

THE

RAIDER

Tribe

OIL 09-10

END OF TOUR
EDITION

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RAIDER 6

COLONEL JOHN NORRIS

4th SBCT COMMANDER



Raider Tribe,

The end is near! We are currently in the midst of the final chapter of our deployment: Our return home to Joint Base Lewis-McChord. We have worked long and hard to make this a successful deployment. This brigade has adopted and overcame many obstacles over the last year and a half. Our success is a testament to the quality leaders, non-commissioned officers and most of all the Soldiers.

On a day that seems like an eternity ago, March 1, 2009, I announced the acceleration of the brigade. We would be deploying nine months ahead of schedule to fulfill the request of Gen. Ray Odierno for a Stryker unit that could bring a mobile and flexible combat force to Baghdad. Some expressed doubt if we would be ready for the mission in Iraq. I believed it was possible because of the over 2,000 Soldiers that had participated in the last 15 month deployment as a part of the "Surge" strategy with another 1000 having done tours in Iraq and Afghanistan with other units.

We took this veteran knowledge, shared it with our young Soldiers and applied it to our training. Being ever mindful that the situation on the ground had changed, we would need to adapt and be open-minded. We could not afford to be victims of our past and the accomplishments and achievements that you have had are evidence that you truly embraced this guidance.

This brigade has successfully embraced our Iraqi Army brothers, Iraqi civic leaders, and the Iraqi people. You have done countless humanitarian assistance drops civil projects and built a relationship with

our ISF that truly allowed for mentorship and assistance. You made the joint operations centers successful and were able to demonstrate to the Iraqi commanders the importance of command and control. You established training exercises and classes ranging from M16 marksmanship, Traffic Control Point procedures, forensics and maintenance classes. You were able to establish the exploitation task force that responded with Iraqi EOD to terrorist attacks and gather evidence. You were able to take that evidence and get the first warrant for arrest issued off DNA evidence. You introduced military working dogs at TCPs to assist in explosive detection in a culture that dislikes dogs. Iraq now has a MWD program of their own.

The brigade has had a front row seat to historic events in recent Iraqi history. Iraqi Security Forces have demonstrated that they are now in control of security by conducting multiple successful unilateral or partnered operations that have crippled AQI and killed its leaders. March 7 elections demonstrated that the Iraqi Security Forces were able to create a comprehensive security plan and execute it. Over 60% of Iraqi's turned out to vote despite early morning violence which is a testament to the tenacity of the Iraqi people. Kenneth Pollack recently stated in a article that "The Iraqi people voted for change, they voted against sectarianism, and they voted for responsible governance." Our purpose was to help facilitate the elections and allow the Iraq people a choice. You did well.

As part of the Responsible Drawdown of Forces (RDoF) we transferred five joint security stations to the Iraqi Government and downsized two others. To accom-

plish this mission we moved concrete walls, broke down motor pools, cooking areas, removed gravel and packed up equipment. Local governments began to build the necessary relationships needed to bring projects and other help to the local areas. Iraqi Security forces began meeting regularly with the tribal shaykhs to discuss security.

The hard work of this brigade was not confined to off the FOB missions.

After seven years of war in Iraq, this brigade will be the last combat unit to depart. With this comes added responsibility. When we arrived we were handed two brigades worth of equipment ranging from MRAPs to printers. For nine months we have been fixing and cleaning this equipment and getting it turned in for redistribution to units in Iraq, Afghanistan or the United States. Our maintenance sections have done an outstanding job keeping our vehicles and equipment operationally ready.

All these accomplishments would not have been possible without the support of our families, friends and the community of Lakewood. Soldiers have received letters, countless care packages, and just the simple holiday card. Your unwavering support for the last year has been inspirational. We look forward to getting home and sharing our experiences of the deployment, photos we have taken, and relaxing during our free time.

As we move through the final days of our deployment, let's reflect on our accomplishments and then focus on the tasks at hand. For the same reasons that we were accelerated we will be con-

See NORRIS, page 9





RAIDER 7

CSM JEFFREY HUGGINS

4th SBCT COMMAND SERGEANT MAJOR



Raiders,

I am immensely proud of you, your hard work and your accomplishments during this, the last combat phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Your professionalism and dedication to the mission have ensured your place in history will be viewed with respect and admiration.

From the very beginning, when our deployment was accelerated by 10 months, up through the "Last Patrol", you have remained adaptive and flexible, ready to face whatever challenges were placed upon you.

And the challenges were many.

Leaving our families behind, we entered a new Iraq, one unfamiliar even to those who had fought here before.

Our missions were less kinetic, but no less hazardous and much more diverse than in the past. From Time Sensitive Target raids to school opening and green house programs you executed them all with professionalism and tenacity.

Several months into the deployment, all of our battalions' boundaries changed, requiring some to pack up with their headquarters and move across our operating environment. Whatever the change we would all have to connect with new partners,

learn new areas and encounter new problems and threats.

Your example, presence and dedication allowed our Iraqi partners to truly take the lead. While you provided the support, assistance and training they needed to be successful, they grew in capability, but most importantly, in confidence.

Later we watched as the Iraqi people went to the polls to vote in their national elections, a historic moment made possible by your efforts.

While the heavily disputed election results left Iraq without a seated government, the enemy took this uncertainty as a chance to renew their attacks and cause chaos in the country. You responded, stepping up to ensure that the Government of Iraq would have the opportunity to continue with their process on their schedule and not on that of the enemy's.

Even now as our deployment comes to an end, we encounter new challenges on nearly a daily basis, and as always you have remained flexible and risen up to meet them.

Your hard work has not gone without notice. Throughout our tour, senior leaders, both military and civilian, have visited our brigade and come away impressed by your accomplishments. They have learned what we already know: That the Raider Brigade was the right team for the job in securing west-

ern Baghdad and enabling the Iraqi people to assume responsibility for their own future.

But there is still much to be done.

The flexibility that you displayed before and during this deployment must continue as we return home to Joint Base Lewis-McChord for SRP, reset and the countless changes that will follow.

Looking beyond the final weeks of our time in Iraq and our redeployment, Raider leaders as well as Raider "buddies" must ensure that our Soldiers and their families are being taken care of.

The sad reality is that there is just as much a threat to our Soldiers stateside as there is here in Iraq. In order to keep our Soldiers safe, accountability, responsibility and discipline must be maintained regardless of where we are.

Make sure you are doing the right thing and setting the example for others to follow.

It has been my honor and privilege to serve as your brigade command sergeant major during this historic time and I am proud of you and all that we have done.

BE SAFE...

BE SMART...

And when required... BE LETHAL!

Raider 7



RAIDER 8

Lt. Col. Darron Wright

4th SBCT DEPUTY COMMANDING OFFICER



Dear Raider Tribe,

As U.S. forces prepare to withdraw later this summer, we continue to make strides in the reconstruction efforts around our area. For the past year, the Raiders, in conjunction with two embassy Provincial Reconstruction Teams, along with USAID and Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), have strived to continue the development and reconstruction of western Baghdad, Abu Ghraib, Taji, and Tarmiyah.

These projects were identified by the local governments, Iraqi ministries and tribal leaders. Working closely with these groups, projects were prioritized by the needs of the people. These projects have included medical clinic repairs, schools, solar lights for neighborhood streets, drinking water pumps, electrical projects, sewage treatment plants, agribusiness and local business grants. In total, we will have completed 83 projects totaling \$14.5 million of U.S. Army dollars when combined with U.S. Department of State and USACE funds. U.S. taxpayers have collectively spent over \$400 million dollars all for the betterment of Iraq and its citizens.

We have refurbished 11 schools and provided 23 humanitarian assistance drops of school supplies, clothes and food helping local under privileged families, children, orphans and teachers to have the resources needed for basic education. We have provided \$230,000 of micro grants to stimulate local business in an attempt to improve

the local economy.

One area in particular that the American forces and external agencies have been focusing on is Agriculture and Agribusiness revitalization. This is an important aspect of the Abu Ghraib and Taji areas. An improvement in farming will provide more locally grown produce for the people of Baghdad as well as spur the growth of the local economy and provide thousands of jobs. Our goal or campaign slogan was "To Grow Crops instead of Terrorists". By employing local military males and women alike, this gave them new opportunities of employment versus making money through nefarious activities.

Money dedicated to this "Brown to Green" initiative has helped to train farmers on new techniques like growing crops in greenhouses and irrigation techniques that use half of the amount of water currently used. Demonstration farms have been established to facilitate this training and provide hands on experience. Nearly 200 farmers have received greenhouses with 100 more expected to be delivered over the next few months. Drip irrigation systems, seed and fertilizers will follow shortly after providing farmers with the tools they need to succeed.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Baghdad University Agricultural College and Veterinarian collage, along with agricultural cooperatives have received



new equipment to teach students and farmer's modern techniques and animals such as cows for teaching proper care and feeding techniques further building a cooperative relationship in the community.

I am confident that these projects will have a lasting effect on the people of Abu Ghraib and Taji areas. Every Soldier in this brigade played a key role in the successful completion of these projects. Your missions ranged from escorting the PRT and JPMO to projects, identifying farmers for greenhouses and business for micro grants, providing security for opening ceremonies or key leader engagements where these projects were identified. These were all critical and instrumental to the success of this brigade's and our partner's non-lethal effort. You have made Iraq a better place and have laid the ground work for future prosperity.

6th IRAQI ARMY

Staff Maj. Gen. Ahmed

6th Iraqi Army Division Commanding General



Staff Maj. Gen. Ahmed took command of the 6th Iraqi Army Division in March 2010, right before the historic National Election. Upon assuming command, he assessed that to be victorious, Iraqi Security Forces would first have to defeat sectarianism. With the assistance of friendly U.S. Forces, they have prevailed. His second priority is the battle against al-Qaeda in Iraq. The 6th IA has successfully battled AQI while simultaneously assuming sole control of security in the Abu Ghraib and western Baghdad areas of operations in accordance with the Security Agreement and in the midst of the withdrawal of American troops. The final battle will be to rebuild the country.

Since taking command, Staff Maj. Gen. Ahmed has committed his every action to the protection of his fellow citizens and to developing his brigades to take an even larger role in providing security. Col. Norris and Staff Maj. Gen. Ahmed quickly developed a close, professional as well as personal relationship that allowed for the free exchange of ideas and cultural infor-

mation and the synchronization of operations between the two units.

He organized a security meeting between himself and the tribal leaders of Abu Ghraib. He convinced them to sign an agreement stating that they would help the security forces weed out the last remaining terrorists by explaining to them that the IA could not defend the area alone, and needed the support of the people in order to ensure Iraq's success against AQI and other violent extremists.

Staff Maj. Gen. Ahmed has personally taken interest in the importance of forensic evidence. He has toured the forensic laboratories, personally collected evidence and turned it over for processing and ordered all his commanders to visit the labs as well. This evidence led to the successful detention of several individuals, further reinforcing to his 6th IA Soldiers the importance of this process.

As the Iraqi Army transitions into the third battle to rebuild the country, Staff Maj. Gen. Ahmed continues to be a driving force in the Abu Ghraib area. He has distributed toys to the children,



given clothes and medical equipment to the elderly and helped fund cultural ceremonies for the poor. Humanitarian food drops have also been distributed by his commanders.

As the Raider Brigade leaves Iraq, it can be confident that Staff Maj. Gen. Ahmed and the 6th Iraqi Army Division are ready to continue leading security operations and have the irreversible momentum to be successful at any security challenge that they may face.

NORRIS from page 5

conducting what is now considered a non-standard redeployment. Our current redeployment plan was selected by USF-I to allow for the maximum amount of strategic flexibility yet still depart Iraq before the September 1 deadline. As we work tirelessly through these operations, let's continue to take care of our Soldiers and each other. It is now time to finish our

seven year mission in Iraq and conduct the symbolic Last Patrol with our ISF partners as the last combat brigade in Iraq. We will DEPART Iraq with our reputation intact, you have secured your place in history.

Raider 6
"Raiders To the Objective!"





MANCHU 6

Lt. Col. Mark Bieger

4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment Commander



To the Soldiers and families of the Manchu Battalion,

This letter will be the last of the deployment and our final entry in to the Raider Tribe. It is impossible to put in to words everything our battalion and great brigade have accomplished over the past 11 months. I could spend some time writing on our contributions and support to the Soldiers of the 24th Iraqi Army Brigade or the Iraqi Police of Western Abu Ghraib. I could try and capture the impact and effects we have had on the populations of Nasir Wa Salam, Aqur Quf and Zaidon. I could also list the numerous and diverse missions we have conducted inside and outside the wire here at Joint Security Station NWS and months ago at JSS Aqur Quf. But even then, I would fall short of capturing the scope and magnitude of what we have accomplished here in the last days of Operation Iraqi Freedom. There have been victories and successes, small and large – too numerous to count and too powerful to describe.

So instead, I will take some time and talk about the men who made it all happen. Two groups of warriors have achieved success beyond all expectation. One group wears silver bars and chevrons with diamonds on their chests, and the other wears many ranks, but has one thing in common – they all wear our nation's flag on their right shoulders. Our battalion is blessed to have company commanders and first sergeants who are the epitome of combat leaders. These eight men have worked tirelessly to accomplish every mission assigned, care for their Soldiers and families and remain focused throughout the deployment. These professionals provide guidance, discipline and mentorship. They

take brigade and battalion orders and turn them in to good, solid purpose and direction. They have worked in one of the most demanding and complex environments possible and succeeded with every challenge. They correct, improve and build. They motivate, challenge and inspire. Most of all and most importantly – they lead.

The battalion would not be successful in this deployment without these eight Soldiers and their outstanding, selfless leadership. And we would not have reached the level of success without the 640 Manchus in their formations. The images captured in the adjacent page depict four company formations of Manchus – Havoc, Able, Blowtorch and Comanche. These Soldiers have accomplished all of their missions, exceeded every expectation and standard – and remained strong and disciplined. They are a mix of young and old Soldiers, from first time deployers to men who are on their fifth combat tour. There are single men, married and those who want to be married. There are infantrymen, cavalrymen, artillerymen, medics and many more. These men have served honorably in the defense of our great nation and the support of Iraq. They have put their personal lives on hold while they pick up a rifle, stand guard in a tower or on a street corner or move silently in squad formation following their leader. Every time the ramp of their Stryker drops, they exit with full confidence and unyielding courage. They are the true strength of our battalion and their hard work and service will be measured years from now in a more stable Middle East – and security for our own nation and families.



Some day, historians will write books about the final two years of this war and conclude that the American Army defeated the insurgency and brought a level of security to the country of Iraq to allow them to proceed with the forming of their new government. This is true and makes for interesting reading. But the real story that our country should take pride in – is the service, sacrifice, heroism, professionalism and immeasurable contribution of the American Soldier.

In closing, it has been an honor and privilege to serve with the Warriors of the Manchu Battalion in combat. Our Soldiers and leaders have been a source of strength, discipline and inspiration – and I will forever be thankful to have stood in their ranks and to have watched them travel home, victorious, to the welcome of their families and friends – and a grateful nation.

Lt. Col. Mark Bieger
"Keep Up the Fire!"





1SG Marcos A. Hernandez CPT Derek J. Oberg



1SG Joel D. Lundak CPT Brian C. Forester



CPT Derek R. Noel

1SG Mark A. Ohme



CPT Guy J. Girouard 1SG Julio C. Armas



Raider Brigade witnesses efforts pay off as Iraqis head to polls

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

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

BAGHDAD – Roughly halfway 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, hav-

ing witnessed years of growth, change, 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



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

Iraqi Army and Police were present at the 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 Brigade Soldiers and leaders were carefully monitoring the security situation alongside their Iraqi partners.

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 ensur-

ing 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 voter 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 determi-



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

(Below) A Soldier with the Military Police Platoon, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, peers from behind a tree covered in election posters March 7 as the Abu Ghraib populace votes.



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

(Below) 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.

nation 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 a sight to see people voting.”



TOMAHAWK 6

Lt. Col. Mike Lawrence

2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment Commander



Tomahawks,

From its first hard-fought battles in the American Civil War, to overcoming insurmountable odds during the Korean War battle of Chip Yong-Ni, to fighting valiantly during the Surge operations in Iraq, the Tomahawks have always been a force our country can count on. The 2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment was constituted on May 3, 1861, and since then has served gallantly in 58 major campaigns. With its most recent deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom 09-10 coming to a close, the Tomahawks will yet again add another combat streamer to its Regimental Colors.

In preparation for the historic 2010 Iraqi national elections, the Tomahawks assumed control in October 2009 of the largest, most ethnically diverse area in the Raider Brigade consisting of a complex mix of urban sprawl and expansive rural terrain. We immediately began executing combat operations from Baghdad north into the Taji Qadaa in order to defeat insurgent forces and protect the Iraqi people in the months leading to the March 2010 elections. While faced with the impending threat of car bombs and suicide attacks inside the capital, the Tomahawks simultaneously attacked insurgent safe havens in the countryside to prevent the flow of weapons and enemy fighters into the capital city.

As election day approached, Tomahawks deployed in force on March 4, phasing all platoons into sector to occupy our entire area of operations, composed of more than 600 square ki-

lometers and close to one million Iraqi citizens. We operated continuously for 96 hours, dominating the security environment with our Iraqi Army partners, sleeping on the ground, eating little, but keeping guard day and night so the people could safely vote for something that had not previously existed – an Arab democracy. Expectations of an attack were high, yet our Soldiers held firm. Elements of the battalion executed a raid early in the morning, at approximately 2 a.m. on March 7, capturing two detainees planning to disrupt the elections. During departure from the objective, they were hit by a roadside bomb with two Iraqi soldiers wounded. The threat was real. As the sun rose on the 7th, and voting began, explosions were heard in the distance throughout the rest of the Raider AO. The Tomahawk vigilance paid off as not a single attack occurred in the Tomahawk AO. Election day security was a direct testament to the bravery and service of our Tomahawks who thrived under the harsh conditions.

Following the elections, the Tomahawks spent over \$10 million on Iraqi infrastructure and humanitarian aid. Highlights included distribution of over 10,000 school supply backpacks to students, 4,000 water filters and 3,000 blankets to needy families, and 1,000 meals served to Baghdad's homeless. In all, the Tomahawks rebuilt or remodeled three schools, built miles of primary roadway, and invested in numerous agricultural initiatives.

During the course of OIF 09-10, the Tomahawks executed over 3,000 patrols, 23 named operations and 35 multi-day



Iraqi-US combined training events. This unwavering commitment to securing Iraq led to a successful election and resulted in Iraqi Security Forces that are prepared to operate unilaterally. During this deployment, 2nd Bn., 23rd Inf. Regt. saw the most combat action in the Raider Brigade, earning nine Purple Heart Medals, a Valorous commendation, three Combat Action Badges, three Combat Medical Badges, and twenty-five Combat Infantryman Badges.

The Tomahawks have served honorably throughout our 150-year history and have one more proud chapter to our history. We fully expect that this will not be the last time our nation calls the Tomahawks to fight and win. When the time comes again, the 2nd Bn., 23rd Inf. Regt. will be ready.

Lt. Col. Mike Lawrence
"Tomahawks! We Serve."



New facility combines IA, U.S. Forces

*Story by Sgt. Bryce S. Dubee &
Spc. Luisito Brooks
4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.*

BAGHDAD – After months of planning and construction, the 6th Iraqi Army Division and the 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division held a ribbon cutting for the recently completed Joint Operations Center on Forward Operating Base Constitution March 15.

“This JOC will prove to be an invaluable asset in the effort to provide security to the Iraqi people,” said Lt. Col. Darron Wright, deputy commanding officer of 4th SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div.

While the new facility, designed to be the central node for the sharing of information between U.S. and Iraqi forces in western Baghdad, had been in operation since before the March 7 Iraqi National Elections, the ceremony represented the official opening of the operations center.

With a quick snip of a pair of gold-handled scissors, Lt. Gen. Ahmed Hashim Aouadi, commanding general of the Baghdad Operations Command, cut the ribbon on the state-of-the-art center, which brings the intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities of the U.S. and Iraqi militaries under one roof.

These combined assets were put on display for the guests and media present at the ceremony in the form of a simulated operation which showed U.S. and Iraqi service members working in the JOC, coordinating operations with troops on the ground.

Watching aerial surveillance footage

of U.S. and Iraqi troops approaching an objective, a U.S. Soldier working in the JOC communicated directly to the troops on the ground, sharing the latest intelligence with them and providing updates to other staff members in the command center.

One row ahead of him, an IA officer relayed updates to his fellow Iraqi Soldiers as they detained two men and prepared to assault a building. Upon completing his communication to the field, he too provided an update to the rest of the JOC.

The demonstration showed the close level of side-by-side coordination the facility is capable of, and its use in combining efforts on the battlefield.

For Staff Sgt. Brad Mateski, a network and systems administrator assigned to 472nd Signal Company, 4th SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div., the JOC opening represents the end of months of work and planning, as well as the start of work in a new location.

“The new facility has greatly improved network capabilities,” he said, explaining that the structure not only has more space but is more secure as well, providing a complete voice and data network.

Mateski, who worked with members of 16th Engineer Brigade during the planning and construction of the JOC to advise where to run data lines and place power conduits, said the process has been fun.

“It’s kind of like building your own house,” he said. “You get to say, ‘This goes here, and this goes here.’”

Because the old JOC was literally

right next door, transitioning to the new facility was merely a matter of unplugging things, moving them, and plugging them back in, he added.

Overall, Mateski said he’s looking forward to working in the new JOC and continuing his relationship with his Iraqi partners.

“They treat us like family over here,” he said. “I’ve had a real good experience working with them.”

The key to the completion of the new battlefield assets has been the partnership trail that runs straight to its front steps, he said.

“With this new JOC complete, it will symbolize the great cooperation between Federal Police, 6th Iraqi Army, Iraqi Police and the Raider Brigade,” said Lt. Hassin, an officer with 6th IA Div.

Pfc. Chris Bozarth, a Soldier with 4th SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div., commented that the new JOC is a big improvement from the old one.

“Try to imagine a sardine can, and that was what the old JOC was like,” laughed Bozarth who had worked inside the old JOC since being deployed to Iraq last fall. “(Our job) is to support the IA’s mission.”

“Now there is a centralized location in which information is gathered and shared.”

During his speech at the ceremony, Wright summarized the purpose of bringing everyone together under one roof. “Together, the Iraqi Army, the Iraqi Police and the Federal Police forces will be able to ensure the security of Iraq’s future more efficiently.”



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



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



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



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



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



ROCK 6

Lt. Col. John Leffers

1st Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment Commander



Greetings Rock of the Marne Warriors!

It has been a long and difficult journey for the battalion over the last 24 months.

Only eight months after re-deploying from fighting as part of the Surge in Iraq in 2007-2008, the battalion received notification from the Department of the Army that we would be accelerated by 10 months and deploy back to Iraq in August 2009 to support the Iraqi National Elections and the seating of the new government.

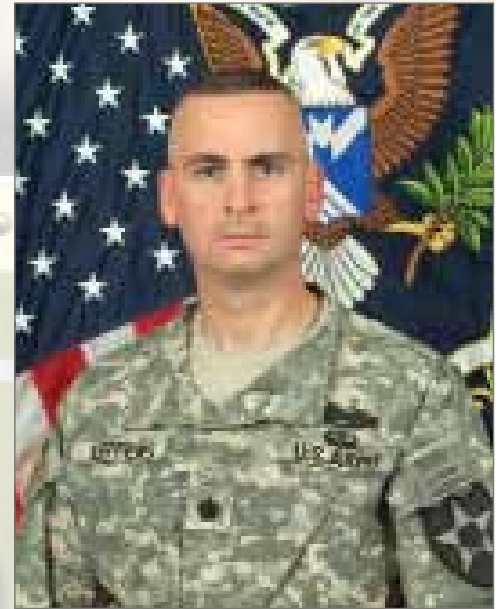
Despite having our dwell cut short by 10 months, the Warriors of the Rock of Marne, who historically have always held the line during World War I, WWII, Korea, and OIF 7-8, eagerly

and assist the Iraqi Security Forces as they completely take over the reins for their own security.

Our legacy will be having established the strong foundation for a strategic partnership between the United States and the sovereign nation of Iraq.

The United States has invested a lot of blood and treasure into making Iraq a true democracy, where its citizens elect their own government; secure their borders from external threats, and maintain an internal police force that can provide security for its citizens and enforce the rule of law.

One day, we will all look proudly back on our combat tours in Iraq and



“Once again this great regiment is holding the line for our nation.”

-Lt. Col. John Leffers

answered the call.

Once again this great regiment is holding the line for our nation. We will be the last combat Battalion in Iraq! We will hold the line as the covering force for Baghdad and its surrounding areas to allow the remainder of the units to re-deploy as we transition to the advisory and assistance brigades (AAB), who will be the only U.S. Forces remaining in Iraq to advise

know that our hard work, personal courage, and dedication to duty set the uncompromising conditions for the nation of Iraq to fully prosper and become a strong ally to the United States. This is very similar to what the 38th Infantry Regiment did during WWI and WWII, where Germany is now a strong strategic ally that we rely on heavily to forward project our combat power into areas of the World that require our as-

sistance.

In closing, I want to personally thank all of the Warriors of the Rock Battalion and your families for all of the personal sacrifice you have made and continue to make for this great nation of ours. I wish you all God speed and safe travels as you continue your journey in life. We will always be a tight knit Band of Brothers with the incredible honor of being able to tell our children and grand children that we once served in the 38th Infantry Regiment – the Rock of the Marne – the greatest regiment ever to have fought in our nation’s wars!

Lt. Col. John Leffers
“Let ‘em Come!”
“Rock of the Marne!”





2009

March 1 - Col. John Norris announces the acceleration of the Raider Brigade to Iraq.



Aug. 24 - The brigade colors are cased.



September - 4th SBCT arrives in Kuwait, begins port operations and training.

June - Raider Brigade Soldiers train at the JRTC, Fort Polk, La.



Aug. 27 - Before deploying, Raider Soldiers gather for a brigade ball.

Sept. 28 - Colors are uncased in Iraq, and the Raider Brigade assumes responsibility from 2nd Bde. 1st Inf. Div.



2010

January - Several VIPs visit the brigade including Vice President Joe Biden.



March 11 - JSS Aqur Ouf transferred to Iraqi Security Forces.

March 15 - 4th SBCT and the 6th IA Div. open the Joint Operations Center at FOB Constitution.

April 20 - JCC Abu Ghraib transferred to Iraqi Security Forces.

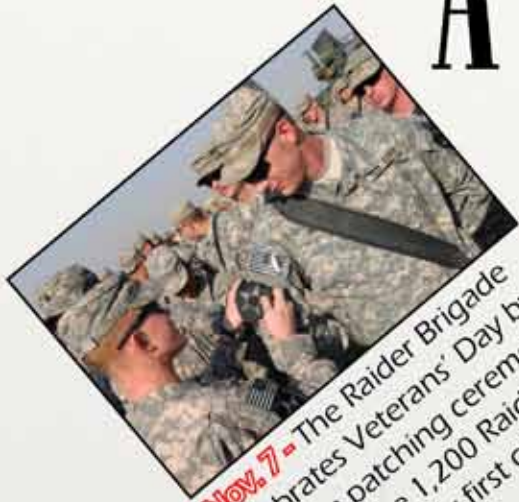
March 7 - After months of hard work and preparation, 4th SBCT watches as the Iraqi people head to the polls to vote in their National Election.



May 7 - JSS Sheik Amir transferred to Iraqi Security Forces.



A look back...



Nov. 7 - The Raider Brigade celebrates Veterans' Day by holding patching ceremonies, where 1,200 Raiders are awarded their first combat patch.



Dec. 25 - The holiday season gives the Raider Brigade a chance to celebrate and connect with loved ones back home.

Nov. 26 - Across western Baghdad, Raiders enjoy Thanksgiving dinner away from home.



Dec. 18 - Adm. Mike Mullen visits the Raider Brigade.



June 20 - 4th SBCT medics compete in a unit-wide best medic competition

July 29 - JSS Tarmiyah and Mushada transferred to Iraqi Security Forces.



July 4 - Raiders celebrate the 4th of July with Dr. Jill Biden



August - The Last Patrol



BLACKHAWK6

Lt. Col. Rick Heyward

2nd Sqdn., 1st Cav. Regt. Commander



Blackhawk Troopers, Families, and Friends,

As we come to the end of a very successful and historic combat tour here in Iraq, I'd like all of you to take a moment to reflect on where we were less than two years ago as a squadron and family team. In February 2009, we received official notification on an accelerated deployment and would go to Iraq in September of that same year. Our troops were still completing reset and we all faced the daunting task of familiarizing ourselves with our equipment, training a new team, and honing our combat skills.

In March, our squadron made the trip to the Yakima Training Center and conducted weapons ranges, mortar live fires, and executed platoon live fire training. Simultaneously, the 45th Military Intelligence Company and Darkhorse Troop conducted specialized training of their Soldiers through schools, training teams, and support of deployed units to hone their skills. We then packed our equipment and made the journey to the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, La. Braving the June heat and choking humidity of the bayou, you all performed admirably and demonstrated many of the same enduring qualities that would be the hallmark of your service in Iraq.

On September 11, 2009, we deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom 09-10. Not only did we leave our homes and loved ones on a significant day in American history, we left as the last combat brigade deployed to Iraq. Our troopers would be the last American Soldiers that Iraqis would deal with on a day-to-day basis, and the Army could not have picked a better group to leave

that legacy.

Upon our arrival to Iraq, we created a new home at Camp Striker on the outskirts of Baghdad. Arrow, Bandog, and Cobra Troops spread out among the farmland in the Zaidon area, a location not known for its love of Americans. Within days, we presided over the opening of the Zuhair bin-Sulma primary school, and mobilized the entire squadron for Operation "Coke Bottle." Furthermore, Darkhorse Troop and the MICO quickly set up operations and began critical intelligence mission support required to drive the SBCT's operations.

In December, we made our final move and set up operations at Camp Taji. Our troops turned over their area of operations to our sister battalion, 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment, and took over a new area from the 1st Cavalry Division.

While our area of responsibility grew when we moved to Taji, our level of commitment did not diminish. Arrow Troop moved out and occupied Joint Security Station Tarmiyah, Bandog Troop took over JSS Mushada, and Cobra Troop became responsible for Main Supply Route Tampa and many other security missions in support of the squadron and brigade. Immediately, the team began to work hard at building rapport with the local population. Concurrently, leaders at every level across the unit engaged the local shaykhs and leaders in an attempt to further stabilize a very tenuous security environment.

With that daunting task complete, our focus turned to the Iraqi National Elections. Since the beginning of OIF, elections represented an increase in violence and contested results. To mitigate this,



every Blackhawk worked closely with their Iraqi counterparts and conducted numerous combined missions to ensure safe and secure elections. In the weeks prior to the election, we took numerous caches, weapons, and high value individuals off the streets. The team worked hard; conducting polling site assessments, performing combined patrols, and implementing counter IED operations at a feverish pace running up to the elections. The entire effort was a resounding success, as our OE was the only area in the Baghdad Province with no attacks on Election Day. Such a level of success was unprecedented, especially in Tarmiyah and Mushada, and was the result of meticulous planning and preparation by everyone in the squadron.

With the national elections behind us, we focused our efforts on stability and support operations. I know that for many of you this was a major shift

See **BLACKHAWKS**, page 30



BLACKHAWKS from page 29

from previous deployments. For others, the new mission set was very different that what you had envisioned of a combat deployment and that often it was difficult to see tangible results. Regardless, you approached the situation and executed the mission as professionals. Through your actions, you set the example for your Iraqi counterparts and gave them an excellent model to follow. While the fruits of your labor may not be immediately noticeable, rest assured that the tremendous effort you put in every day will manifest itself in the Iraqi Security Forces and the people of Iraq for many years to come. Through your actions, you have left an indelible mark on the Iraqi Army, Iraqi Police and its local leadership; one that will allow them to succeed long after we are gone.

Be extremely proud of all that you have accomplished in the last 12 months. You have made a difference in allowing a transition to occur here in Iraq and established a sustainable security environment that is now in Iraqi hands. Your actions have made a difference in the lives of the Iraqi people, providing them liberty, freedom and choice that otherwise would never have occurred.

Our families and community connectors are incredible; we can never thank all of you enough for the unwavering support you have provided during this deployment. Command Sgt. Maj. Griffin and I are truly proud of this incredible team and feel privileged to have fought and served with each of you.

Lt. Col. Rick Heyward & Command Sgt. Maj. Kevin Griffin
"Blackhawks!"





Infantrymen trade **BULLETS** for **backpacks**

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

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – With their Strykers parked outside, 1st Lt. Matt Sawdy led 1st platoon, Company C, 1st Battalion 38th Infantry Regiment, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, into the building, his men setting up a security perimeter along the way.

Inside the courtyard, the lieutenant met with his Iraqi Army counterpart, discussed plans for the day's mission, then took a knee, placing his M4 carbine at his side and picking up a bright pink Barbie backpack.

Soldiers from the platoon conducted a series of humanitarian assistance drops March 25, delivering roughly 2,400 backpacks full of school supplies to children at schools in their operational environment.

As Sawdy and his men took their positions to begin distributing the supplies, teachers from the school led their eager students into the courtyard.

"It's good to get out here and help the kids out," he said. "As a father, it makes you feel good."

As security continues to improve in Iraq, the infantrymen are finding themselves conducting more of these types of missions rather than the high-intensity combat operations they would have conducted during their previous deployments.

After two deployments to Iraq full of intense fighting from 2003 to 2004

and again from 2006 to 2007, Sgt. 1st Class Adam Asclipiadis assumed this deployment would be similar.

"This deployment is different from the last," the San Jose, Calif., native said, explaining that even with the pre-deployment emphasis on supporting the Iraqi Security Forces, citizens and government, the amount of non-lethal missions he's conducted this deployment came as a surprise.

"Even the non-kinetic operations at (the Joint Readiness Training Center,) the key leader engagements, and all that did not prepare my brain for this," the infantry platoon sergeant said, as smiling schoolchildren lined up to get their supplies. "There's a sense of satisfaction that the deployments we did before meant something."

This fact is something that Asclipiadis imparts on his Soldiers, admitting that sometimes there's a challenge in explaining this new reality to young infantrymen, straight out of training, who anticipate they will be heading into a fight.

"Ever since basic, they've been drilled 'kill, kill, kill, assault and breach.'— We're not really doing any of that, so you have to refocus them," he said,

adding that while some might get frustrated at times with the boredom of something like a school supply drop, he feels his Soldiers will realize the significance of their actions in the long run. "Years from now they'll look back and say, 'I did that.'"

Participating in the mission that day, while on his first deployment, was Pfc. Benjamin Dodd, an





M240 machine gunner. He said that while it's not what he expected, he's embracing his new role.

"It's a totally different war now," the Rockville, Tenn., native said. "We're trying to build (the Iraqis) up now as a country."

Dodd said he's appreciative of the real-world experience he's gaining while deployed and

better understands the sacrifices of the Soldiers who came before him.

A Stryker driver from Milladore, Wisc., also on his first deployment, Pfc. Robert Grassel agreed, echoing a comment spoken by Asclipiadis earlier that day.

"Sgt. A said that this deployment is better because he'd rather go home

with all of his Soldiers than a bag full of memories," said Grassel.

For Dodd, while he's first and foremost an infantryman, he enjoys watching the Iraqi children running away with smiles on their faces and arms full of school supplies.

"If I had to do projects all the time," he said, "these are the kind I'd want to do."





VIKING 6

Lt. Col. Terrence Braley

2nd Battalion, 12th Field Artillery Regiment Commander



Fellow Vikings, families, and friends,

During the past year, the Soldiers of the Viking Battalion have accomplished a multitude of diverse missions in support of our Iraqi Security Force partners. The Soldiers of the Viking Battalion supported our ISF partners in securing the local population, provided training for the ISF, conducted civic action projects for the people of Western Baghdad, and even provided artillery fire support. With all these missions, our Soldiers left behind a lasting legacy of professionalism in the ISF allowing the country of Iraq to gain irreversible momentum.

Every day Viking Soldiers supported and assisted two Iraqi Army brigades and one Iraqi Federal Police brigade in securing the local population. Our Soldiers conducted over 770 combined patrols with our ISF Partners. These missions included assisting Iraqi Soldiers in searching vehicles at checkpoints by providing key enablers to detect hidden explosives and other weapons. We also conducted 18 combined operations searching suspected areas looking for insurgents and weapons. Viking Soldiers together with Iraqi Soldiers searched key polling sites prior to the March 7 elections, ensuring the Iraqi people could safely vote. We also conducted over 940 unilateral missions to ensure freedom of movement and security within Western Baghdad.

When we were not conducting operations with the ISF, the Vikings trained

our partners. With the assistance of our attached advisor teams, the Vikings trained the Iraqi Army and Federal Police in marksmanship, vehicle searches, sensitive site exploitation, and battle command. The Soldiers who manned our joint operations centers trained Iraqi Soldiers how to battle track and the importance of timely and accurate reports. Over 1,500 Iraqi Soldiers were trained on M16 marksmanship on the Joint Security Station Justice range. Vikings trained Iraqi Soldiers on how to properly use the Backscatter Van at checkpoints to search vehicles for hidden explosives. All of the training provided by our Viking Soldiers assisted in turning a capable Iraqi Army into a professional army.

With the help of our attached civil affairs team, the Viking Battalion conducted civic action project to help improve the quality of life for the local populace. All projects and humanitarian assistance missions were conducted by, with and through our ISF partners. We even had the ISF planning and conducting their own civic action missions and all we provided were the supplies. We completed 42 projects for a total of \$500,000. Some of the more notable projects concluded were school remodeling, distribution of school supplies, and the remodeling of the Khadamiya Sports Complex.

The Viking Battalion maintained "Hot Gun" support from October 2009



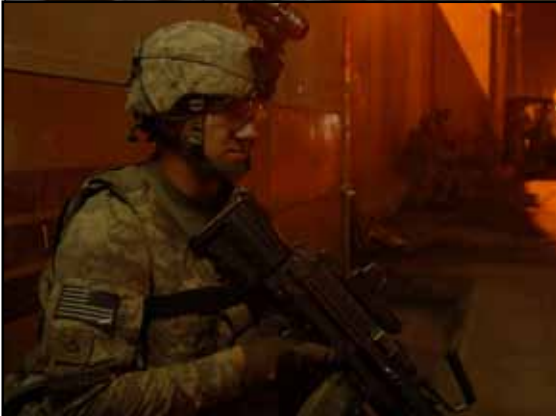
through January 2010. Soldiers from Barbarian Battery and Chief Battery fired 153 illumination 155MM rounds and 32 high explosive 155MM rounds in support of area denial missions. Soldiers from Hammer Battery provided early warning and detection of enemy indirect fire using both the Q36 and Q37 Firefinder Radars. Hammer Soldiers also supported the all U.S. Forces in the Baghdad area with updated meteorological data using the Profiler system.

In closing, the mighty Viking Soldiers advised, trained and assisted the Iraqi Security forces in Western Baghdad securing the Iraqi people. Vikings have put the final touches on OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM and have the honor of being the last combat Soldiers in Western Baghdad.

Lt. Col. Terrence Braley

"Raiders To the Objective, Vikings!"





STRYKER



*Pfc. Greg Miller,
Infantryman, 4th Bn., 9th Inf. Regt.
Ind.*

"I took this picture when we first got to Kuwait, on the way to a range out in the desert to fire our marks and fifties. It's one of my favorites because even though I took it at the beginning

of the deployment, it's fitting as an image of us leaving here as well."



*Sgt. Paul C. Adamson,
Mortar Squad leader, 4th Bn., 9th Inf. Regt.
Burbank, Calif.*

"Throughout this deployment I have had the privilege of taking thousands of pictures of the Soldiers to my left and right, both American and Iraqi. I have also had the chance

to capture the great moments during our time with the people of Iraq. This is one of my favorite pictures that I have taken. It shows the emotion in the future of Iraq's children. Their smiles reflect that our job is making a difference."



SHOOTERS



*Sgt. Anastasia Maynich,
CBRN NCO, 472nd Sig Co.
Moscow, Russia*

"It was a one shot deal.

I chose this photo because it's so full of emotion. It's like she has two people within herself: a Soldier and a woman. She's looking into the reflection, yet

she's looking back at us. It means that that person cares. Even though she's looking away, she'll always look at you. She was feeling the anticipation of going home, feeling the emotion of actually being here then transitioning herself back to life in the US. I wanted to show her personality and this shot wouldn't have worked with anyone else."



The 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division Public Affairs Office would like to thank you for the opportunity to tell your story over the past year.

From training at the Joint Readiness Training Center to the Last Patrol, we feel privileged to have had the opportunity to travel among the battalions, working with Soldiers in every job and at every level to inform the American people of the great things the Raiders have accomplished.

Without you, we would have no mission and we hope that you had a chance to view and enjoy the various products we created.

To see more of the stories, photos and videos from the Raider Brigade check out our Facebook page and DVIDS website at:

www.facebook.com/4SBCT-2ID

<http://www.dvidshub.net/units/4SBCT-2ID>





FORGE 6

Lt. Col. Gary Martin

702nd Brigade Support Battalion Commander



Soldiers, Families, and Friends of the Forge Battalion

I am happy to inform you that our time here in Iraq is coming to an end. As we enter into our final few weeks in country, I'd like to commend everyone in the Forge family, both deployed and at home, for your hard work, determination, and patience during our deployment. On behalf of myself and Command Sgt. Maj. Walter, THANK YOU. Each of you has made tremendous sacrifices in support of our tenure overseas; without your support, we would not have been able to achieve the level of success that we did. Each of you should be extremely proud of yourselves and your accomplishments.

As most of you know, our Forge Soldiers, noncommissioned officers, warrant officers, and officers have been providing outstanding combat service support and health service support to the Raider Brigade for nearly 12 straight months of continuous combat operations – not a small feat by any stretch of the imagination.

While each of the brigade's maneuver battalions own and operate within their own operational environments, our battalion has provided sustainment support throughout the entire Raider Brigade OE, covering Western, Central, and Northern Baghdad. The numerous missions of the Forge Battalion have spanned across multiple joint security stations, forward operating bases, camps, and the Victory Base

Complex, impacting the lives of over 4,000 Raiders and 7,000 non-BCT Soldiers and civilians.

Through your constant efforts and commitment to success, the Forge Battalion has greatly impacted the success of the brigade in its efforts to combat insurgency, support the Iraq National Elections, and establish and uphold an effective and lasting partnership with our Iraqi Army counterparts.

Job well done, Forge. I cannot express how proud I am of your commitment and dedication to this vast and complex mission set.

Our headquarters and staff sections have endured countless hours, oftentimes "burning the midnight oil," planning, directing, and synchronizing the logistical, operational, administrative, and religious functions of the battalion. Their efforts have allowed us to maintain seamless, uninterrupted CSS, HSS and technical oversight to the Raider Brigade.

Our Logistical Training and Advisory Team has made lasting impressions in the improvement of the Iraq Army's logistical systems, through joint U.S.-IA training events, participation in countless key leader engagements, and the development of exportable training packages – basic step-by-step instructional manuals for various maintenance operations – for the IA to continue using in the years to come. Your efforts



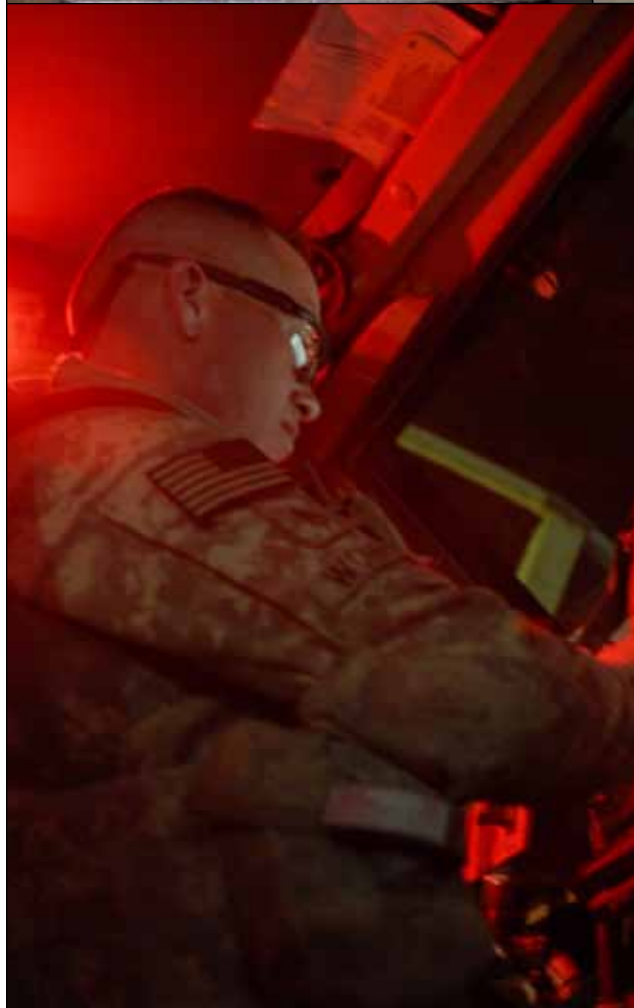
have been instrumental in providing the necessary guidance to our companies as they conducted their sustainment missions.

The Soldiers of Headquarters Company, "Highlanders," have served over 1 million meals through their Field Feeding Teams and cooks who provided oversight of our two dining facilities, the Raider Inn and DeFluery Café.

The Soldiers of Alpha Company, "Atlas," have provided distribution of all classes of supply, conducted over 500 combat logistics patrols (CLPs), driven over 140,000 miles, and delivered over 1 million gallons of fuel and 800,000 tons of supplies, ensuring every Raider Soldier received the necessary sustenance and resources to "stay in the fight".

The Soldiers of Bravo Company,

See FORGE, page 42



FORGE from page 41

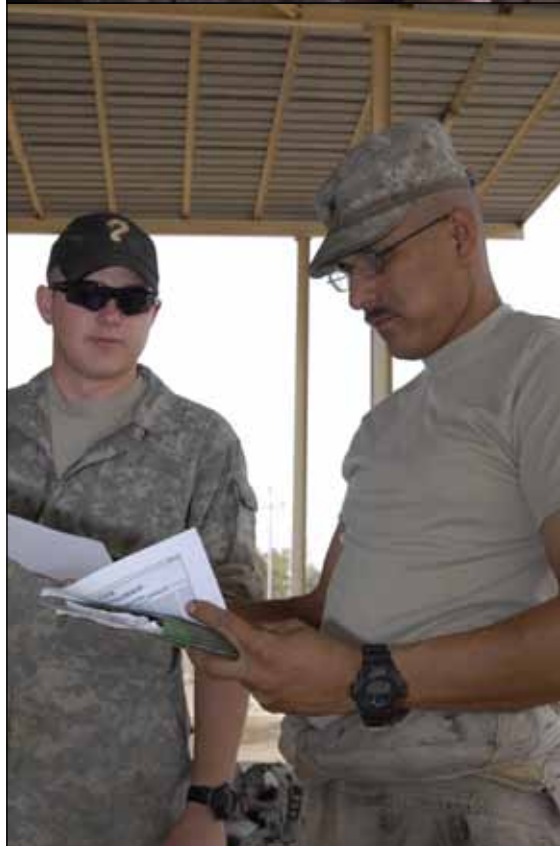
“Blacksmith,” conducted field level maintenance and wheeled vehicle repair for the battalion and brigade’s fleet. Their efforts elevated the previous Stryker Operational Readiness rate from 63% to 97%, which they maintained throughout the entire deployment.

The Soldiers of Charlie Company, “Crusaders,” provided Level II area health support, emergency medical and disease non-battle injury treatment, ground evacuation, dental, physical therapy, behavioral health, preventive medicine, pharmacy, immunizations, laboratory, radiology, patient hold, medical supply, and medical maintenance. During the deployment, the Crusaders stood up two separate Troop Medical Clinics, Riva Ridge at Camp Liberty and the Raider TMC at Camp Taji, treating a patient population of over 24,000 personnel.

Our three Logistical Support Teams and five Combat Repair Teams were forward-located with each maneuver battalion, providing direct support operations for distribution, maintenance, and field feeding.

So, again, THANK YOU to everyone in the Forge family. It is because of you that this deployment has been a success. Be proud of what you have done and cherish these memories – they will last you a lifetime.

Lt. Col. Gary Martin
“TO THE OBJECTIVE!”
“RAIDER SUPPORT! FORGE!!”



BRIGADE STAFF



MILITARY POLICE



PERSONAL SECURITY DETACHMENT



MILITARY TRAIN

-22ND BDE, 6TH IA DIV-24TH BDE, 6TH IA DIV-54TH BDE, 6TH IA DIV-36TH BDE, 9TH IA DIV-



TRANSITION TEAMS

37TH BDE, 9TH IA DIV- 2ND IRAQI FEDERAL POLICE DIV-9TH IA LOGISTICS BN



38TH ENGINEER COMPANY



COMPANY F, 52ND INFANTRY REGIMENT



MILITARY INTELLIGENCE COMPANY



472ND SIGNAL COMPANY



4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division

Raider Memorial

No one wants to glorify war, but it is appropriate to glorify the deeds of men in war. This is not a memorial to war, but a tribute to our heroes. Heroes who came from across America displaying the physical and moral courage that inspires Americans in every generation to lay down their lives for a higher purpose and for people they will never meet. It remains our challenge to do our very best to remain true to the principles and beliefs for which they made the ultimate sacrifice.





Thank you Lakewood for your support during OIF 09-10!



On the back cover:

CAMP BUEHRING, Kuwait -- Soldiers with 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment drive to a range in September 2009.

Photo by Pfc. Greg Miller, 4th Bn., 9th Inf. Regt., 4th SBCT, 2nd Inf Div.



STRYKER BRIGADE...

...TO THE OBJECTIVE!!!

