

THE RAIDER

Tribe

Special 2010 Election Edition

Vol. 1, Issue 5



"To The Objective!"

RAIDER

Command Group

4th STRYKER BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM



Dear Raider Tribe,

We would like to take this opportunity to review the last year and highlight the work we have done to help the Iraqi people, security forces, and government carry out successful elections in Iraq.

In March 2009, we received word that the Raider Brigade's deployment cycle would be accelerated by nine months.

This was necessary because Gen. Odierno and his staff believed that Iraq needed the capabilities of a Stryker brigade to facilitate the responsible withdrawal of forces and leave Iraqi Security Forces trained and capable to protect the people.

Throughout this acceleration, we knew that this deployment to Iraq would be different than our prior deployments.

We started immediately training and studying how to support the Iraqi Government, the Iraqi Security Forces and most of all the Iraqi People. The environment had changed and we could not be prisoners of our past.

In June, at the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, La., we applied a partnership model in which we integrated ourselves with Iraqi Security Forces, trained and mentored when asked, and helped unify the security forces in their operations.

We had a very successful rotation and we were able to take away many learning points that helped us apply this



Photo by Pfc. Kimberly Hackbarth, 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

successful strategy here in Iraq.

The post-June 30 Security agreement environment solidified our belief that relationships and partnerships with our Iraqi counterparts would lead to continued success in the final phases of the Iraq war.

Iraqis are truly in the lead and we have set our focus on unifying the effort of U.S. Forces, Iraqi Army, Iraqi Police and the Federal Police. We needed to show that we could support the ISF both in the outer belts and in the city.

To do this, we needed to regain limited access to the city and establish an understanding with Iraqi security leaders that we were here to offer support, and not to take the lead.

We have been able to do this and it has led to much success and opportunities creating a bond that has allowed

us to continue to advise and assist our Iraqi partners.

The incredible Soldiers of the Raider Brigade whom I am privileged to help command are partnered with the 6th and 9th Iraqi Army Divisions, the FP, and the local IP, are responsible for the security of a population roughly the size of Baltimore (2.5 million people) with 463 polling stations scattered throughout.

Our area has been called the center of gravity for Iraq since it has 18 high profile government buildings and the Abu Ghraib qada.

No single security force, facing the current threats, can secure an area with these demographics without unifying its efforts.

We helped the Iraqi Army and police establish joint operation centers that were able to coordinate respons-



es to incidents, share intelligence, and synchronize operations before and on Election Day.

This led to multiple combined and ISF unilateral operations that found and uncovered large amounts of explosives, IED making materials, and leaders of extremist groups before the election.

On Election Day, Col. Norris and our operations officer sat side by side with the 6th Div. IA counterparts monitoring the situation, receiving updates from the field and watching drone and balloon camera feeds to get situational awareness.

The other way we supported our partners was through the Exploitation Task Force. This force consists of Iraqi Army Explosive Ordnance Disposal, U.S. EOD, IA Soldiers and U.S. Police trainers who gather evidence, process bomb fragments, and conduct forensic analysis on crime scenes. This has helped the ISF in understanding the value of exploitation and analysis that supports targeting those individuals

responsible for criminal and terrorist activities.

These accomplishments were instrumental to the success of the Iraqi Elections.

We had 40 incidents reported throughout the Raider operational environment and they all occurred before 11:30 a.m. local time.

A majority of these reports were small explosives that have been dubbed “coke bottle” IEDs.

Much like a small firework, they were used to portray chaos and disrupt voter participation in the elections.

Al Qaeda in Iraq also placed bombs in four separate houses causing six civilians to be killed and four wounded.

The intent was to use these four bombs coupled with the “coke bottle” IED to create a perception that Baghdad was under siege. They failed in their attempts to deter a majority of voters.

After the morning’s events, reports of voters streaming to the polling stations were being sent up by all partners.

It is important to note that out of 463 polling stations in our area, not one was attacked or closed due to violence. Iraqi’s were able to participate in elections that will hopefully help Iraq move toward a stable and peaceful country.

The will of the people triumphed and they did in fact openly defy AQI and their cowardly attempts to derail the election process.

All credit that is due is to the ISF and Government of Iraq for providing a relatively safe and secure environment to allow democracy to take its place here in Iraq as they continue on the path as a sovereign and free nation.



Photo by Spc. Luisito Brooks, 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

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On the cover:
Photo by Pfc. Kimberly Hackbarth,
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Raider efforts pay off as Iraqis head to polls

**Story by Sgt. Bryce S. Dubee & Pfc. Kimberly Hackbarth
4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.**

BAGHDAD – Roughly half-way through their deployment, Soldiers from the 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division witnessed the fruits of their labor, as well that of those who went before them, as Iraqi citizens went to the polls to vote in their national elections Sunday.

“The election today, as demonstrated by the high voter turnout, was years in the making, and validated the time and effort invested by the U.S.,” said Col. John Norris, the brigade commander. “Today was personally rewarding, having witnessed years of growth, change,



Photo by Pfc. Kimberly Hackbarth, 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

A military policeman with 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division watches from a distance as Iraqi Security Forces provide security in Mansour, March 7 during Iraq's national elections.



Photo by Pfc. Kimberly Hackbarth, 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.
An Iraqi man shows off his ink-covered finger, symbolizing that he has cast his ballot at a Mansour polling site, March 7 during Iraq's national elections.

and progress.”

While most of the brigade's Soldiers remained either inside the wire or at prepositioned Iraqi Security Force's headquarters available to provide support if so requested by the Iraqis, some were busy escorting United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq personnel and Western media to polling sites.

“The security was tight,” said Guy DiDomenico, a U.N. field security specialist while touring a polling site in Mansour. He explained that early in the morning around 8:30 a.m. polling was slow, however more many voters had arrived between 10 a.m. and noon.

Compared to the 2009 elections, where he was also present, DiDomenico said that security has improved greatly and that the polling locations appeared much more organized, with more people working the sites.

Watching from more than 300 meters away as their ISF counterparts handled the security at polling sites; U.S. Soldiers said they were impressed by the process.

“The ISF did a good job,” said Cpl. Andrew Canvasser, a military policeman with the MP platoon, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div.

“The ISF used show of force to keep order,” he said, explaining that both Iraqi Army and Police were present at the

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1-38 IN provides defensive support for Iraqi elections

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

BAGHDAD – Before the sun rose at Victory Base Complex March 7, Soldiers from Company C, 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment found themselves poised to help Iraqi Security Forces protect voters at the national elections.

Iraqi forces had given the U.S. Soldiers, from 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, permission to set up inside the 3rd Iraqi Army Bn., 6th IA Div., post in Abu Ghraib so they could react quickly to support the ISF, if needed.

“We’re here only if the Iraqi Army calls on us,” said 1st Lt. Andy Byers, platoon leader of 4th platoon. “The only way we’re allowed to move is if it is specifically requested by ISF command.”

This approach allowed the ISF to demonstrate to insurgents the ISF doesn’t need to rely on U.S. Forces to secure the elections and show voters they could handle anything that occurred, said Byers.

“The ISF seem much more confident in working independently,” said Byers. “This elec-

tion was a perfect chance for them to prove to their people that they are a professional force, and to earn the Iraqi people’s respect.”

Soldiers said the ISF being ready to stand on its own is also a testament to the U.S. military’s success in preparing Iraq to protect itself.

“American forces have trained the ISF well,” said Sgt. Cody Jurens, a Co. C team leader. “The ISF seems ready, so when we leave, Iraq will be in capable hands.”

After multiple deployments, some 1st Bn., 38th Inf. Regt. Soldiers have noticed significant changes with Iraq’s ability to defend itself.

Sgt. Keith York, a team leader assigned to Co. C, served in Iraq 2007-08, and noticed the difference in how the ISF operated between then and now.

“Back then, there was corruption among the Iraqi Army and police, and they didn’t understand the use of chain of command,” York explained. “Over the last three years, it’s been great to see how much better it has become.”

Jurens also has had prior experience in Iraq.

“In my two deployments to Iraq, I can definitely tell we’ve made a dif-

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

Pfc. Shane Packard, an infantryman assigned to Company C, 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, watches the horizon for possible attacks March 7 as the Abu Ghraib populace votes.



polling sites “[They] did a good job minimizing [the] threat as much as they could.”

Meanwhile back on Forward Operation Base Constitution, the location of the 6th Iraqi Army Division’s Joint Operations Center (JOC), 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team Soldiers and leaders were carefully monitoring the security situation alongside their Iraqi partners.



Photo by Pfc. Kimberly Hackbarth, 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

An Iraqi Army Soldier searches a civilian for explosives, weapons or other dangers before allowing him to pass through a checkpoint to the voting site in Mansour, March 7 during Iraq’s national elections.

Together the two military partners shared intelligence about the situation on the ground, coordinated the use of U.S. intelligence, reconnaissance and surveillance equipment and received updates from the field.

“The JOC was instrumental in ensuring that Iraqi and U.S. forces were synchronized, updated on each others’ activities and allowed us to quickly and effectively maneuver ISR assets at the request of our partners,” said Norris. “The JOC has proven to be a valuable tool and an asset that will continue to be used by our ISF partners long after we have gone.”

Even though the threat of violence against voters by insurgents was high and throughout the morning the sound of explosions could be heard in the distance, ISF were committed to providing a safe and secure environment for voters.

“As anticipated, AQI attempted to disrupt the elections, but the determination of the Iraqi people and the ISF has prevailed and Iraq is moving forward,” said Norris.

DiDomenico agreed.

“I give a lot of credit to the Iraqi people for going out and voting even though there’s real danger out there,” he said. “It’s sight to see people voting.”



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

Pfc. Jacob Woods, an infantryman assigned to Company C, 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, and a watches the rooftops from his guard post in Abu Ghraib during the March 7 elections.

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populace has mentioned they’re happy that we’re around.”

York also noticed a big change in the mindset of voters, particularly in Abu Ghraib.

“Last election, hardly anyone in Abu Ghraib voted,” he said, “but [in] this election, there has been a great deal of anticipation leading up to the election among the people of Abu Ghraib, with many of them expecting to cast their votes.”

Leaders from Iraq and around the world have applauded Iraqis for taking a big step toward becoming a free, peaceful nation. That step holds a special meaning for York.

“It is great to see them taking the next step,” he said. “It means that when me and my guys go home, we have helped this nation on its way to its potential. I am honored to have been a part of this.”



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

Soldiers with 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, watch the area with Iraqi Army soldiers from the rooftop of a 3rd Iraqi Army Bn., 6th IA Div., post March 7 while Abu Ghraib residents cast their votes in nearby polling sites.



Manchus, MiTT teach ISF search skills for elections

Photo by Spc. Luisito Brooks, 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

Muhammad Siad, an Iraqi Policeman, leaves no stone, or hat for that matter, unturned as he searches Spc. Anthony Pariseau, an infantryman with Company B, 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment for hidden weapons during polling station security training in Nasir Wa Salam, Jan. 28.

Story by Spc. Luisito Brooks
4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

NASIR WA SALAM, Iraq – The future of Iraq will be decided when Iraqi voters head to the polls March 7; and the Iraqi Security Forces are training to ensure those polling stations are safe.

The 24th Brigade, 6th Division Military Transition Team, along with Soldiers from Company B, 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, conducted polling center security training here for members of the Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police, Jan. 28.

“This training is important because the safety of the voters and the voting centers is our number one priority,” said Sgt. 1st Class Aaron Matherly and the 24th Bde, 6th Div MiTT noncommissioned officer in charge of training.

The three-day training brought together the IA and the IP and instructed

them on ethics while working the polling site, searching vehicles and people.

“First, the ethics portion of the training addressed situations that we hope never occurs at the voting sites, but we still had to discuss them,” said Matherly. “We talked (about) how not to bribe the voters, accept bribes, and the consequences of those actions.”

Many of the soldiers and police officers gained a better comprehension of the moral obligations they have to the Iraqi citizens.

“The ethics training was very important for our people,” said Sgt. Hider, an IA soldier. “I learned a lot, and it was just as important as searching people and vehicles.”

At some polling sites, roads that lead to voting centers may be closed to add an extra level of security during voting, but the training still covered the proper procedures on searching a vehicle.

“I knew how to search vehicles before this, so this was a refresher for me,” said Muhammad Siad, an Iraqi policeman.

To simulate how voters will be searched, a mock voting center was built, with Soldiers playing the role of voters.

“Before the ‘voters’ could go inside the area to vote, the Iraqi soldiers and police officers searched them for possible hidden weapons,” said Matherly. “Most of the voters that went through the checkpoint were clean, but we planted a weapon on one voter to see if they would find it, and they did.”

The U.S. Soldiers said they were confident in their Iraqi partners abilities to protect voters on Election Day.

“The Iraqi Army and the Iraqi Police came together, took this training,” said Matherly, “and ran with it.”





MANCHU 5

Maj. Anthony E. New

4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment Executive Officer



To the Families, Friends, and Soldiers of the Manchu Battalion

As we approach the mid-way point in our deployment, one thought that comes to my mind is “transitions” - each with their own associated anxiety, uncertainty, and unique challenges.

The transition from winter to spring may be the most visible deployment milestone for those of you back home in the good ol’ U.S. of A.

For us out here in Western Baghdad, it will take on less familiar tones. In March, the country of Iraq will hold its National Elections and subsequently go through a historic transition from one leadership of government to another.

In the midst of this historic event, the Manchu Battalion has and will continue to go through leadership and personnel transitions.

Headquarters and Headquarters Company recently transition from one company commander to another.

The Manchus welcomed our new HHC commander, Capt. Derek J. Oberg, to the battalion and have the utmost confidence that he will take the unit to new heights.

As a Soldier in HHC, I’d like to wish our out-going commander, Capt. James “Bud” Corbin and his wonderful family (Chassie, Sydney, and Amelia) best of luck in their future endeavors. But

more importantly, thank each of them for their leadership, tireless dedication to the Soldiers and families of HHC, and for their service to this battalion for over six years. You will be sorely missed, but your legacy is reflected in each HHC Soldier. I, for one, am proud to have been one of your Soldiers.

In March, the battalion will bid farewell to two other company commanders and outstanding leaders, Capt. Andy Lembke of Co. C and Capt. Keith Roberts of Co. A. Andy, Keith, Nancy, Evan, Megan and Jacob will all be sorely missed.

Upon completion of these company changes of command and after the seating of the new Iraqi Government, the battalion will transition its primary

“Our Soldiers are focused, have the strength and discipline to persevere through any challenge.”

*-Maj. Anthony E. New
executive officer*

focus from partnering with our Iraqi Security Forces to supporting the commander in chief’s intent for a responsible drawdown of forces in Iraq.



These transitions will come with their own associated anxiety, uncertainty, and unique challenges. None of these can be overcome without focus, perseverance and leadership. Our Soldiers are focused, have the strength and discipline to persevere through any challenge, and are led by an assemblage of the finest leaders imaginable.

Families and friends of the Manchu Battalion, we cannot thank you enough for nor can we begin to imagine all that you do for us. Because of you, our Soldiers, and our leaders, we will overcome any challenge that the transitions ahead present. Because of you, we will succeed. Thank you!

**Manchu 5
“Keep Up the Fire.”**

Cav Soldiers patrol on Election Eve

**Story by Spc. Luisito Brooks
4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.**

TARMIYAH, Iraq - The first step on the road to democracy is providing security to those who wish to travel its long and sometimes dusty path.

On the eve of the Iraqi elections, 1st Lt. Travis Boltz, the platoon leader of 2nd Platoon, C Troop, 2nd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, and his Soldiers patrolled streets and areas commonly used to set improvised explosive devices.

"We are out here to prevent insurgents from placing IEDs," said Boltz, a Tulerosa, N.M. native. "This election will play a major role in the future of this country and we must do the best we can in order to keep the area safe."

On the patrol, Soldiers were looking for potential threats or just anything out of the ordinary that could affect the voters travelling to the polling stations.

"An IED can be disguised as anything, so it can be a soda bottle, tin can, dead animal or trash," said Sgt. Gregory Goodfield, a cavalry scout with C Trp., 2nd Sqdn., 1st Cav. Reg., 4th SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div. "We have to be on our game when we're on patrol so we can spot things that can be used to hide bombs."

The patrol took Soldiers through dense vegetation, muddy farms and unpaved streets that voters will be using the next day.

Boltz said he spoke with a local who explained it is getting harder for insurgents to operate because they are getting caught and that is very discouraging to other insurgents.

Another local in the area was excited about the opportunity to vote and happily shared his excitement with the U.S. Soldiers.

"We were patrolling through this one farm when the owner came outside and shook my hand with a smile on his face and thanked us for what we we're doing," said Boltz. "He said that he is going to vote because he wants to see his country prosper."

For the elections, the main focus of

the Iraqi Security Forces will be on providing the security at the voting sites.

"In order for them to focus on their task, we must fill in the gaps, so when we are out on patrol, we stay out longer and cover down for the ISF," said Boltz. "We have patrolled this area many times in an attempt to stay on top of insurgent activity."

During the heightened threat level prior to the election period, the Soldiers had remained busy, but are encouraged by the vision of a better Iraq.

"I know anything can happen, but all the guys are hoping for a smooth election," said Goodfield, a Hemet, Calif. native. "If and when things go well, the sooner we can get back to our families."



Photo by Spc. Luisito Brooks, 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.
The platoon leader of 2nd Platoon, C Troop, 2nd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, 1st Lt. Travis Boltz, met with a local farmer during a patrol in Tarmiyah, March 6.

Increased citizen support, trust leads to discovery of bomb-making factory

*Story by Pfc. Kimberly Hackbarth
4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.*

BAGHDAD – The voice of one trusting local citizen helped keep the streets safer in southern Ghazaliya when he notified 4th Battalion, 22nd Iraqi Army Brigade, 6th IA Division, of a possible improvised explosive device factory.

“Whether it’s big information or small information, [it’s] all important information,” said IA Lt. Col. Abdullah, the 4th Bn., commander. “Whatever we find, no matter how small it is, we found it because of our efforts, because of our sources, and because of the information that we get.”

The information regarding the IED factory turned out big, resulting in the seizure of a quarter kilogram of ammonium nitrate, 43 battery connectors and condensers, one cell phone and other supplies used to create magnetically-attached IEDs, commonly used to in assassinations.

This, along with other recent tips provided by local citizens, continues to demonstrate that many Iraqis are no longer afraid to come forward and help, said Abdullah.

“Day by day, the trust of the civilians is getting stronger,” he said.

The partnership developed between the IA and the local civilians has become a key topic of discussion during council meetings attended by 4th Bn. and local shaykhs.

At the meetings, Abdullah updates council leaders on what improvements have been made by his battalion.

Bolstering the community’s confidence in the battalion has led to increased participation from the local populace, greatly appreciated by the battalion, said U.S. Army offi-



Photo by Pfc. Kimberly Hackbarth, 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

Using a laser pointer during a meeting at 4th Battalion, 22nd Iraqi Army Brigade, 6th IA Division headquarters in Ghazaliya, Feb. 4, the battalion commander, Iraqi Army Lt. Col. Abdullah, explains to Capt. Vic Morris, commander, Company F, 52nd Infantry Regiment, where a magnetically-attached improvised explosive device factory was found after receiving a tip from a local citizen.

cials.

In response to the successful Feb. 4 discovery, Soldiers from Company F, 52nd Infantry Regiment, the Iraqi battalion’s U.S. partners, visited the battalion headquarters in Ghazaliya to congratulate them.

“The fact that they were able to seize these MA-IEDs degrades the enemy’s ability to conduct attacks against them,” said Capt. Vic Morris, the commander.

The company is attached to 2nd Battalion, 12th Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division.

Morris and Abdullah said they plan to continue to work together in the future, using assets such as military working dogs and metal detectors to improve security for the local populace.

Abdullah summed up contributions of the citizens who helped find the bomb-making factory with a quote from the Quran: “When you protect someone from being killed, you’re saving everybody’s life.”

Raider Soldiers!

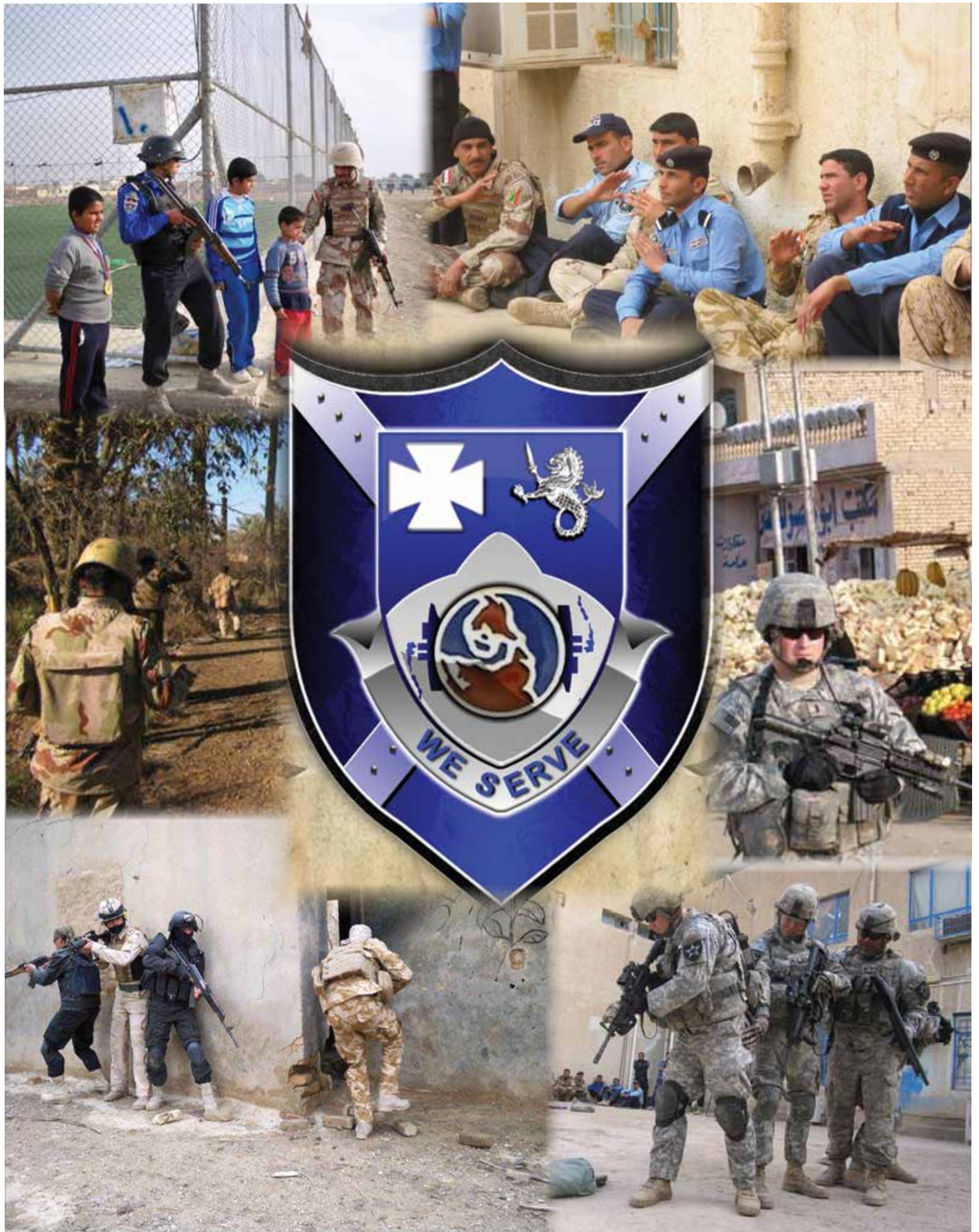
Think you can write? Want to get published in an issue of the Raider Tribe?

All 4-2 Soldiers are invited to submit a 300-500 word essay on the following topic:

Looking back 20 years from now, what will you remember most from this deployment?

Send your entry to Sgt. Dubee at bryce.dubee@4bct2id.army.mil no later than April 23, 2010.





TOMAHAWKS

Capt. Val Moro

HHC, 2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment Commander



Tomahawk Soldiers, families, and friends,

The Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, "Tomahawks" are currently operating out of Camp Taji, Iraq, securing the land north of Baghdad for the upcoming elections.

With a large area to secure, the Tomahawks are running on all cylinders to complete the mission, become bigger, faster and stronger, and remain poised for any mission or situation that comes their way.

The Mobile Tiger Team is a small unit headed by the HHC company commander, Capt. Val Moro and 1st Sgt. Todd Nibarger. Their mission is to improve the Iraqi Security Forces through joint training at Iraqi Army check points with ISF. This mission is a tremendous contributor to the successful transition of U.S. Forces to ISF securing Iraq.

Lead by Staff Sgt. Eric Shuty, the Personal Security Detachment escorts the battalion commander to key leader engagements with shaykhs, military figures and government officials.

Along with battlefield circulations

and project evaluations, the Personal Security Detachment is a quick response force that can reach any part of the battle space for significant events that require the battalion command group's "boots on the ground" presence.

Recently reconstituted, the Tomahawk Battalion scouts are the most versatile and highest trained element in the battalion, ready for any mission that comes their way. They are ready to conduct traditional reconnaissance missions throughout the battle space, as well as respond to immediate threat targets.

The Tomahawk Battalion Mortar Platoon has developed into the main effort for the battalion in becoming the escort element for the U.S. State Department's Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team-North. The ePRT-N is charged with primarily guiding Iraq into building a better future in their provinces for their citizens.

First Lt. John Yanikov and Sgt. 1st Class John Jackson have begun to run "split-sections" in order to accommo-



date the demands of circulating the ePRT-N over a large area beyond the Tomahawk operational environment, fulfilling their critical mission.

Tomahawk medics are prepping to conduct our first emergency medical technician class in order to increase the ability of Soldiers to care for their fellow Warriors on the battlefield.

Sgt. 1st Class Gregory Stephens and Capt. Scott Fisher, a physician's assistant, will be the primary instructors of the class.

Capt. Chester Olson, the Tomahawk chaplain, continues to conduct "The 5 Love Languages" classes for the Tomahawk Soldiers in order to improve their current and developing relationships back home with wives, fiancées, or significant others. The goal is to have Soldiers return home to strong relationships.

"...the Tomahawks are running on all cylinders to complete the mission..."

**-Capt. Val Moro
HHC commander**

Capt. Moro

Mobile Tiger Team training brings IA, IP together

**Story by Pfc. Kimberly Hackbarth
4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.**

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Rain moistened the dirt under the combat boots of Iraqi Army Soldiers, Iraqi policemen and U.S. Soldiers as they patrolled down a street in Taji, Feb. 26.

The patrol, part of a three-day training course taught by the Mobile Tiger Team from 2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, transformed the working relationship between IA and IP into a partnership that was uncommon in the Iraqi Security Forces' past.

"The big change is that they were willing to work together period," said Staff Sgt. Eric Lockhart, a platoon sergeant with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Bn., 23rd Inf. Regt. who, on his previous deployments to Iraq, never saw ISF work so close together.

The collaboration between the IA and IPs is exactly what the battalion leadership is looking for to ensure the safety of Iraq.

"First and foremost, our mission is to synchronize the security environment between the various ISF elements... and close any security gaps," said Capt. Val Moro, commander, HHC, 2nd Bn., 23rd Inf. Regt.

Rain or shine, the group bonded by learning basic Soldier skills including searching vehicles and personnel, clearing buildings and conducting field sanitation.

Every group who came through training, however, didn't immediately work as a unit. There was a pattern in the interaction between IA and IP.



Photo by Pfc. Kimberly Hackbarth, 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

An Iraqi Army Soldier kicks in the door to a building on an IA compound near the Taji Bridge, Feb. 26 during a culmination search and patrol exercise taught by Soldiers from the Mobile Tiger Team with 2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division.



Photo by Pfc. Kimberly Hackbarth, 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

An Iraqi policeman searches Iraqi civilians as his Iraqi Army counterpart provides security and other IA and IPs search a vehicle near the Taji Bridge, Feb. 26 during a culmination search and patrol exercise. Soldiers from the Mobile Tiger Team with 2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division taught IA and IP how to search personnel, vehicles at a three-day training class.

On the first day, IA and IP day showed up and were cordial to each other, but they sat in segregated groups. It wasn't until the patrol tactics taught on the second day that the two forces began to forget what uniforms they were in and just participate.

ISF learned to communicate using hand and arm signals in a formation regardless of whether it was to a fellow

er," said Mora.

On the third day, ISF showed up and automatically sat down next to each other, joking and conversing and not distinguishing who belonged to what organization.

"Once they start doing the patrol, the classes are IA or IP led and they actually run the patrol, so they really figured it out on their own," said

"What we see now is not us forming that partnership with the ISF, it's the ISF elements forming that partnership with each other."

*-Capt. Val Moro
commander*

HHC, 2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment

IA or IP in order to move as one unit.

"We've noticed by end of the second day (the IA and IPs) sit down and they're not sitting in their groups anymore; they're sitting among each other," said Mora.

"At the end of third day, you couldn't even tell they were part of a different unit."

By watching the strengthening bond between their ISF counterparts

and experiencing the bond themselves, the MTT Soldiers learned that there's more to a deployment than combat operations.

"Our biggest lesson is realizing that it's not always about coming into an area and immediately conducting operations and going after the bad guys," said Mora. "That stuff's important if it needs to be done, but it's just as important to go in and form that relationship with your ISF partner."

MTT Soldiers now look forward to an Iraq with U.S. forces no longer in the picture.

"What we see now is not us forming that partnership with the ISF, it's the ISF elements forming that partnership with each other," said Mora; "That's the next step."



Photo by Pfc. Kimberly Hackbarth, 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div. Staff Sgt. Faaoga Ena, center, the Headquarters and Headquarters Company commander's gunner with 2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment teaches an Iraqi policeman how to search personnel using an Iraqi Army Soldier near the Taji Bridge, Feb. 26 during combined training for IA and IPs.



ROCK 6

Lt. Col. John Leffers

1st Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment Commander



Rock Soldiers, families, and friends,

Greeting Raiders and Rock Warriors!

The month of January started the year strong as the Warriors in the Rock Battalion continue to make a difference with the Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police forces based on the strong partnership we built over the last several months.

The majority of the Battalion's focus has been on the upcoming Iraqi Elections scheduled to take place in early March.

There have been multiple civil projects developing in the Rock operating environment, as well as, continued joint patrols with our Iraqi partners.

We continue to diligently and tirelessly assist the Government of Iraq and its Security Forces make Iraq a safe and secure country as the citizens of Iraq prepare for the upcoming National Elections.

Attack Company continues to remain vigilant throughout their operating environment. Their focus this past month has been working with their Iraqi Army and Police partners to continue to clean up the area of known threats. In conjunction with local sheiks and tribal leaders, they have conducted several joint missions with favorable results. Attack Company has also been working meticulously to install solar powered water filters for the local populace.

Bayonet Company has not only conducted numerous daily joint patrols

with the Iraqi Army, but also has concentrated their efforts toward multiple humanitarian aid events. They currently have three HA events planned throughout their operating environment to continue to increase a long term relationship with the local populace between the Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police. The aid supplied is targeted for schools in order to increase future learning opportunities for children.

Chaos Company remains busy conducting joint missions with their Iraqi Army and Police partners within Abu Ghraib to locate and arrest violent extremists to promote rule of law. The recent opening of the Abu Ghraib courthouse is a further indication of the Iraqi government promoting legitimacy.

Hunter Company continues to supply endless support to the Soldiers and companies in the Rock Battalion.

As the election period draws closer, staff elements continue to refine the plan for a successful voting day.

They recently sponsored the battalion's 138th Day, marking the 38th Regiment's 138 days in combat.

The day was filled with numerous sporting events, reminders of our regimental history, food, and a combat patch and awards ceremony.

Before the day started we had the privilege to promote Staff Sgt. Wall and Staff Sgt. Mercer to sergeants first



class. Both of these noncommissioned officers are the epitome of true leaders who represent the future of our Army.

In closing, I would like to wish everyone a Happy Valentine's Day! Thank you for your continued support of all the Rock Soldiers and their families. Your selfless service and countless sacrifices for this battalion and great nation of ours do not go unnoticed.

The enduring support of our families allows our Soldiers to continue to focus on accomplishing our mission and returning home safely.

Rock 6
"Rock of the Marne!"

Soldiers gain closure through Operation Proper Exit



Photo by Sgt. Bryce S. Dubee, 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

Sgt. Omar Avila (left) tells the story at Warrior Chapel, Feb. 1., of how he and Sgt. Jay Fain (center) made the decision to participate in Operation Proper Exit and the reactions of their families when they told them they would be returning to Iraq. Both men were wounded in separate attacks in 2007 while serving with 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division.

Wounded Warriors return to Iraq for first time since being injured

Story by Sgt. Bryce S. Dubee
4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

BAGHDAD – The last time they were here, they lost a piece of themselves. Years, and numerous surgeries later, they’ve returned to get a small piece back.

Six Soldiers, each severely wounded during combat operations in Iraq, returned to the battlefields where they were injured to gain a sense of closure as part of the Army’s Operation Proper Exit.

Arriving in Baghdad on Sunday, the six men, all retired from the Army,

visited and shared their stories with Soldiers from the 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division at the Warrior Chapel here Monday.

A hush fell over the crowd as the six Soldiers, many with noticeable limps from their prosthetic limbs, and two military mentors, also wounded in Iraq, entered the chapel.

The uncomfortable silence hung in the air, but only for a few seconds, as the crowd quickly realized that the men seated in front of them were their brothers in arms.

“This is all about bringing them back

to the team,” explained Command Sgt. Maj. Jeffrey Huggins, the 4th SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div., command sergeant major, to brigade Soldiers before the event. “We’re helping them to get some closure.”

The afternoon began with heartfelt discussion, the wounded warriors sharing their stories of getting injured and their time spent in recovery.

“That was the most frustrating part was not being in the fight, not knowing where my guys were,” said Sgt. Omar Avila, who, while serving with 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry

Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division was struck by a 200-pound improvised explosive device on May 14, 2007, suffering burns over 75 percent of his body and had part of his foot amputated.

Sgt. 1st Class Joshua Olson, an active duty military mentor for the six Soldiers and making his third return trip to Iraq since being wounded, echoed Avila's sentiment.

"I was with my boys for nine straight months, 24-7, and then I woke up in a hospital and they weren't there," he said. "That was the most frustrating part of the transition for me."

Letters from their buddies back on the line, even just simple email updates were helpful in keeping them informed and keeping their spirits up while they healed, they said.

"We didn't come back to flags waving – we didn't have any real reintegration period," said Sgt. Jay Fain. "We still felt like we were in the fight."

They also stressed to the Soldiers

in the audience, most of whom were infantrymen, the importance of seeking out help in dealing with combat stress.

"It does not hurt to get help," said Fain, who, also while serving with 1st Bat. 26th Inf. Reg., was struck by a roadside bomb roughly a month after Avila, resulting in the loss of his right leg. "Don't let that pride swallow you."

However, it wasn't long before inhibitions broke down and the serious and somber tone of the conversation transformed into one more commonly heard around infantrymen.

"The best part about being injured is you can really mess with people," laughed Sgt. 1st Class Michael Schlitz, the other military mentor travelling with the group, who suffered burns on 85 percent of his body and lost both hands after being hit by an IED in 2007.

The wounded Soldiers teased one another about their injuries, the burn victims saying the amputees only had "paper cuts" while one Soldier who had his leg amputated joked that he now dresses as a pirate with a peg leg every Halloween.

This levity had a huge impact on many of the Soldiers in the audience, showing them that life goes on after being wounded.

"It was very inspirational," said Spc. Carlos Perez, a Stryker gunner



Photo by Sgt. Bryce S. Dubee, 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div. Col. John Norris, commander, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, places a coin in the pocket of Sgt. 1st Class Michael Schlitz, a military mentor with Operation Proper Exit.

assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div., who said that he was a little nervous about the experience at first, not knowing the extent of the Soldiers' injuries.

"They were very outgoing, and handling their situation really well," he said.

Pfc. Adam McHenry, also with HHC, 4th SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div., agreed.

"It's reassuring knowing that if you do get injured you will be taken care of," he said.

Schlitz, who is on his second visit to Iraq in nearly a month, said that for him, meeting with the Soldiers currently serving in Iraq is the most important part of the Operation Proper Exit mission.

"We get to support you guys," he said. "You guys are the ones bringing the fight to a close."



Photo by Sgt. Bryce S. Dubee, 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div. Command Sgt. Maj. Jeffrey Huggins (right), command sergeant major of the 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, talks with Master Sgt. Tom Carpenter about the capabilities of a Stryker.



BLACKHAWK 6

Lt. Col. Richard Heyward

2nd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment Commander



Troopers, families, and friends of the Blackhawks,

On Jan. 16, the Blackhawks transitioned with 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment and operations in Tarmiyah began in earnest.

C Troop had the distinction of executing the Squadron's first operation. During Blackhawk Guard, C Trp. vigilantly protected the safe passage of aircrafts carrying 1st Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division Soldiers as they re-deployed home.

We work closely with new partners; both Iraqi and American, whose skills compliment our own. The Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team provides critical expertise on infrastructure, economic development, and governance. We have already worked together on many occasions to include participation in a weekly spot on a Tarmiyah radio station that includes local Iraqi leaders, Iraqi Security Forces and call-in questions from residents of several surrounding provinces. Supporting the ePRT will be a key component to our mission as they become the lead U.S. agency in Iraq later this year.

The 36th Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division is well trained, well equipped, and very willing to work with us. This is due in large part to the support provided by the 36 Bde., 9th IA Military Transition Team. They are facilitating development of our counterparts with "train the trainer" programs that are

positioning Iraqi noncommissioned officers to run their own training and provide mentorship to the brigade staff.

The Iraqi Police continue as a critical partner in need of our focused attention and our police advisor, Mr. Strickland, is lending his depth of experience to our partnership and training program.

Our new division commander, Maj. Gen. Terry Wolff, and deputy, Brig. Gen. Mangum from United States Division-Center received briefs from our staff and commanders. Lt. Gen. Charles Jacoby received a command brief and took the time to visit Joint Security Station Tarmiyah to recognize some of our finest Troopers.

With their Iraqi counterparts, A and B Trps. successfully thwarted a number of attempts to destabilize the security situation in the area. C Trp., with the Chemical, Biological, Radioactive and Nuclear Platoon, work diligently to protect the area around Taji base and secure convoys supplying A and B Trps. at their JSSs.

By now, many families might know the unit sustained its first combat wounded. Since the moment of contact the entire squadron expended every effort to get our men to medical care and locate those enemies responsible. No unit wants to go through such ordeals, but I am grateful for the courage and professionalism of each Blackhawk involved. From the medic, himself wounded, who rendered immediate first aid, to the tactical operations center that coolly coordinated to get assets through difficult weather to our Sol-



diers; our equipment, our training, and our disciplined teamwork paid off. We wish our men a safe and speedy recovery.

The Raider Brigade's expansion north of Baghdad and Tarmiyah signals the beginning of the drawdown of combat brigades in Iraq. We are now in preparation for the next major milestone, the National Elections in March. Alongside our Iraqi counterparts, we will help the population and government continue their security gains and momentum toward a future that is fully in Iraqi hands. The professionalism and service of the Blackhawks are impressive as we move toward this decisive moment in Iraq's history. Challenges remain, but our men continue to serve with honor and distinction.

Blackhawk 6
"Out Front, Blackhawks!"

Manchus mentor IA medics

**Story by Spc. Luisito Brooks
4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.**

NASIR WA SALAM, Iraq – The clock is crucial when treating serious injuries.

Knowing this, the 24th Brigade, 6th Division Iraqi Army conducted a mass casualty evacuation training exercise with assistance from 24th Bde., 6th Div. Military Transition Team and 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, Jan. 29.

“This training will only use Iraqi Army assets,” said Sgt. 1st Class Juan Olivarrez, the 24th Bde., medical noncommissioned officer-in-charge from Brownsville, Texas. “It will show what needs improvement with current casualty evacuation system, and then we can address them.”

Before the actual training could begin, some of the Iraqi Soldiers encountered a real world situation that underscored the importance of the exercise.

“One of the battalions was missing a medic because he was out on a mission,” said Lt. Ali, the 24th Bde., surgeon. “Another Soldier was called to step in and cover his duties.”

An alarm sounded at the start of the exercise, signaling that a simulated mortar had just

hit. Each battalion had to quickly evaluate and treat the injured, evacuating those who needed additional care. U.S. medics expressed satisfaction with response times.

“They worked fast with the initial

treatment,” said Sgt. James Grady, a combat medic with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th Bn., 9th Inf., 4th SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div. “Onsite treatment is most important when it comes to saving the lives of seriously injured because of blood loss.”

The route to the aid station was designed to assist each battalion in quickly transporting the injured to the aid station with less chance of causing traffic jams or accidents.

Upon arrival at the aid station, the brigade surgeon quickly examined the injured.

“My guys did well getting the injured to the aid station, so all of the injured were saved,” said Ali, acknowledging that because it was an exercise, not everything was 100-percent realistic. “One of the injuries was a head injury, and for this exercise we [simulated] that he was airlifted to the local hospital.”

After the training was complete, the U.S. and Iraqi leaders sat down, drank some chai tea and discussed their performances.

“This training is something that all Iraqi Soldiers should know,” said Ali. “The Americans won’t be here forever, and this is something that we need to work on for our Soldiers.”



Photo by Spc. Luisito Brooks, 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

Soldiers from Company A, 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division took the opportunity to share with their Iraqi Army partners a few tips, along with the new golf clubs that were sent to them from the Fort Lewis, Wash. area on Jan. 9, here.

“Onsite treatment is most important when it comes to saving the lives of seriously injured because of blood loss.”

**-Sgt. James Grady
combat medic
4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment**

US-Iraq leaders join together to provide water

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

JOINT SECURITY STATION NASIR WA SALAM, Iraq – Civil affairs Soldiers and leaders from 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, joined with the Iraqi Ministry of Water, Feb. 28 to celebrate the opening of a refurbished water filtration plant near the village of Aqur Quf.

The Soldiers, from Company B, 422nd Civil Affairs Battalion, and 4th Bn., 9th Infantry Regiment, assisted the Iraqi officials in the project at their request in order to provide clean drinking water to the Iraqis in the area.

The plant is one of three such plants expected to open in different regions in the coming months, said 1st Lt. James Hester, a civil affairs team leader and project manager assigned to Co. B, 422nd CA Bn.

“This is the main water treatment plant of the area, and [it] now can con-

nect more areas through water piping from this facility,” said Hester. “The Iraqis did a tremendous amount of work on this project. We’ve had weekly meetings with the Ministry of Water, the plant manager and contractors to make sure things progressed properly.”

The new plant will deliver fresh water to the people living in the Jeb Dafar and Zaidon regions as well as people in the surrounding area. The plant can be renovated further to serve even more people as the need arises, said Hester.

Begun in the summer of 2009, the project has taken a long time to reach fruition, said Hester, requiring the efforts of all of them working side-by-side to complete.

The civil affairs team received some help along the way from 4th Bn., 9th Inf. Regt., known as the “Manchu” battalion.

“The Manchus provided us with a platoon dedicated solely to helping us

whenever we needed it,” said Hester, “which provided us the opportunity to operate independently and check on progress frequently to keep things moving smoothly.”

Iraqi Security Forces have hailed the project as one of many opportunities to prove their dedication to the local people, said Lt. Col. Mark Bieger, battalion commander for 4th Bn., 9th Inf. Regt.

“We’ve been making an effort to step back and let the Iraqi leadership present humanitarian aid and projects like this one to the people of Iraq,” Bieger said. “We want to generate a positive perception among the local populations that the ISF are here to support and protect them.”

The water plant will be paramount in providing the areas around Aqur Quf, which are predominately made up of farming communities, with reliable water to support their crops, said Bieger.

Despite the project taking 18 months to complete, ISF and U.S. Forces have managed to keep the area secure the entire time. According to Bieger, the ISF has stepped up its role in supporting security for projects such as this one to encourage future projects that provide basic necessities.

“This ribbon-cutting ceremony was clearly an Iraqi celebration of Iraq’s dedication and ability to support themselves,” said Bieger.

Soldiers in attendance understood the significance of their efforts.

“We’re trying to help the Iraqi people so that when we leave, they’ll have clean drinking water,” said Spc. Jared Bower, assigned to Co. B, 4th Bn., 9th Inf. Regt. “I’m very proud of what we’re doing out here; we’re participating in a piece of history.”



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

Local shaykhs, U.S. Soldiers, and Iraqi security forces tour a newly refurbished water filtration plant in the Zaidon area of Iraq, Feb. 28. The plant now has the capacity to serve an additional 4,000 to 5,000 people with clean, reliable drinking water due to the joint efforts of Iraqi and U.S. forces.



VIKINGS

Battery C, 2nd Battalion, 12th Field Artillery Regiment



Viking Soldiers, families, and friends,

This month has been especially busy and rewarding for Chief Battery, 2nd Battalion, 12th Field Artillery Regiment Soldiers here in Iraq. Our Soldiers have played key roles alongside our Iraqi Army partners.

We helped the IA to provide the people of Iraq safety and security. Chief Soldiers did a week long joint mission with our Viking brothers from Bravo Battery, 2nd Bn., 12th FAR in order to help improve security.

The mission included mounted and dismounted patrols across the Viking area of operation ensuring that major roads were clear of improvised explosive devices and explosively formed penetrators. Overall the week was a great success.

Btry. C has accomplished a lot and performed a variety of mission sets this month.

One of these included conducting an administrative move from Joint Security Station Justice to Camp Liberty, which brought the battery together for the first time since Kuwait.

Another mission set was performing mounted and dismounted patrols on main supply routes and alternate supply routes and executing clearing operations on indirect fire points of origin. We also performed IA key leader engagements and even worked with military working dog and Backscatter vans at traffic control points in order to

help the IA perform their duties better.

During the first week of January, Btry. C had the mission to support the rest of the battalion's operations which included tasks such as escorting civil affairs Soldiers to help give out supplies to Iraqi citizens and their children.

We also escorted resupply convoys going to various bases throughout the Viking operating area and were always ready to respond to any unit in need of assistance.

Soldiers also conducted joint search operations at traffic control points around the area of operations alongside our Iraqi partners of the 54th Brigade, 6th IA Division.

More than 1,000 vehicles were scanned and searched in the first day alone by U.S. and Iraqi Soldiers working together.

The month was made more interesting when Capt. Raphael went on R&R, leaving the battery to be led by the executive officer and the first sergeant. Lastly, Sgt. 1st Class Coleman took over the Company Intelligence Support Team (C.O.I.S.T) while Staff Sgt. Blakey took over as platoon sergeant for 2nd platoon, Btry. C. The battery as a whole has definitely been tested to see how operationally flexible we can be.

With hard work of course comes recognition.



This past week, we saw the timely promotion of two of our Soldiers, Spc. Piña and PV2 Lames. Both deserved their promotion for their hard work, dedication to the mission, loyalty to their fellow Soldiers, and their willingness to go above and beyond what is required.

This month has been very challenging, but thanks to our supply team we got a huge morale booster when sports equipment and assorted board games arrived to be used during free time.

It has definitely been a busy month for Btry. C, 2nd Bn., 12th FAR Soldiers and all our Raider brothers across the brigade, but as always Btry. C has continued to set the example.

“Chiefs lead the way!”



FIERCE 6

Capt. Vic Morris

Company F, 52nd Infantry Regiment Commander



Viking Soldiers, families, and friends,

Company F, 52nd Infantry Regiment, attached to 2nd Battalion, 12th Field Artillery Regiment on May 1, 2009, is currently facilitating the security operations of both the 54th and 22nd Iraqi Army Brigades in the Amanat. TM Fierce is dedicated to the support of the 6th IA Division, through United States Forces enablers and "Lightning Response" to their battalion level operations.

The 54-man Stryker anti-tank Company is comprised of infantrymen who also have a specific skill set involving anti-tank vehicles and weapons systems. We are currently utilizing the Anti-Tank Guided Missile Stryker variant for increased optical capabilities and over watch, during counter-explosively formed penetrator patrols along the Viking operational environment main supply routes.

We were initially excited to become part of Task Force Viking, because many of us knew the outstanding work they did in Diyala during the 2007 Surge. We also knew how capable the battalion was during the recent preparation for deployment.

Recently, the company received additional support and combat power through Company C, 2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment's Rifle Platoon. This platoon augmented the existing two platoons and provided additional flexibility and maneuverability to the fight.

Since Oct. 12, 2009, Co. F has conducted 13 combined operations with two battalions from both the 54th and 22nd IA Bdes. in Baghdad.

These missions have ranged from muhalla clearances, to elementary school assessments and humanitarian assistance distribution.

Partnered with the 3rd Battalion, 54th Bde. and 4th Battalion, 22nd Bde., 6th IA Div., TM Fierce recently executed three combined company operations during the first and second weeks of February.

These decisive operations included the help of military working dogs, Back Scatter vans and USF intelligence, security and reconnaissance, and sand EOD. These missions capitalize on intelligence sharing and combined execution of large area cordon and searches.

Through these missions, I am able to foster a partnership with the Iraqi Army battalion commanders; as well as give platoon leaders a chance to execute jointly with Iraqi Army company commanders.

Another facet of this partnership is to proliferate the pride and success that these battalions have had. We recently conducted a key leader engagement with Lt. Col. Abdullah, 4th Bn., 22nd Bde., 6th IA Div., commander. We met and interviewed him with public affairs Soldiers and a combat camera Soldier, to capture the story of the execution of an autonomous raid that led to the seizure of an IED factory in Ghazaliya. These events enable us



to maintain operational awareness and congratulate our partners on the great work that they are doing. The chai, kabobs, and chicken beyani are always added bonuses.

Our overall enduring missions are in support of the TF Viking Mission set involving MSR security, counter-indirect fire and logistical support. The platoons maintain a relatively high optempo, in order to set the security conditions for the March 7 Elections. Many of the young officers and newly promoted NCOs stand willing to take their place in history as we all strive for a stable Iraq, where human rights are the foundation of the society. The road is long and the Amanat is an arduous environment, but Vikings will prevail and TM Fierce, as always, is "Ready Rifles!"

FIERCE 6



FORGE 6

Lt. Col. Gary Martin

702nd Brigade Support Battalion Commander



Hello to the Raider Team.

I am happy to be a part of the Forge team after assuming command two months ago from Lt. Col. McCassey during our expansion. In my very short time here, I am thoroughly pleased with all the hard work and stellar sustainment Forge Soldiers provide to the Raider Brigade daily. I have also seen tremendous efforts and results in our logistical partnership with our Iraqi brothers.

During the 60 days, our top priority was to continue to provide outstanding sustainment to the Raider Brigade. My long term goal for our logistical partnership with our Iraqi peers is the Iraqi Security Forces have the confidence in their systems and the ability to sustain them well after we have re-deployed.

During the time we are not sustaining the brigade or working with our partners, we stressed the importance of battle-focused training to keep Soldiers proficient on Warrior skills.

Over the last week we conducted a maintenance rodeo of all of our rolling stock, communication equipment, night vision devices, optics and weapons. We revisited the standard to best prepare our equipment to successfully accomplish our sustainment and partnership missions over the last six months.

Over the past month, the Forge team has been actively supporting our ma-

neuver brothers preparing for the Iraqi Parliamentary Elections as well as sustaining the Raider Brigade. Early during the month we began transferring one of our JSSs back to Iraqi control.

During this time we provided support with prepositioned racks for the unit to load their equipment for movement to either another JSS, or back to Camp Liberty. Due to the responsiveness of the battalion and the ability to quickly retrograde this equipment, the JSS will be handed over to the Iraqis a month ahead of schedule.

In preparation for the elections, the battalion developed contingency packages of food, water, ammunition and medical supplies that were staged in the battalion motor pool for immediate delivery. We continued to deliver barrier material to our transition teams for distribution through our Iraqi brothers to be used around the polling sites to provide protection for the Iraqi voters. The Forge battalion also increased stockage of food, water and fuel at our outlying locations in order to sustain our brother battalions during the period of limited movement throughout the Baghdad area.

Finally, hours before the election, we were called on to emplace other force protection measures throughout Baghdad and our Soldiers performed spectacularly.

Now that the elections are over and we have reached the half-way point in our deployment, we anticipate many long days conducting our much anticipated



responsible drawdown of forces and preparing for the subsequent redeployment to Fort Lewis. As we close or transfer security stations back to the Iraqi government, equipment and supplies will be hauled back to Camp Liberty from the outlying locations, vehicles will be inspected for maintenance and Soldiers will begin medical assessment for their return. There is much more work to do but we are certainly on a glide path to exceed our own expectations. I would also like to thank all the friends and families who continue to provide their untiring support to the Forge Battalion.

Lastly I look forward to our continued success and want to thank you for a very warm welcome.

Forge 6
"FORGE!"

6th IA Div MPs mirror U.S. search techniques

**Story by Spc. Luisito Brooks
4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.**

JOINT SECURITY STATION CONSTITUTION, Iraq – An Iraqi Soldier was searching under a vehicle using a long inspection mirror, when he noticed something out of place and immediately, he recognized a simulated improvised explosive device, placed there to test him as the final part of a training exercise here, Feb. 18.

The Military Police Company, 6th Iraqi Army Division conducted the training on the proper procedures of clearing an area of IEDs as well as the set up and operation of security checkpoints with assistance from the 6th IA Div. Military Transition Team (MiTT), 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division.

The training event was the final stage of the five-day course that would cer-



Photo by Spc. Luisito Brooks, 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.
A military policeman with the Military Police Company, 6th Iraqi Army Division, searches under a vehicle during a checkpoint training exercise on Feb. 18 at Joint Security Station Constitution.

tify the Iraqi unit as official trainers for their division.

“This next election we’re expecting many threats,” said Sgt. Maj. Hamza Radi Sabhan, the sergeant major of the MP Co., 6th IA Div. “The most important thing we learned at this training was how to discover IEDs and vehicle-born IEDs.”

With his many years of military training and experiences with elections in the past, Sabhan was a major contribu-

tor to the training, but remained open to any suggestions from the MiTT.

“This year we are expecting all American Forces to pull out of this country,” said Sabhan. “That’s why this is good experience to have before they (U.S. Soldiers) leave this country.”

Sabhan said he saw

that his Soldiers were very motivated during the training and was pleased on how they executed.

“The training was good, and everyone was excited to get this training,” said Pfc. Isam Mufag Iadel, a military policeman with the MP Co., 6th IA Div. “We talked after the training and we all understand that the American Forces are leaving and it will be our responsibility to train ourselves.”

After the training was complete, the MP Co. leadership and Soldiers from the MiTT held a small ceremony and gave certificates to every Iraqi Soldier who completed the training.

During the ceremony, Sabhan explained to his Soldiers how important the training is in preparation for the upcoming elections and the future of Iraq.

“With the government in place, we can look forward to better things in Iraq,” said Sabhan. “Remember the lessons and training that we just accomplished because we want to make sure the voting sites are as safe as possible.”



Photo by Spc. Luisito Brooks, 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

A military policeman with the Military Police Company, 6th Iraqi Army Division, searches under a vehicle during a checkpoint training exercise on Feb. 18 at Joint Security Station Constitution.

Elections meeting emphasizes combined efforts

Story by Pfc. Kimberly Hackbarth
4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – As the March 7 elections draw nearer, leaders all over Iraq are working toward one common goal; security of the voters at the polls.

Leadership from the Iraqi Army, Iraqi Police, and U.S. Forces met at the 9th IA Division headquarters building here, Feb. 20, to review security strategies for the election.

One by one, representatives from each group took the podium and briefed their plans to the fellow Soldiers and policemen who have dedicated an abundance of their time and efforts into planning and training to ensure the safety of Iraqi voters.

During the meeting, speakers and attendees declared their confidence in one another and a true sense of partnership.

“There is joint security with [IPs] and the IA,” said IP Brig. Gen. Imad, the IP Taji sector commander. “All officers with the IP work side by side with IA officers; each IP chief officer knows the battalion commander in his (area of operations).”

Imad also spoke about the confidence he has in his own policemen.

“All IPs are ready and trained [for the elections],” he said.

During the elections, the IA and IP plan to work together to secure polling sites.

The IA will provide an outer cordon around polling stations while IPs secure the interior of the buildings. These actions will show their ability to work together and protect the populace and their right to vote.

U.S. forces will not be present at the polling stations, but they are still involved in the security planning process.

Col. John Norris, commander, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, sat at a table at the very



Col. John Norris, commander, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, takes notes during an elections security meeting at the 9th Iraqi Army Division headquarters building in Taji, Feb. 20. ISF and U.S. Forces gathered to review security strategies for March 7 elections.

front of the room with Maj. Gen. Qassim, commander, 9th IA Div., and other leaders from the area.

When given his chance to speak, Norris reminded the room that communication is important in order for the elections to go well.

“We, as a team, cannot (be successful) if we are not sharing information,” said Norris.

The combined forces even reached out to an extended part of their ‘team’ - the civilians.

Representatives in charge of the polling sites and a local hospital were able to voice their concerns involving the elections to the IA, IPs, and U.S. service members present.

While not every issue was resolved during the meeting, every concern was taken into consideration. Focused on a common goal- a safe and successful election, the IA and IPs showed their unity not only with Americans, but more importantly, among themselves.

On the back cover:

NASIR WA SALAM, Iraq – Spc. Anthony Pariseau, an infantryman with Company B, 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment serves as a demonstrator for a class of Iraqi Army and Iraqi policemen on how to thoroughly search personnel during security training for local elections.

Photo by Spc. Luisito Brooks, 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.



STRYKER BRIGADE...

...TO THE OBJECTIVE!!!

