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*By the Soldiers... for the
Soldiers in the service*

DOGFACE SOLDIERS BEGIN
JOINT CHECKPOINT TRAINING



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On the cover:

Soldiers of the 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, along with Iraqi Army, Iraqi Police and Peshmerga: ate, slept, and trained together during a five-day combined training exercise held at Forward Operating Base Marez, Jan. 1-5.

Photo Illustration By
Pfc. Gregory Gieske



Photo Illustration By
Spc. Dustin Gautney



Re-created from a WWII YANK Army Weekly, the *Blue and White Devils* was a short history pamphlet of the 3rd Infantry Division during their Italian campaign.

Command Corner

To all the Spartans: Every day you continue to prove yourselves as disciplined Soldiers and as exceptional representatives of the United States of America. You have done all that has been asked of you and more. For many of you that are from our Brigade at Fort Stewart this past week constituted your 65th day here in Iraq. I want to personally congratulate you on how you have conducted yourself up to this point. We were all confronted with a significant amount of uncertainty and last minute change, and we were able to work through the change and uncertainty together as brothers and sisters in arms, unified in three common goals: don't let down our Nation, don't fail any mission, and never let your brothers and sisters down. Combat is always stressful and tough, but we have to remember that at no time here in Iraq are we ever alone as long as we are members of the Spartan Brigade.

Marne Soldiers never leave our comrades and we will take any action to protect and defend them no matter what the risk and no matter what the threat. Sixty-five years ago this month, in France, our forebearers of the Marne Division were asked to come forward to assist another unit that was crumbling under the weight of the last German offensive of World War II. The 3rd Infantry Division had just finished crossing the Vosges Mountains while in contact, a feat which had not been done since Hannibal fought the Romans, and were preparing for a final assault across the Rhine River and

into Germany. During the following nearly forty-five days of constant combat while vastly outnumbered and outgunned by the Germans, the 3rd Infantry Division and their French Allies stood shoulder to shoulder and counterattacked into the German onslaught. During the battle Marne Men earned the highest number of Medals of Honor ever for a single battle. This is where Lt. Audie Murphy earned his medal and became a legend. The Soldiers of the 3rd Infantry Division of 1945 are no different than we are today. They were driven by the same three goals that I talked about earlier: don't let down our Nation, don't fail any mission, and never let your brothers and sisters down.

These goals were exhibited by Sgt. Daniel Templeton and his brothers from Company B., 3-7 Cavalry, when he observed a well trained and well equipped enemy force maneuvering to interdict Main Supply Route Tampa. Sgt. Templeton positioned his Bradley and his dismounted element in order to eliminate the threat. In doing so he undoubtedly saved the lives of his fellow Soldiers. His actions that night are proof positive that Marne Men still to this day and forever will live up to the three goals that were established so many years ago. This is our legacy. See you on the battlefield...



SEND ME!
Spartan 6

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Command Sergeant Major



As we approach our 65 day mark in Iraq, I see our Soldiers performing their duties with class and professionalism, which is making a difference with the security and stability within Ninewa Province. Through hard work and cooperation with the Iraqi Security Forces and local citizens, we are able to reduce the amount of violence within Ninewa Province.

As I travel to the various Joint Security Sites and Forward Operating Bases to visit our Soldiers, I see a sense of pride of accomplishments within our Soldiers. They understand the importance of their mission, and are ready for the challenges they face on a daily basis. We will remain disciplined and focused throughout the deployment, and will continue to apply pressure on our enemies within Ninewa. Our goal is to see a safe, secure, and vibrant Iraq for all Iraqis.

My sincere thanks to all our friends and Families from around the world who supported us with packages, letters, and well wishes during the holiday season. We are truly grateful for all the support that we are receiving, and will continue to make you proud.

SEND ME!
Spartan 7



The Entourage - After exiting the aircraft, Major General Tony Cucolo, commander, 3rd ID, directs General David Petraeus and Lt. General Charles Jacoby off the tarmac for an afternoon luncheon with Soldiers from the 3rd Infantry Division followed by a provincial operations briefing, Dec. 31.

Photo By
Pfc. Gregory Gleske



FEATURES

Operation Saber Shock :

Combined operation between U.S. and Iraqi Army that culminated in the first American mortar fire launched in the city of Mosul in the last four years.

Story by 2nd Lt. Andrew Nesom
Photos By Pfc. Gregory Gieske



As the holiday season comes to a close, most Americans celebrate with champagne and party hats. The elite warriors of Bonecrusher Troop, 3rd Squadron, 7th U.S. Cavalry have been celebrating the holidays with a powerful fireworks display.

Labeled Operation Saber Shock, the combined U.S. and Iraqi Army (IA) mission culminated in the first American mortar fire mission launched in Mosul in the past four years. Since the war began, terrorists have launched multiple long-ranged attacks on FOB Marez/ Diamondback between Christmas and the New Year.

This holiday season was different, however. Through the detailed coordination of Lt. Col. Michael Haber and the Stability Transition Team, elements of the 3-7 Cavalry and 7-2 IA conducted combined reconnaissance patrols and established observation posts inside Mosul to deter any holiday attacks.

Along with an increased IA presence, the Bonecrushers launched 120mm illumination rounds above templated firing positions to deny the enemy freedom of maneuver.

“Slinging mortar rounds is a great Christmas present,” said Spc. Eric Nealis, a mortar gunner.

As a result, there was only one ineffective rocket attack on FOB Marez this season.

Although indirect fire missions are not the Cavalry’s specialty, the Squadron has top-notch mortar sections and a wealth of experienced and capable indirect fire experts.



Pfc. Donnie Garlock, 3-7 Cavalry, watches as members of his mortar team load illumination rounds. Below: Illumination rounds light up the night sky over FOB Marez / Diamondback to deter insurgent attacks.



“Overall, the effect was great. The FOB took almost no indirect fire compared to previous years and it gave my Soldiers the chance to use their targeting skills for real-fire missions, rather than conducting information operations,” said Sgt. 1st Class Alex Mauric, the Squadron Fire Support NCO.

December will go down as the first month without a hostile U.S. casualty in Iraq. This may very well be thanks to increasing partnership with the IA through the Stability Transition Teams and the hardy work and fighting spirit of the 3-7 Cavalry Troopers, said Sgt. 1st Class Mauric.

Soldiers of 1-36 Infantry awarded combat patch



Story and Photos By
Pfc. Jason B. Aglietti
1-36th IN.

Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 36th Infantry Regiment (Spartans) receive their highly coveted unit 'combat patch' over the past week. Most Spartans have waited since Basic Training to earn a combat patch.

Unit combat patches are worn on the right shoulder and presented to Soldiers for deploying during wartime. The tradition of wearing shoulder sleeve insignia has a rich history, its origins dating back to the 81st Infantry Division in 1918, before being universally adopted in the World War II era.

Over the past week, the 1-36 IN. Battalion Commander, Lt. Col. Chris Connolly, and Command Sergeant Major Glenn Robinson traveled between FOB Marez, several Joint Security Stations, and outposts near Mosul, Iraq. They presented Spartan Soldiers with a 1st Armored Division patch during unit patch ceremonies.

"The combat patch ceremony has a lot of meaning behind it," said Command Sgt. Major Glenn Robinson after one of the ceremonies. "In the past, Soldiers were awarded it after successfully served in a combat theater. It is more than a

patch; it creates unit cohesion and represents both the unit and Soldiers that serve under it."

The Spartan battalion conducts combat operations in one of Iraq's key cities. Spartan Soldiers see both the patch and the ceremony as a proud historic achievement they have earned in support of the global war on terrorism.

"It feels good to have it," said Pvt. Mantford Sturgill who installs and maintains communication systems for each of the companies within the Spartan battalion.

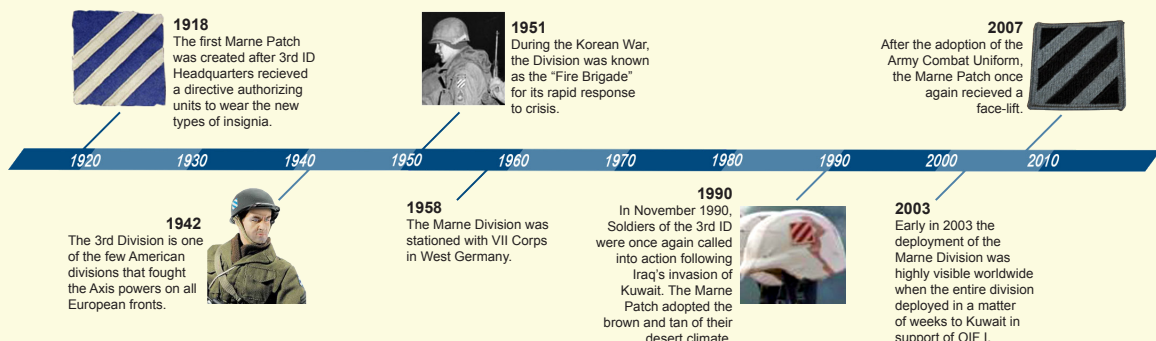
Pvt. Sturgill deployed to Iraq less than two weeks after completing AIT. "It shows that we have actually preformed our jobs during combat operations and we are able to excel at what we are trained to do."



Soldiers from 1-36th IN. recieved the 1st Armored Division patch during a patch ceremony held at FOB Marez and various Joint Security Stations throughout Ninewa Province.

THE MARNE PATCH THROUGH-OUT HISTORY

Throughout Marne history the three bars of white on a field of blue have been displayed on its Soldiers.



Desert Rogues hand over control of Joint Security Station



Story By
1st Lt. Joseph Stanger
1-64th AR

On Thurs., Jan. 7, preparations began for the handover of Joint Security Station IT2 to the government of Iraq. This marks the first base closure for 1st "Desert Rogue" Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment and it is a demonstration of the tremendous leaps the government of Iraq and the Iraqi Army have made in providing their own security.

As 1-64 AR begins moving off the base, the Iraqi Army is preparing to assume total responsibility for the base by the end of January.

Bravo Company, 1-64 AR, began moving off the base on Jan. 7. Many of the supplies they had moved off the JSS as well as most of the personnel. Bravo Company is leaving behind all mission essential equipment so the Iraqi Army will have a functioning

base when they assume full responsibility.

Bravo Company spent countless hours building life support capabilities of JSS IT2 to a fully functional outpost. When Bravo first assumed control of the outpost, it had very limited operating capabilities. "Now that IT2 is being transferred to the Iraqis, they will receive a fully functional outpost," said 1st Lt. Ryan McAlister, the Bravo Company platoon leader who worked at IT2.

"It makes me proud that our efforts have helped the Iraqi Army provide independent security for the citizens of Iraq," said 1st Lt. McAlister. "Watching my personnel and equipment move out of IT2 shows the tangible progress that we have made in Iraq."

- 1st Lt. Ryan McAlister

IT2 may be the first JSS closure and handoff to the Iraqis,

but it definitely won't be the last. In the coming months, there will be many more JSS handoffs across the nation as the government of Iraq assumes control for the security of their country.

BRIGADE SAFETY OFFICE

PREVENTING ROLLOVERS

ROLLOVERS OCCUR DUE TO THE FOLLOWING:

- SPEED TOO FAST FOR CONDITIONS.
- DRIVER INATTENTION/OVER CONFIDENCE.
- ROAD CONDITIONS ARE UNKNOWN OR DISREGARDED; SUCH AS MUDDY, WET, OR WEAK CANAL BANKS.
- DRIVER INEXPERIENCE OR NOT QUALIFIED ON VEHICLE.
- FAILURE TO ENFORCE STANDARDS. BOTH LEADERS AND SOLDIER.

MITIGATION MEASURES:

- SPEEDS ADJUSTED FOR CONDITIONS
- REMAIN CLEAR OF ROAD EDGES AND DROP-OFFS. UTILIZE ISR ASSETS TO RECON DANGEROUS AREAS.
- BE COGNIZANT OF CANAL BANK WEAKNESSES. THESE AREAS GET WEAKER OVER TIME AND AFTER RAINS.
- CREW COORDINATION. CREW MEMBERS MUST ASSIST WITH AND CALL OUT HAZARDS.
- PERSONNEL MUST ENFORCE THE STANDARDS AND FOLLOW GOOD TIPS.
- USE COMPOSITE RISK MANAGEMENT - ALL FIVE- STEPS ~ ALL THE TIME.

Assassin Battery reduces threats and builds confidence in Mosul



Story and Photos By
2nd Lt. Tiffany Ackers
1-9th FA

Since November, Assassin Battery of the 1st Battalion, 9th Field Artillery has partnered with the Iraqi 3rd Federal Police Division Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) and the U.S. Army's 38th EOD Company to reduce the threat caused by Improvised Explosive Devices (IED).

Each unit brings a different skill set that keeps western Mosul safe. The many miles traveled through the tight streets of Mosul have forged a bond between each of these teams, building confidence in each other's abilities.

Assassin Battery provides the firepower for the team. Rolling in Mine-Resistant, Ambush-Protected (MRAP) vehicles, armed with automatic weapons, and trained in urban combat, the Assassins provide security for the American and Iraqi EOD Soldiers. The constantly-scanning gun turrets look intimidating, as the Assassins keep a constant vigil while Soldiers dismantle the IEDs. This serves a dual purpose: it protects the EOD Soldiers from attack and keeps local citizens out of harm's way.

Iraqi shurta (policemen) of the 3rd Federal Police Division bring years of operational experience to the team. Their knowledge of Mosul and its violent extremists allows for an in-depth understanding of the different types of IEDs – there are very few devices they haven't seen or reduced before.

The 38th EOD Company brings technical equipment

and years of expertise to the operation. Their sophisticated equipment and experience makes IED removal safer for the ISF and USF Soldiers involved in this dangerous work. Utilizing a variety of robots with cameras and mechanical hands gives the EOD the ability to identify and reduce IEDs without exposing the team to danger.

Rendering an IED safe is exacting work that can't be rushed. If possible, the IED is dismantled and rendered safe by the robots. If not, the IED is rendered safe by blowing it in place with an explosive charge, or by

separating the explosives from the initiation system. This process takes time and the longer the team stays on the objective, the more vulnerable they are.

The Assassins are on call 24-hours a day. Some days, the team isn't called, other days, the team responds to multiple IEDs in multiple locations across Mosul. The Assassins conduct additional military training while remaining on-call with the battalion operations center. They frequently utilize the Marez range to hone their marksmen-



Members of 1-9 FA along with Iraqi Federal Police Division EOD Team and the U.S. Army's 38th EOD Company use joint tactics to keep western Mosul safe.

ship and to stay current with medical and evacuation battle drills, knowing their quick response can save lives.

Reducing IEDs is a continuous battle requiring constant vigilance. As the 2nd Brigade Combat Team and their Iraqi partners continue to successfully execute operations across Mosul and the Ninewa Province, the emplacement of IEDs continues to decrease. Until there are no IEDs in Mosul, the Assassin Battery, 38th EOD and the Iraqi 3rd Federal Police Division will continue to make Mosul safe in northern Iraq.

Spreading Christmas Cheer

— One Mission at a Time



Story and Photos By
1st Lt. Edward Tucker
3-73rd Cavalry



Whether by coincidence or not, the spirit of holiday giving appears to have spread to the Area of Operations (AO) of Apache Troop 3-73 Cavalry. Over the past month, Apache Troop has helped facilitate several projects that have not only helped the ISF and Iraqi Government in gaining legitimacy, but have also exemplified “the spirit of giving” to the Iraqi people.

These projects have ranged from agricultural aid to improvements on religious structures to small and simple gestures of generosity for our military counterparts.

Early in December, 3rd Platoon visited the headquarters of the Iraqi Army’s 3rd Company, 3rd Battalion, 10th Brigade, just outside the city of Tal Afar. The base is fairly new, and was still in need of improvements to enhance security around the buildings.

1st Lieutenant Kyle Robinson, 3rd Platoon’s patrol leader, brought a “housewarming gift” of several rolls of concertina wire to help the Iraqi Army fortify the perimeter of their new headquarters. Both

U.S. and Iraqi Soldiers worked together to unload and emplace the wire, and the IA Soldiers were very grateful for the gesture.

“This engagement between [US Forces] and our Iraqi allies started out great and definitely ended on a positive note,” said 1st Lt. Robinson. “They seemed really appreciative that we wanted to help and I’m sure it helped strengthen our relationship with the Iraqi military.”

Later this month, 2nd Platoon accompanied representatives from Civil Affairs (CA), the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT), and a group of Iraqi reporters to unveil drastic improvements to the Taqwa Mosque in the eastern district of Tal Afar. The mosque was partially destroyed in early October by a suicide bomber who entered the mosque during prayer, began shooting individuals, and then detonated explosives strapped to his vest.

Over the next several weeks, the CA team, led by Capt. Brandon Mace and the PRT, led by Mr. Scott Strang, worked together with the local Iraqi government to repair the damage. On several occasions

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Col. Robert Bensburg, Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT), discusses the "seed drop" operation with officers from the Ministry of Agriculture Council.

(Below) The 400-ton seed drop is part two of an "agricultural stimulus," geared towards strengthening the struggling Iraqi economy; first in Rabiya, then in Tal Afar.



2nd Platoon accompanied the CA team to the mosque, securing the area and allowing Capt. Mace to assess the steady improvements while coordinating with mosque officials. With each visit progress was evident, with cosmetic repairs, structural strengthening, and even new additions visible.

Finally, on Dec. 9, mosque officials were ready to unveil the results of the US/Iraqi project. Reporters were flown in from Mosul, as 2nd Platoon once again ventured into Tal Afar with CA, PRT, and even the Tal Afar mayor to visit the mosque. Cameras flashed and interviews commenced, as the group pointed out the enhancements made over the past two months. The mosque has now been fully repaired, repainted, and an awning added outside the entrance all thanks to the generosity and cooperation of U.S. forces and the Iraqi government.

"I think it is good," said 1st Lt. Ramadan, our Iraqi Army escort for the day. "It was tragic what happened [to the mosque], but it is good that the U.S. and Iraqis

worked together to repair it."

As the sun set over Tal Afar, the patrol packed up and returned to the FOB. The spirit of giving continued throughout the Apache AO, all the way up to Christmas Eve. On Dec. 2, 2nd Platoon, along with Lt. Col. Robert Bensburg of PRT, facilitated the delivery of more than 6,000 bags of wheat and barley seeds to the Agricultural Council of Tal Afar. Spearheaded by Lt. Col. Bensburg and over 10 weeks in the making, the seed drop was part two of an "agricultural stimulus," geared toward helping the struggling Iraqi economy, first in Rabiya, and then in Tal Afar.

"This mission actually helps more than just the farmers," stated Lt. Col. Bensburg. "The goal was to utilize as many local assets as possible. Of course the farmers and Ministry of Agriculture benefit from the seeds, but the trucking company and workers are locally-employed citizens as well. Plus, the Government of Iraq will be making the distribution, boosting their legitimacy by planning and overseeing the

recipient farmers."

The trucks arrived just before noon and for the next several hours, 400 tons of seed were unloaded. While Lt. Col. Bensburg oversaw the operation with several Ministry of Agriculture Council officers, members of 2nd Platoon provided security and weighed random bags to ensure quality control. At the end of the day, the once-empty barns of the Ministry of Agriculture were now filled to the roof with seed. Over the next several weeks the seed would be distributed to more than 400 local farmers, a welcome gift after years of drought.

"I think it was pretty 'tis the season," helping these guys out as they get back on their feet," said Sgt. Hamrick. "It seems hard enough being a farmer in the States, let alone a war-torn country such as Iraq."

After many heart-felt thanks from the agricultural engineers and officers, the patrol left the Ministry of Agriculture and returned to FOB Sykes, wrapping up a rather unusual, yet spirited, Christmas.

26th BSB partnership efforts: Assess, Advise, Train



Story and Photos By
Capt. Steve Francis
26th BSB

On any given day convoys from the 26th Brigade Support Battalion can be seen traveling the roads of Ninewa Province, delivering supplies to units throughout the Spartan battlespace. It is well known that 26th BSB transports all classes of supply to 2nd Brigade Combat Team customers, fixes and maintains vehicles and combat equipment, and provides medical support to the brigade. But there is another important aspect to the Challenger Battalion's mission in northern Iraq: partnership with the Iraqi Security Forces.

In addition to the normal support mission that 26th BSB has performed during its four deployments to Iraq since 2003, the Challenger Battalion has now made partnership a priority. The Battalion does not partner directly with just one Iraqi unit, but instead partners with logistics units and key logistics leaders across multiple units and components of the Iraqi Security Forces in Ninewa Province.

The Challenger Battalion works hand in hand with 2nd Iraqi Army Division, 3rd Iraqi Army Division, Location Command, Ninewa Iraqi Police, and the 3rd Federal Police Division. The Challengers' partnership line of effort consists of three parts: assess, advise, and train.

Using the talent and logistics expertise within the Battalion, 26th BSB conducts frequent and ongoing assessments of ISF facilities, operations, and logistics systems. The assessments include medical clinics, maintenance facilities and operations, and supply flow.

Through these assessments 26th BSB is able to prioritize advisory efforts and determine training requirements for ISF units. Challenger 6 and the 26th BSB ISF Logistics cell conduct weekly Key Leader Engagements throughout AO Spartan with Iraqi Logistics Commanders and Division G-4.

Through these engagements, partnership is strengthened between U.S.

Forces and Iraqi Security Forces. The Challengers enable Iraqi units with advice and help the ISF units build trust and confidence in their own logistics systems and capabilities.

Another way 26th BSB enables Iraqi Security Forces is through training. So far, during a short tenure in Mosul, multiple combined training events have been conducted with the ISF. To date, training has focused on operator level maintenance and first responder medical training. The Challenger Battalion is working to expand

its training to include drivers training, advanced mechanics training, non-tactical vehicle maintenance training, and weapons repair training.

Training opportunities enable Iraqi Forces to become self-sufficient and strengthen trust and partnership between U.S. Forces and ISF. With the responsible drawdown of forces on the horizon, the 26th BSB is determined to achieve success through partnership with Iraqi Security Forces, and leave a competent Iraqi Force behind, capable of supporting and sustaining themselves.



Members of 26th BSB assist and train local Iraqi Army Soldiers on proper maintenance of tactical vehicles

Warriors train the next generation of Iraqi Police



Story and Photos By
1st Lt. Martin Mangum
1-4 Cavalry

The Troopers of 1st Squadron, 4th US Cavalry Regiment took part in a graduation ceremony at the Iraqi Police Academy on Forward Operating Base Sykes, conducting a combined luncheon and meeting with Iraqi Security Forces commanders following the ceremony, Jan. 7.

The ceremony celebrated the achievements of the class, trained by the Desert Warriors of the 855th Military Police Company. The program was created to produce competent Iraqi Police officers for stations throughout the region and covered a number of police-oriented tasks including criminal investigation techniques.

The Warriors have overseen the training of IPs on FOB Sykes since their arrival approximately one month ago.

"The training they receive here greatly increases their ability to safeguard the populace," said 1st Lt. Paul Lee, Executive Officer of the 855th Military Police Company. "In our second iteration of this course, we were pleased it was executed in a professional manner."

The graduation, the second of its kind in the past month, was attended by a number of local ISF leaders, to include Iraqi Police, Iraqi Army, and



The 18 graduates from the Sinjar and Tal Afar IP Stations pose with their diplomas.

even Peshmerga. The guest speaker for the event was the Police Chief for Tal Afar, Col. Ali.

Prior to the start of the ceremony, the 1-4 Cavalry leadership invited the commanders to a luncheon. At the conclusion of the events, the commanders came together in a combined staff meeting, bridging the cultural gap and discussing the numerous problem sets in the Area of Operations from a variety of perspectives.

"These events prove that, through our synergistic partnership, we can begin to foster peace and stability throughout this region," said Maj. Jason Bridges, 1-4 Cavalry, emphasizing the importance of combined efforts in this environment.

The day was a resounding success; proof that, even in the disputed northern regions of Iraq, cooperation among Arab and Kurd, Iraqi Army and Peshmerga, Jundi and Sherta, is not only possible, but remarkably productive.

"The training they receive here greatly increases their ability to safeguard the populace,"

- 1st Lt. Paul Lee

A Soldier's Story: from streets to Soldier



Story By
Pfc. Jessica Luhrs
1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division
Public Affairs

Most members of the military have a defining moment in their life when they think to themselves, "I want to become a service member."

This moment for Cpl. Omar Medina, a native of Oakland, Calif., and the communications non-commissioned officer in charge for B Co., 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, currently attached to 1st Brigade, 1st Armored Division, came when he began looking at the situation in his neighborhood and the lives his cousins, who had joined the military.

"The area I grew up in was pretty bad. A lot of people I knew were members of gangs, drugs were made available to all. Robberies and shootings were a common thing," said Cpl. Medina. "I knew I had limited choices to get away from these situations. This community is one of those places if you didn't go off to college or join the military you were just stuck."

"I thought about going to college. My teachers always told me I had the potential, but I knew it wouldn't give me the discipline to stay out of trouble," said Cpl. Medina. "Then my cousins, who are Marines, told me how well they were doing in the military and how they were far away from the situations back home."

"At that moment I began to consider the military," said Cpl. Medina.

During his junior year in high school Cpl. Medina took the ASVAB, just to see how he would do and immediately the Army recruiter began speaking to him and offering him any job in the Army he wanted, according to Cpl. Medina.

A year after taking the ASVAB and speaking to the recruiter for the first time, Cpl. Medina was signing a contract to be a Soldier as a private first class and working with communications, according to Cpl. Medina.

Now the 21-year-old corporal with only three years of service is currently the youngest NCOIC in B Co., and does work that makes him stand out in front of his fellow

Soldiers, according to Capt. Kirk Chalmers, the executive officer for B Co.

"We have many Soldiers that stay in the same rank for years," according to Capt. Chalmers. "But with the leadership qualities he will go very far in the military."

He is known as the Soldier who never accepts 'no' for an answer, according to Capt. Chalmers. There is not one question he will not find the answer to or an obstacle he cannot overcome.

With all the work Cpl. Medina put into leaving the situations he grew up in, it is hard to believe he wants to return to his hometown to work.

"It is hard to think about where I would be without the military, probably hooked on drugs, in a gang or in jail," according to Cpl. Medina. "This is one of the reasons I want to go back now. I want the people there to know they have the same option."

"To this day when I go home, two or three of the people I went to school with have either been killed or were in jail, and I also still see the same drug deals, robberies and shootings occurring, just with different people," said Cpl. Medina.

"The Army has given me something no other option in life could: self-discipline," according to Cpl. Medina. "This ability will enable me to go to college and get a degree in criminal justice so I can go back to my hometown and get the drugs off the streets that are influencing the children in a negative way."

All of the leadership in B Co sees tremendous potential in Cpl. Medina and are all confident no matter what he does he will succeed, according to Capt. Chalmers.

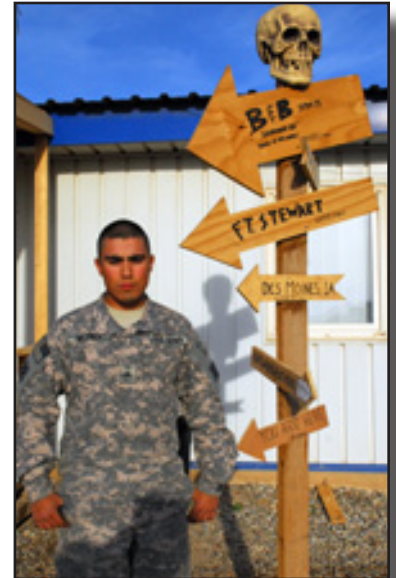


Photo By Pfc. Jessica R. Luhrs

Cpl. Omar Medina, non-commissioned officer in charge for B Co., 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, currently attached to 1st Brigade, 1st Armored Division has overcome much hardship to be where he is today.

Filling the Gaps:

Operation Titan Dig underway



Story By
1st Lt. Todd C. Gibson
2-3 BTB

The ground shifted and gave way as Echo Company, 1-30th Infantry Battalion, M-9 Armored Combat Earthmovers (ACEs) slowly pushed tons of dirt with their blades. Their mission: to fill any breaks a vehicle could enter along the Riyadh Line, a great berm (dirt wall) surrounding the city of Mosul.

The berm was named in honor of Maj. Gen. Riyadh Jalal Tawfiq, who commanded the Iraqi security forces during the Ninewa campaign. The campaign was aimed to break the back of insurgents within Mosul in 2008.

This berm, which rings the city, helps preserve the stability Maj. Gen. Riyadh worked so hard to obtain, as the Riyadh Line funnels all motor traffic into designated checkpoints.

"You'll never stop foot traffic over this berm," said 2nd Lt. Joshua Rogers, the Platoon Leader of

Echo Company's Assault and Obstacles Platoon. "But by forcing vehicles to approach through these checkpoints, any kind of smuggling by insurgents becomes substantially more difficult."

Second Lieutenant Rogers' platoon was the lead element throughout the operation, filling nearly a dozen breaks.

The Echo Company combat engineers have been attached to the 2-3 Brigade Troops Battalion since their arrival in Iraq. The mission was coordinated between the battalion and company commander,

Lt. Col. Lee Desjardins and Capt. Kevin Thomas. Known as "Operation Titan Dig," it wasn't a company or battalion-level effort, but involved elements throughout the entire 2nd Brigade Combat Team. Approximately 19-20 kilometers were scoured in search of pass-



Photo By 1st Lt. Todd C. Gibson

Two of Echo Company's M-9 Armored Combat Earthmovers plow dirt forward to fill breaks within the Riyadh Line.

"Forcing vehicles to approach through these checkpoints, any kind of smuggling by insurgents becomes substantially more difficult,"

- 2nd Lt. Joshua Rogers

able breaks. Unmanned Aerial Vehicles conducted reconnaissance, while Soldiers from the 1-9 Field Artillery Battalion provided additional security. Heavy Equipment Transport Systems (HETs) from the 26th Brigade Support Battalion deployed Echo Company ACEs to their required locations.

This mission is on-going, since erosion creates new gaps, but thanks to the perseverance of Echo Company's engineers, a stable and prosperous Mosul will not be endangered by insurgent network smuggling.

Visiting FOB Marez's Dining Facility, CENTCOM Commanding General David Petraeus, takes a moment to sign several covers of 2nd Heavy Brigade Public Affairs 1940's tribute publication, the **YANK**, Dec. 31.



Photo By
Pfc. Gregory Gieske

After delivering humanitarian aid to a Mosul Boys and Girls School as part of the US Jr. Hero's Program, Iraqi Federal Police give a brief tour of their area of operation as Maj. Paul Green, HHC, 2nd HBCT, 3ID, spots several defensive weak points from a city street, Jan. 3.



Photo By
Pfc. Gregory Gieske



An Iraqi Army Soldier looks on as fellow Kurdish and Iraqi soldiers attend joint training held at FOB Marez, Jan. 4.

Photo By
Pfc. Gregory Gieske



Posting security in front of a Girls and Boys School, Sgt. Mario Rodriguez-Colon, 1-9 FA, 2nd HBCT, 3ID, stands guard during a joint effort with the Iraqi Police for the Junior Hero's Program in Mosul, Iraq, Jan. 3.

Photo By
Pfc. Gregory Gieske



Thousands of potential Iraqi Army recruits lined the highways as Iraqi Army and U.S. Forces searched every candidate before entering the recruitment center.

Building an Army

Iraqi Army welcomes 500 new soldiers during recruitment drive

Story and Photos By
Spc. Dustin Gautney
2nd HBCT Public Affairs





The early morning sun's rays gleamed off the paved highway, illuminating the horizon. The new morning light unveils the side of the highway filled with nearly 1,000 Iraqi local nationals jogging and a few running along the road's shoulder. The local nationals did not run in fear; however they ran for a hope and dream to become part of the Iraqi Army during an Iraqi Army recruitment drive, Dec. 23.

With nearly a thousand in attendance hoping to be part of the Iraqi Army, only 150 would be chosen that day. During the course of the four-day event approximately 500 were chosen out of thousands of local nationals.

For the Soldiers of 1st "Desert Rogues" Battalion, 64th Armor, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, the job of assisting the 2nd Iraqi Army Brigade in the task of recruiting new members into their fold could not have been executed more smoothly, according to Capt. Wes Wilhite, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1-64th Armor.

"From start to finish the plan for the recruitment drive was an Iraqi plan; coordinated by their commanders and executed by their officers and non-commissioned officers," said Capt. Wilhite.

As part of the plan to assist the Iraqi Army recruitment drive, Soldiers from 1-64th Armor supplied additional security for numerous security points as well as using the U.S. Handheld Interagency Detection Equipment (HIDE) allows users to photograph, fingerprint, perform retinal scans, and verify credentials against previously gathered information to support the drive, said Capt. Wilhite.

"The HIDE is basically the final check for the locals during the recruitment process. After going through the security check points and being medically screened, we have everyone go through the HIDE check point," said Spc. Gary Daniels, 204th Military Police Company, attached to 2nd HBCT, 3rd ID.

Captain Wilhite also said that the plan was executed to the highest degree of excellence from the Iraqi Army that U.S. military assistance was minimal in the event because of the outstanding planning from the Iraqi Army.

"I feel that even if we were not part of that plan to assist in the recruitment drive that the event would still have been a success, which is a testament to the fine leadership of the Iraqi Army."

Lieutenant Colonel Ross Coffman, commander, 1-64th Armor, agreed the Iraqi Army's planning and execution of the event is an example of how an Iraqi plan conducted by Iraqi leaders and soldiers leads to the best results for the Iraqi populace.

"The Iraqi Army plan was so well designed that had we not been there at all the recruitment drive would have still been a huge success," said Lt. Col. Coffman. "The Iraqi Army is so well lead and trained to be able to execute a recruitment plan so large and over multiple locations that I can say I would be proud to stand side by side our Iraqi brothers in any war."



Training for Iraq's Future

Story By
Spc. Crystal M. O'Neal
2nd HBCT Public Affairs

As one Soldier, in full battle gear with his M-4 rifle in hand, stands in front of the formation, demonstrating firing techniques, another Soldier moves through the ranks. Row by row, the



latter Soldier watches, stopping beside any member of the ranks who appears to be having trouble correctly performing the techniques his battle buddy in front of the group is demonstrating.

The student listens and watches as the Soldier grabs his AK-47 rifle, bends his knees slightly,

demonstrating a correct firing stance. The student retrieves his weapon, repeats the Soldier's actions properly and turns to the Soldier, smiles and says, "Shukran," Arabic for "thank you".

Task Force Marne Soldiers from the 3rd Federal Police Division Transition Team stationed at Forward Operating Base Marez in northern Iraq trained members of the Iraqi

Federal Police Dec. 18, on reflexive firing from the left, right and rear positions at FOB Marez.

After briefly quizzing the students on the four-step firing process they had taught the policemen the previous day, the Soldiers showed step by step how to properly execute firing positions and explained the importance of having disciplined and uniformed firing positions.

Master Sergeant Todd Bacon, 3rd Federal Police Division Transition Team and non-commissioned officer in charge of the training, said the training would definitely be helpful to the policemen while on duty.

"Today we taught them correct reflexive firing positions. We taught them how to turn, pivot left, right, or to the rear and fire. I also made sure to tell them to always position their armor towards the enemy and that while it may be more comfortable to fire from the side, that leaves more of their body that is not protected exposed," said the Master Sergeant.

Sergeant First Class Edwin C. Frates, 3rd Federal Police Division Transition Team, said that the policemen soaked up the training with ease.

"The guys listened to the interpreter as he translated Master Sgt. Bacon's words. They followed orders really well. Hopefully, they will take some of this training home with them, practice it, and apply it when they are out on patrol," said Sgt. 1st Class Frates.

The Sergeant First Class also said that it made him feel good that he and the other Soldiers could be involved in something so productive for both the U.S. Army and the IFP.

"With this training, these guys will be more effective at what they do. They will be able to protect their citizens and ensure safety in Iraq. This only helps get us all closer to the mission here in Iraq – to stabilize Iraq's security forces and its people," said Sgt. 1st Class Frates.

After practicing the firing stances, the IFPs ran through an obstacle course then moved down to the range to test their newly learned training.

Iraqi Federal Police conduct various training tasks under the guidance of Spartan Soldiers.

Photos By
Pfc. Gregory Gieske



JANUARY 8, 2010



Father and Son enjoy holidays together – in Iraq

Story By
Spc. Crystal M. O'Neal
2nd HBCT Public Affairs

Photo Illustration By
Pfc. Gregory Gieske
2nd HBCT Public Affairs

The holiday season is a time for sharing and caring, especially when it comes to Family. Christmas is traditionally greeted with a decorated Christmas tree, lots of gifts and a big Family dinner.

Once Christmas passes, the countdown to the New Year begins, as Families prepare for bonding, quality time and a new beginning.

For the Sexton Family of Fort Stewart, Ga., the holidays were very different from most American Families, as both the father and son were absent, answering the call of duty in different parts of Iraq.

The Sexton men, however, were able to spend the holiday together at Forward Operating Base Marez in northern Iraq. Col. Charles E. A. Sexton, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, serves as the commander there, and his son, 1st Lt. Chuck Sexton, 2nd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 1st BCT, 82nd Airborne Division, visited him.

According to Col. Sexton, although he enjoyed the holidays

with his son, it also saddened him.

"To be totally honest, I was happy and sad that my boy is here. But if we couldn't be together at home, at least we were able to see each other here," said Col. Sexton.

For 1st Lt. Sexton, being able to call his mom and sister on Christmas Day, with his father beside him, was truly wonderful.

"Because we are a very close family, this would have been my first time spending the holidays without any of my Family. I was glad that Dad and I were able to speak with my mother and sister together on Christmas day; they were together, also, so in a sense we were together as a whole on Christmas," he said.

The Sextons went on several missions together during 1st Lt. Sexton's stay at FOB Marez, including a humanitarian aid drop on Christmas Day when Spartan Soldiers delivered Christmas presents to young orphans in northern Iraq and a battlefield circulation visit to several FOBs.

Colonel Sexton joked that while 1st Lt. Sexton came to FOB Marez on a Freedom Rest pass, he didn't do much resting.

"My son had an opportunity to take a rest and relaxation pass, but instead he chose to come here. He hasn't done much relaxing since he's been here," said Col. Sexton. "In fact, he's been out with me and my guys working as part of my personal security during a couple of the missions."

Colonel Sexton said that he is proud of his son for joining the Army, showing his devout dedication to his country.

"I am pleased that my son is succeeding in his career as a Soldier; he is very enthusiastic about what he does. I never pressured him to do it; it was a decision that he made as a grown man. I am proud of him, and I enjoyed every moment that we spent together this holiday season," said the colonel.



Chaplain's Corner



"The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

- Edmund Burke

As long as there are American Warriors,
evil will not triumph.

As long as we love God and country more than self,
evil will not triumph.

As long as Families support and parents pray,
evil will not triumph.

The good men and women of America, with the help of God, will always rise up to confront evil. I am privileged to serve with them; to care for their souls.

Send Me!
CH (Maj.) Sid A. Taylor

News from Home -

The New Year has arrived, the traditional time of year for soul searching and list making. Along with the many resolutions we often make, Army spouses also like to take a step back and look at the (sometimes) crazy lives we lead. I hope you enjoy the following homefront observations as much as I did. It's only funny 'cause it's true! Happy New Year, Spartans!

-Melody Sexton

How To Tell If Your Husband Has Been Deployed Too Many Times

By Jill Crider

The last few years (oh, say eight, give or take) have proven to me beyond a shadow of a doubt that LIFE DOES GO ON whether my husband is home with us or not. It's also been proof that I "don't have to make this stuff up, I just write it down when it happens!" So here are just a few ways I can tell that my husband has been deployed too many times...and maybe yours too!

1. You...automatically...speak...with a...two second...delay...on...every...phone...call.
2. Once again, the only thing on this year's Christmas list for your husband is "brown t-shirt, brown socks, white boxers."
3. Some of the most meaningful conversations you've ever had with your husband have been text messages.
4. Your husband has "attended" family events (graduations, baby deliveries, etc) more than twice, via satellite.
5. You have "attended" his last two promotions, via satellite.
6. Your little one thinks every guy they see in ACUs is "Daddy." But when "Daddy" does come home, they run in the opposite direction, screaming!
7. Your husband carries an entrenching tool with him every time he goes to the restroom.
8. When your husband returns after a year, your niece, who was too young to remember him when he left, now wants to "introduce" him to the rest of the family.
9. Every story you tell about "something dramatic happening" begins with,

"(insert-your -husband's-name-here) was GONE, of course..."

10. You live next door to someone for three years and your husbands never meet. Until you are stationed together someplace else. But this time, they deploy together, again.

11. You're on your THIRD Plat Daddy! (I could do a WHOLE list on Plat Daddy alone!)

12. You have two identical clocks on the wall, right beside each other, with the words "Here" and "There" written beneath them.

13. You can completely redecorate your bedroom faster than he can get to his final destination.

14. On the day your husband is leaving, one of the last things you say to him as he heads toward the door is, "Be sure to take out the garbage on your way to the war."

15. When you tell your kids you are moving again the first thing they ask is, "Is Dad moving too?"

16. About two weeks before your husband deploys again he keeps asking you, "Isn't there some nice jewelry you've been wanting?"

17. While your husband is home on R&R, he offers to take your child to school one morning and let you sleep in, only to have him call on the way there to ask, "Where does he go to school now?"

18. You've bought a house, a car, delivered a baby, had life threatening surgery and enrolled your kids in college, all in one year, all in his name, and all with nothing more than the flick of a Bic and a General Power of Attorney.

19. Your husband uses the words "it's ONLY a year this time" to describe the upcoming deployment.

20. The Tuesday night menu at your house reads "Captain Crunch and Pinot Grigio."

21. The ONE piece of paper that your husband wrote down the "passwords" to EVERYTHING hasn't been seen since the FIRST deployment!

22. There are at least six duffle bags in your garage full of "desert stuff" that never gets unpacked until the night before he is leaving and needs the ONE thing in ONE of them that cannot, nor will, ever, be found.

23. Your husband has no idea what he gave his Mother for Christmas, her birthday, anniversary or Mother's Day in the last five years.

24. Your kids "SKYPE"

25. At YOUR house "Dwell Time" is affectionately referred to as "Oh...Hell" time.



BLUE *and* WHITE DEVILS