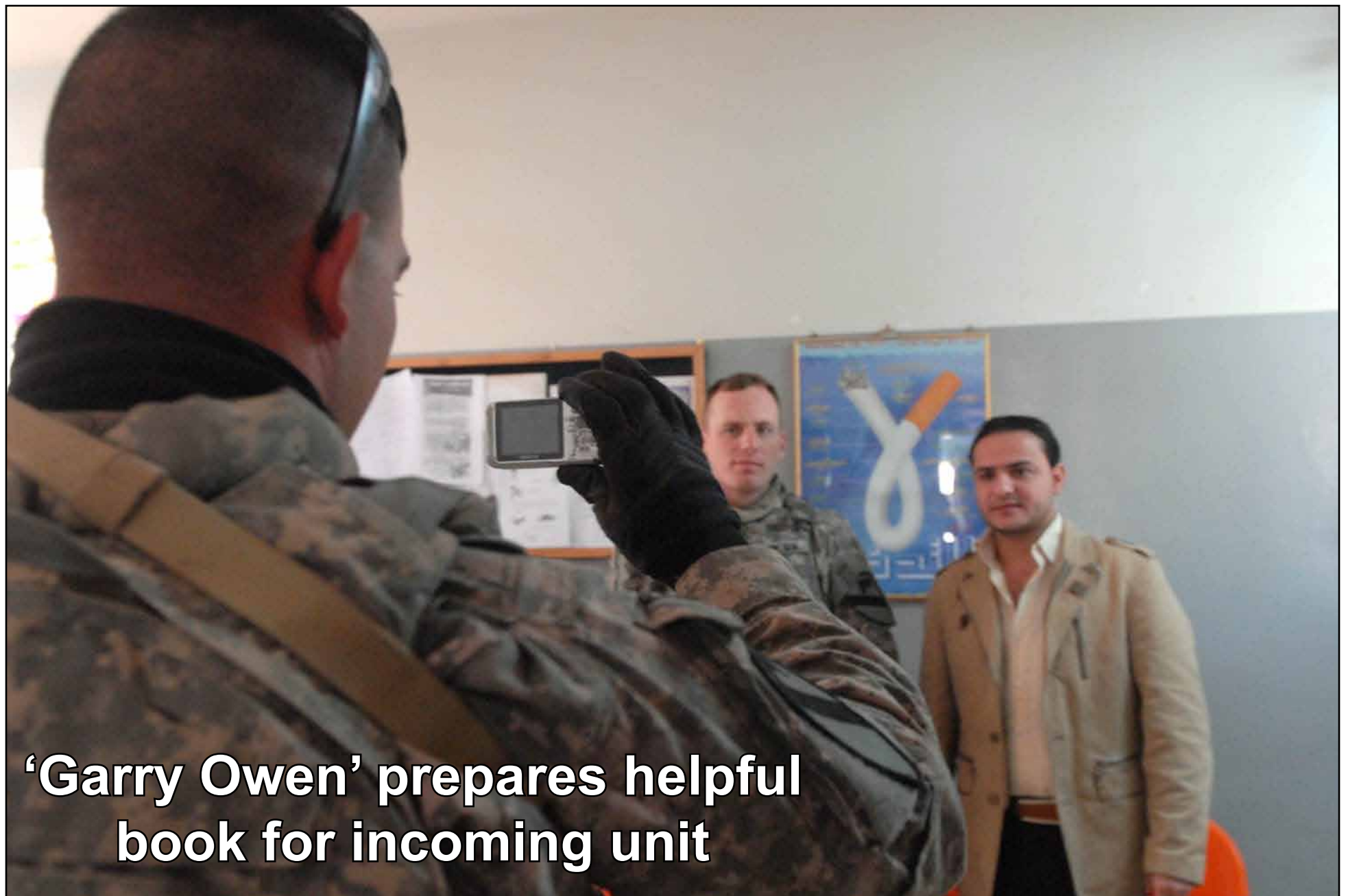


“Muleskinners” working hard

Photo by Sgt. Shejal Pulivarti, 1BCT PAO, 1st Cav. Div., USD-C

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Beemer, Neb., native Spc. Devon Pagels (left) and Issaquah, Wash., native Spc. Brenton Nikolaus, both wheeled-vehicle mechanics assigned to Company B, 115th Brigade Support Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, drain fluids out of a generator at Camp Taji Jan. 5.





## 'Garry Owen' prepares helpful book for incoming unit

**Birmingham, Ala., native, Sgt. Charles Ray (left), an intelligence support team representative for A Troop, 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, photographs the head doctor at a local hospital for their records at Contingency Operating Location Istiqlal Dec. 10. 1st Sqdn., 7th Cav. Regt., Soldiers are gathering and compiling vital information about their area of operations to pass to the incoming unit.**

Story and photos by Pfc. Bailey Jester  
1BCT PAO, 1st Cav. Div., USD-C

**BAGHDAD** – About a year ago, 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division prepared to move to Contingency Operating Location Istiqlal.

Today, they are preparing to redeploy back to Fort Hood.

"We are working on filling the holes in our continuity book for the unit following us," said Huntsville, Ala., native, 2nd Lt. John Wilson, platoon leader assigned to 1st Sqdn., 7th Cav. Regt. "We are putting the information we have gathered during our stay together so the following unit doesn't have to start from scratch."

The book having been assembled since their arrival contains basic contact information for key sources and Iraqi Security forces leaders, including pictures, names, numbers and locations.

Although the 1st Sqdn. Soldiers are leaving the area, the work they

put into building relationships with the local residents will not be lost, said Wilson.

"We plan on pushing the next unit and introducing them to our [friends]," Wilson explained.

"We want to start them where we left off."

One of the lessons 1st Sqdn., Soldiers hope to impart to their replacements is the importance of building friendships with the Iraqis to gain their trust and assistance in bringing peace back to the nation.

"We have built a relationship with these people. We have sat down and talked to them," explained Birmingham, Ala., native Sgt. Charles Ray, an intelligence support team representative for A Troop, 1st Squadron, 7th Cav. Regt. "These men and women are our eyes and ears. They pay attention to things and can tell when things are out of place."

Along with the many important and helpful relationships the "Garry Owen" Soldiers have formed in the community, they also improved a partnership with their Federal Police

counterparts.

"The FPs go where we go to show the local populace that they are trying to take charge," said Ray. "Working together sends a good message to the people."

The FPs and Soldiers from 1st Squadron, regularly conducted combined patrols to collect photographs,

phone numbers, names or locations. They plan to capture all of this and more in their book.

"Finishing this book will greatly help the incoming unit continue where we left off," said Wilson. "We don't want them to waste their time on something that has already been started." ▲



**Huntsville, Ala., native, 2nd Lt. John Wilson, a platoon leader assigned to 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, visits a water purifying system outside the gates of Contingency Operating Location Istiqlal Dec. 12, to collect information for their continuity book.**

# Old Hickory Soldiers pause for a 'Night of Praise'

Story and photo by Spc. Ruth McClary  
30th HBCT, PAO, USD-C

**BAGHDAD** – A gospel program targeting Congregational and Baptist enthusiasts was offered at Contingency Operating Station Falcon to give Soldiers a chance to continue praise and worship while deployed.

North Carolina National Guard Soldiers performed praise and worship songs during the "Night of Praise" at the Steel Chapel at COS Falcon, Dec. 28.

"Don't worry about who is sitting beside you or what is going on outside," said Spc. Talisa Cooper, as she addressed the congregation. "This night was set aside just to allow God to have His way."

The group, which usually performs one song during the Protestant service on Sundays, organized its first gospel service at the chapel; hosting the event to embrace the style of music and service they remember from home.

Group members, including Master Sgt. Anita Wyatt, of Minneapolis, Minn.; Sgt. 1st Class Barry Oxendine, of Raeford, N.C.; Staff Sgt. Iraina Witherspoon, of Brooklyn, N.Y.; Sgt. Ronald Trainer, of Fayetteville, N.C.; along with musicians Spc. John Riggs, of Kinston, N.C., and civilian contractor, Mike Taylor, practiced for about two weeks to prepare for the performance.

"Master Sgt. Wyatt asked me to

play tonight," said Riggs, of 230th Brigade Support Battalion. "I loved it; it's a different style of worship and it's more of what I'm used to, more gospel than Pentecostal."

"Any time I can be where I can play music for the Lord, I'm happy," he added.

Trainer was the mastermind behind the scene; getting the singers on board and finalizing the date. Wyatt determined the flow of the schedule, posted flyers and designed the programs. Capt. Wayne Lehto, the battalion chaplain, sponsored and emceed the program.

Lehto opened up the service by asking everyone in the congregation why they came. Most of them said Wyatt asked them to come. It became the running joke as each person found a way to connect their presence there to Wyatt.

"I was charged to tell people to come," said Wyatt. "It really took me out of my comfort zone to do so. I sent out emails to the leadership and told people that I have cordial relationships with, but God ordained this night. It was really all God."

Five voices echoed through the church, with the strength of a full choir, as onlookers jumped to their feet, clapped their hands and sang along in approval. Group members said they were happy with the success of the event and felt a great sense of accomplishment.

"I think it was wonderful," said Trainer. "It gave people a chance to



Sgt. Ronald Trainer (far left), of Fayetteville, N.C., leads a song during a "Night of Praise" gospel celebration; targeting Congregational and Baptist enthusiasts at Contingency Operating Station Falcon, Dec. 28.

have church and release some stuff they had pinned up in them."

"It felt good to see other people, who love to worship Christ, fellowship and be led by the Spirit," said Witherspoon, of 1472nd Civil Affairs Team attached to the 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team.

"I found it encouraging and uplifting to partake in the gospel celebration," said Staff Sgt. Harold Faison, of Roseboro, N.C. "And I can go on and on and on and on and..." as he broke into song, sculpting his words to the last song performed.

"It was a joyous occasion, a real blessing from God and I'm glad

I had a chance to be a part of this event before leaving the base enroute to my home church," said Melinda Gosa, of Fort Hood, Texas, a civilian member of the congregation.

The congregation huddled around the singers after the service, congratulating them on a job well done. Thirty minutes later the last of the group emptied the church, singing some of the songs and discussing how the program reminded them of services back home.

"Just like at home, you can't get the people out of the church," said Trainer. 🌈

## Diplomacy takes precedence in East Rashid

Story by Staff Sgt. Jeff Hansen  
366th MPAD, USD-C

**BAGHDAD** – Military operations are not always focused on combat; sometimes they are all about diplomacy.

Such was the case in the East Rashid district, Dec. 28, when members of 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team met with key government leaders to discuss matters of shared interest.

Capt. Christian Smith, commander of Company A, visited the District Area Council, to speak with local leaders about past successes, current issues and future projects.

Smith re-established communications with Hashim Mahemoud Dahash, deputy councilman of the East Rashid district area council and a

member of the Baghdad city council. Hashim has been a major contributor to improvements in living conditions and security in East Rashid.

Smith said Hashim has been a major asset in improving living conditions for the population there.

"He's like a father figure to everyone around here," said Smith, referencing Hashim's recent work with youth soccer leagues and kidnapping victims.

Smith, a native of Wake Forest, N.C., also wanted to ensure that his replacement would get a chance to meet up with key leaders during the trip to the council. Capt. Evan Davies, a company commander with the 3rd Infantry Division, got a chance to build rapport with Hashim and other local leaders, where he took the opportunity to discuss his plans for joint operations in the area.

"We are here to facilitate the Iraqi Federal Police in their mission to better secure [East Rashid] by conducting training, joint operations and the

like. We've seen what the 252nd [Combined Arms Battalion] has done here and hope to keep up their traditions," said Davies.

Hashim agreed the 252nd did a great job keeping the area outside of Joint Security Station Doura safer for the people, calling the Soldiers his second family. He said he felt the Iraqi Federal Police and Iraqi Security forces have greatly improved with their help and just hopes the incoming U.S. Soldiers will continue that kind of great work.

During Smith's trip to the council, Jaber akol Khamis al-Hadar, the manager of the East Rashid council, visited his American guests. He wanted to meet Davies and express his gratitude to the 252nd Soldiers for their hard work and achievements during their deployment.

Smith said his working relationship with the Iraqi government officials has been very positive in the past, and he hopes the coming year will remain the same. 🌈

# Operation Proper Exit

Story and photos by Sgt. Jennie Burrett  
2nd BCT PAO, 10th Mtn. Div., USD-C

**BAGHDAD** – In past wars, wounded warriors, especially those recovering from severe injuries, were never afforded the opportunity to re-visit the locations where they had been injured or the hospitals in theater where they had been treated.

Five wounded warriors returned, to visit with Soldiers of 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, through “Operation Proper Exit”, Dec. 30, at Contingency Operating Station Carver.

Some wounded Soldiers have said that when they left the combat zone, they had left their unit behind and they had left something unfinished. The program, in essence, gives the Soldier a sense of closure, allowing them



**Capt. Samuel Brown (center), of San Antonio, talks to Soldiers of 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, during Operation Proper Exit at Contingency Operation Post Carver, Dec. 30. Brown deployed to Kandahar, Afghanistan from June 2008 to September 2008 where his vehicle hit an improvised explosive device. As a result of the blast, he suffered third-degree burns over 30 percent of his body.**



**Sgt. 1st Class Michael Schlitz (center), of Moline, Ill., a former Soldier with 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, shows off his mechanical arms during a visit to Contingency Operation Station Carver, Dec. 30.**

to “leave the battlefield the right way”

“There are several steps towards your recovery and this is just one more step to help come full circle with accepting your injury,” said Sgt. 1st Class Michael Schlitz, of Moline, Ill., a former 4th Bn., 31st Inf. Regt. Soldier. Schlitz was injured during his unit’s last deployment when his vehicle hit an improvised explosive device resulting in him being a double arm amputee, being burnt over 85 percent of his body, and losing some of his vision.

“It is very important for me to show the guys that if they get hurt they can come back; there is still life after an injury. Two or three years ago I would have never thought I would have come back to this place and here I am now healthy. I am doing a lot more than I ever thought I was going to do and now I can show it to them and give them a little bit of support.”

During the day’s events at COS Carver the wounded warriors took time to visit with the Soldiers, letting them ask questions and took a look at the new

equipment the U.S. troops have now compared to when they were in a theater of operation.

“I think for [the wounded warriors] they get the reassurance that the things that they have done and the effort they have put into it isn’t going to waste,” said Cpl. Ryan Clark, of Phoenix, an infantry team leader. “And it lets us know, even for some of the younger Soldiers, that you should never give up and always put forth the effort in whatever you do.”

This is the third time U. S. Division–Center has conducted Operation Proper Exit for the wounded warriors to return to Iraq.

“Younger Soldiers are learning that bad things do happen sometimes, but it is possible to continue on and carry on with a productive life in the future,” said 1st Sgt. Chris McMillian, of Hoyleton, Ill., and Schlitz’s former platoon sergeant. “Seeing Sgt. Schlitz again is always fun. He hasn’t changed since his injuries. He always has a smile, always has a joke; makes me laugh. It is nice to see my friend again.” ▲

# Convoy through Baghdad no laughing matter

Story and photo by Sgt. Tracy Knowles  
16th Eng. Bde., UPAR, USD-C

**BAGHDAD** – Bright lights, laughter, and a rowdy crowd - all before 9:00 am. This is the sound the 1434th Engineer Company, 101st Engineer Battalion's, Convoy Security Team makes while preparing to escort seven comedians across Baghdad on a New Year's Eve comedy tour for U.S. forces.

Today's mission provided rolling security for comedians on a Stars and Stripes comedy tour for Soldiers based in more remote areas.

Carrying civilians like Michaela Watkins from Saturday Night Live and David Price from CBS's The Early Show, through a combat zone is a delicate operation. Identifying the routes to be taken and ensuring the civilians have the proper personal protective equipment are just some of the concerns.

"We volunteer to do this because [Soldiers] make it possible for us to have the freedom to move about the world," said Price.

All joking aside, the Soldiers are very passionate about their jobs. When the time comes for the CST to head out of the safe zone, game faces are donned and the job begins.

"Unless you go outside the wire and really see what's going on, training only goes so far, it's a different world out there," said Spc. Michael Demma, of Travers City, Mich.

Demma, a Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle driver, explained that even though each Soldier has a specific job, the team cross-trains, so any Soldier can be moved into another position, if necessary. From gunner to truck commander, every member of the team is equally important.

Escorting the comedians throughout Baghdad provided for some much needed laughter in the vehicles on the way to their destinations. Laughter keeps endorphins flowing and brings down stress levels. It can even act as a pain reliever and help to relax muscles.

As the old saying goes, "Laughter is the best medicine." For the Soldiers of wars past and present, a little humor goes a long way. 🌈



Braintree, Mass., native, Maj. Shawn Cody (left), operations officer for the 101st Engineer Battalion, talks with Karri Turner, an who is best known for playing Lt. Harriet Sims on the TV series "JAG".

## Laughter echoes at JSS Nasir Wa Salam



Photo by Spc. Daniel Schneider, 366th MPAD, USD-C

**BAGHDAD** – The audience of Soldiers at Joint Security Station Nasir Wa Salam roar in laughter while Dave Price, from CBS's The Early Show, performs during the "Laugh in the New Year - Improv in Iraq Tour III," Dec. 30.

# Siblings deploy to Iraq together in Air Cavalry

Story and photo by Sgt. Alun Thomas  
1st ACB PAO, 1st Cav. Div., USD-C

**CAMP TAJI, Iraq** – The odds of two siblings being deployed together in the same brigade might be considered slim in the active Army, especially if it happens by chance.

Luckily for Pfc. Harmony Rodriguez and her brother Spc. Jeremiah Rodriguez, the odds worked in their favor as both are serving together with 1st Air Cavalry Brigade while following in the footsteps of their father, a 19-year Army veteran.

They say growing up in a military environment had a profound influence on them, with all roads eventually leading to 1st ACB and Iraq.

Harmony, from Victoria, Texas, and a cook assigned to Company E, 4th Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st ACB, 1st Cavalry Division, said their father served in the Reserves before joining the active Army.

"I have nothing but good memories of my father in the Army growing up," she said. "He was in the reserves [first] but it was good to see him in uniform and doing his training."

For Jeremiah, 22, from Lubbock, Texas, an aircraft electrician in Company B, 615th Aviation Support Battalion, 1st ACB, the previous decade was spent without his father around much of the time.

"It was kind of sad seeing him deploying all the time; he has three deployments under his belt," Jeremiah said. "Seeing him walk away was hard and we would always miss him."

Despite the strain of being separated frequently, Jeremiah was moved by his father's dedication to military service and decided to also join the Army as a result.

This in turn motivated Harmony to do the same.

"With my father and brother both in the military, it inspired me to join as well," Harmony, 19, said. "My dad tried to talk me out of it."

As she came in the Army, Jeremiah was assigned to Korea before leaving for 1st ACB. He said he was surprised when he learned that Harmony would be joining him there.

"It was a pure coincidence. ... I was still in Korea when she told me she was [joining] and when she came in, this was her first unit," Jeremiah said. "I had been [there] for six months already with the Air Cav., when she got to Hood, so then we deployed together, and here we are."

"I thought it was awesome," he added. "You can't have anything better than that, really."

For Harmony, being sent to 1st ACB gave her peace of mind, allowing her the comfort of her brother's guidance.

"It was great. I was just happy to be



Pfc. Harmony Rodriguez (left), from Victoria, Texas, a cook assigned to Company E, 4th Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, smiles as her brother, Spc. Jeremiah Rodriguez, an aircraft electrician in Company B, 615th Aviation Support Battalion, 1st Air Cav. Bde., from Lubbock, Texas, pins private first class rank on her patrol cap during a promotion ceremony at 4-227th headquarters Jan. 4.

with someone I knew in the same unit, especially my brother," Harmony said.

Being deployed together gives them both the luxury of family companionship; a luxury most Soldiers don't enjoy while in combat.

"We have family that's always close by; someone you can talk to all the time that knows you well," Harmony said. "We don't talk every day, but we do as often as we can."

Jeremiah said he now knows how his father felt during his deployments.

"You get to see the other side, what's it's like from another point of view. I get to see what my dad went through when we were missing him," Jeremiah said. "I know how it is now; he didn't have a choice when he went and it's our turn now."

The deployment is proving to be a

positive one for Harmony, who was switched from her job as a cook to the 4-227th tactical operations center as part of flight operations.

"My first sergeant decided to task me out. ... I didn't like [my role at the TOC] at first, but I just went with the flow and now I like it," said Harmony. "I like the Air Cav., and if I re-enlist, I want to re-class to aircraft flight operations."

Jeremiah, however, said he fully plans to make the Army a career, hoping to emulate his father who is closing in on 20 years.

"I'm going to be a lifer ... I [want] to stay in and retire; hopefully as a sergeant major," he said. "I like my job, but my dad is a ranger, so I might have to go chase after him and see how far I go." ▲



# New Year's around USD-C



Photo by Spc. Kelly LeCompte, 30th HBCT PAO

**BAGHDAD –** With hats and noise makers, Soldiers of the 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team ring in the New Year on board a C-130 aircraft on their way to Kuwait as the first iteration of brigade Soldiers begin to return home from deployment, Dec. 31.



Photo by Sgt. Jessica Reaves, 1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

**CAMP TAJI, Iraq –** Pago Pago, American Samoa native, Spc. Shusila Savae, a supply clerk for Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, blocks for Pfc. Jessica Cisero, a Tampa, Fla., native as she races toward the end zone for a touchdown against "Sweet Guns", the female Powder Puff Team from 4th Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cav. Bde., 1st Cav. Div., New Years Day. The 1st BSTB Powder Puff Team won the game by seven points.



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Patrick Malone

**CAMP RAMADI, Iraq –** Spc. Michael Lindsay (center), a geospatial engineer with 1st Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division (Advise and Assist Brigade), stands with Maj. Daniel Benick and Master Sgt. Richard Walker, officer in charge and non-commissioned officer in charge of brigade military intelligence, after re-enlisting immediately after midnight on the morning of Jan. 1, 2010. Originally from Grand Rapids, Mich., Lindsay plans to become a warrant officer.



Photo by Sgt. Alun Thomas, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

**CAMP TAJI, Iraq –** A burn barrel provides warmth for senior non-commissioned officers of the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, following a fun run to bring in the New Year, Dec. 31. Both sergeants major and first sergeants ran together with potential first sergeants as a way to recognize future leaders.



Photo by Spc. Ruth McClary, 30th HBCT PAO, USD-C

**BAGHDAD –** Spc. Nathaneal Meade (left), of Elizabeth, Colo., and Spc. Frank Walker, of Wilmington, N.C., hang balloons in front of a dart board, Dec. 31; hoping to send one dart through all of them at midnight to pop-in the New Year. Meade came up with the idea when he found leftover balloons from a previous birthday celebration.

## VIETNAM

JAN 27

## On this day in American military history

## Ceasefire is called for Vietnam

The Vietnam conflict also known as the Second Indochina War began Sept. 26, 1959 and officially ended April 30, 1975. The conflict took place in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia and was fought between North Vietnam and South Vietnam.

The United States entered the war to prevent the takeover of South Vietnam by North Vietnam. U.S. involvement escalated in 1968 due to the situation known as the Tet Offensive.

Negotiations began in 1968 and led to the Paris Peace Accord in 1973 which was intended to establish peace by calling a temporary ceasefire and ending the U.S.'s direct involvement in the conflict.

President Richard Nixon appeared on national television and announced that the ceasefire would begin on Jan. 27, 1973.

"Throughout the years of negotiations, we have insisted on peace with honor, I set forth the goals that we considered essential for peace with honor," Nixon stated. "In the settlement that has now been agreed to, all the conditions that I laid down then have been met."

The accord stipulated that U.S. troops begin withdrawing and prisoners be exchanged. Le Duc Tho, the North Vietnamese Prime Minister and Henry Kissinger, the US Secretary of State, who were the main negotiators of the accord were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize that year. Tho refused his award stating that peace had not yet been met.

Fighting in the region continued for two years after the U.S. ended their involvement. Peace was not accomplished until April 1975.



1973