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January 12, 2010

Eliminator Company clears the way

By Staff Sgt. Natalie Hedrick
3rd HBCT, 3rd ID



FOB ECHO – It was late. While most of the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, at Forward Operating Base Echo were in bed the evening of Jan 2, Soldiers from “E” Company, 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment, were preparing for another day of work to begin.

It was 1st Platoon’s day to go out. After receiving their mission brief, the engineers made their way to the motor pool where their “chariots” awaited. Soldiers quickly prepped their Caiman armored vehicles, their Buffalo mine protected clearance vehicle, and their Husky engineering vehicle. They had a long night ahead of them.

“I can’t believe the Army is paying me to do this,” Pvt. Evanan Elias said



Photos by Staff Sgt. Natalie Hedrick

Soldiers of 1st Plt., “E” Co., 1st Bn., 15th Inf. Regt., 3rd HBCT, 3rd Inf. Div., get together to pray before a route clearance mission Jan. 2, at FOB Echo. The fact that they are not going through anything alone keeps them motivated, many engineers from 1st Plt. said.

as he jumped down from the back of his vehicle. “I love being an engineer.”

When it was just about time to leave, the protective gear was put on and the last of the cigarettes were put out. Drivers, gunners, truck commanders, medics, and mechanics made their way to their assigned seats.

Their mission this deployment sounds simple enough - to provide freedom of movement for friendly forces throughout the “Dragon,” or operational environment. Yet, the details in gaining “mission complete” status, in reality are anything but easy.

“We are the first line of defense for everyone who travels in this [operational environment],” said Sgt. Eric McFarland, truck commander for the Buffalo that day. “It’s pretty rewarding knowing that our job is finding [improvised explosive devices] so no one gets hit.”

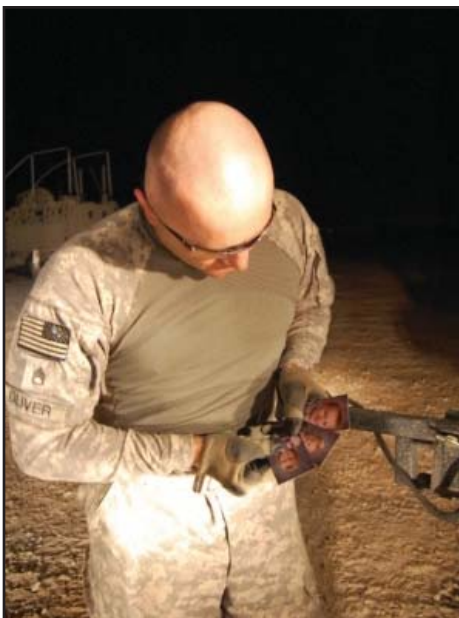
“I can’t believe the Army is paying me to do this. I love being an engineer.”

~ Pvt. Evanan Elias

Although most of the Soldiers agree their job is gratifying, there are difficulties they endure before, during and after each mission.

Spc. Sean Bryant is a mechanic assigned to 1st Plt. Although he is not an engineer by trade, he travels with them on every mission.

“I had to learn the engineering equipment,” he said. “It’s difficult sometimes because I have to stay up all night to work to keep their vehicles on the road.”



Staff Sgt. Vincent Oliver, 1st Plt., “E” Co., 1st Bn., 15th Inf. Regt., 3rd HBCT, 3rd Inf. Div., looks at school photos of his children before a route clearance mission Jan. 2 at FOB Echo. Although most of the Soldiers from 1st Plt. agree their job is gratifying, there are difficulties they endure before, during and after each mission.

Remembering their roots:

Artillerymen stay connected to traditions in a very different combat environment

By Sgt. Benjamin R Kibbey
USD-S PAO



COB BASRA – The traditional St. Barbara's Day banquet is a time to both come together and celebrate the roots of the artillery and honor her most outstanding members through induction into the Order of St. Barbara.

Though the punch served Dec. 18 during the observance at Contingency Operating Base Basra was missing the "spirits" it would normally contain, the spirits of the artillerymen and

guests were by no means dampened.

Capt. Chris Purtell, manager of the, Commander's Emergency Relief Program, 34th Infantry Division, United States Division-South, oversaw the creation of the punch, with the additions of several other symbolic ingredients.

In a lively and humorous display, and with the assistance of the most junior artilleryman present, Spc. Cody Broyels, 2nd Battalion, 150th Field Artillery Fires Regiment. Purtell finished the making of the punch with

a "check round" sent into the specialist's "breach."

With that, and the declaring of the punch as "fit for human consumption" by Brig. Gen. David J. Elicerio, deputy commanding general of operations, USD-S, the toasts and awards followed.

Prior to the induction of several new members into the Order of St. Barbara, Lt. Col. Thomas Sonnen, deputy in charge of information operations, 34th Inf. Div., read aloud a history of the "Oozle Finch," a mascot of sorts for artillerymen, yet another punctuation of humor into what, given the location, was otherwise a very dry affair.

He ended the short story with mention of two officers about to be awarded the Honorable Order of St. Barbara: Maj. Terry Jacobson, deputy Air Mobile Defense officer, USD-S, and Maj. Brian Smith, officer in charge of AMD, USD-S.

Capt. Paul Ives, Economics Team lead, civil-military operations, USD-S, and Lt. Col. James Swanson, Key Leader Engagement branch chief, USD-S, also received the Honorable Order of St. Barbara.

Yet, nothing bought focus to the changed duties of the modern artillery quite as much as the speech by Lt. Col. Steven L. Bullimore, 17th Fires Brigade commander.

Bullimore said he had been to a conference where some attendees had claimed that the leadership of



Photo by Sgt. Benjamin R. Kibbey

Capt. Chris Purtell, manager, CERP, USD-S, "aims" Spc. Cody Broyels, 2nd Bn., 150th FAR, prior "firing" the first "check round" of Artillery Punch at the St. Barbara's Day observance at COB Basra, Dec. 18. As the most junior artilleryman present, Broyles was picked for the honor of testing the brew.

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THE RED BULL REPORT

34th Red Bull Infantry Division
Public Affairs Office



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- 12th Combat Aviation Brigade
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Improving our foxhole:

By Spc. J. Princeville Lawrence
34th Red Bull Infantry Division PAO



COB BASRA – When the 34th “Red Bull” Infantry Division arrived at Contingency Operating Base Basra, they found a sparse and austere base.

The British had just recently moved their headquarters there before leaving, and the 10th Mountain had also just recently moved their headquarters there before leaving.

Thus, to the 34th Inf. Div. fell the majority of base building.

Col. Ronald Albrecht, 34th Inf. Div. deputy chief of staff, said one part of the build-up concerned protective structures - roads, guard towers and call boxes containing emergency phones – and the other part of the build-up involved making life more comfortable for the troops.

These “life sustainment” efforts included areas to watch movies, play video games and work on computers, as well as enough rooms to house more than 2,200 troops. Under Albrecht, who was put in charge of much of the construction, housing units, or Life Sustainment Areas, have been sprouting like kudzu throughout the base.

“We built one, two, three, four,” Albrecht paused, “five LSAs.”

During their time here, the 34th Inf. Div. and units attached to them completed over 70 projects to build up the base, including the construction of a full-size Post Exchange, a new post office, a new chapel and other improvements.

“It’s hard to give numbers,” said Al-

Red Bulls look back at the build-up of COB Basra



Photos by Spc. J Princeville Lawrence

Even as they prepare to return home, the Red Bulls continue to build up the base: a new helicopter holding area and additional guard towers should be completed soon.

brecht, a native of Cedar Falls, Iowa. “It’s just an upgrade to basically everything on the COB.”

Albrecht, who has 20 years of experience in construction, said his civilian experience helped him work with the many units from both the Army and the Air Force.

“It was a total team effort to get everything done,” he said, adding that much of the construction was contracted to local Iraqi companies.

Because of its pivotal location near the port of Basrah, COB Basra is slated to be one of the last Army-occupied bases in Iraq. The turnover process is already beginning, as parts of the airport are being returned to their Iraqi owners, and the rest of the base is slated to be turned over when all combat troops leave Iraq in 2011.

Long before that, however, control of the base will be turned over to the 1st Infantry Division, which will continue the Red Bull’s command-and-control mission in the nine southern provinces of Iraq.

Even as they prepare to return home,



In addition to adding amenities to COB Basra, the 34th “Red Bull” Inf. Div. spearheaded efforts to subtract rubbish from the base.

the 34th Inf. Div. continues to build up the base: a new helicopter holding area and additional guard towers are due for completion soon.

“We’re always improving our foxhole so we can leave the place better than we found it,” Albrecht said. “We’ve gotten a lot closer to our goal.”

For more of Spc. Lawrence’s stories, visit: www.TheRedBulls.org/Lawrence



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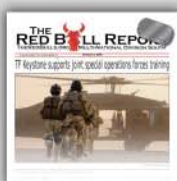
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OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM 2009-2010

From Page 1**CLEARs**

McFarland, although proud of his work as an engineer, admits there is always a tinge of anxiety when he rolls out the gate.

"Even though we are the ones that clear the roads we never really know when we might get attacked or something might go off," he said.

Pvt. Jocue Valencia, who drove the Buffalo that night, appreciates the hardships he goes through.

"After hearing the stories from Sgt. Mac [McFarland] about last deployment, I really can't complain," he said. "I wasn't expecting this coming into the Army."

The fact that they are not going through anything alone keeps them motivated, many engineers from 1st Plt. said.

The chatter overflowed from each truck in the convoy. Games such as "name your top five hottest celebrities" and "name your top three best movies of all time" bounced from truck to truck via radio. Each engineer with something to say made sure to

include everyone in their conversation, regardless of which vehicle they were riding.

"It's like when we're out on the road, everyone starts flappin' their gums and gets their frustrations out," Bryant explained. "But when we get back, everyone's copacetic. We joke around with each other out there but no one gets [their feelings] hurt."

"We are pretty tight in the platoon," added Staff Sgt. Vincent Oliver from over the radio. "There are no real 'cliques' and everyone gets along."

"Except for the medic; he's an attachment," Oliver's driver jokingly added with the platoon medic sitting directly behind him.

Six hours and countless wise-cracks later, the convoy pulled back into the gates of FOB Echo.

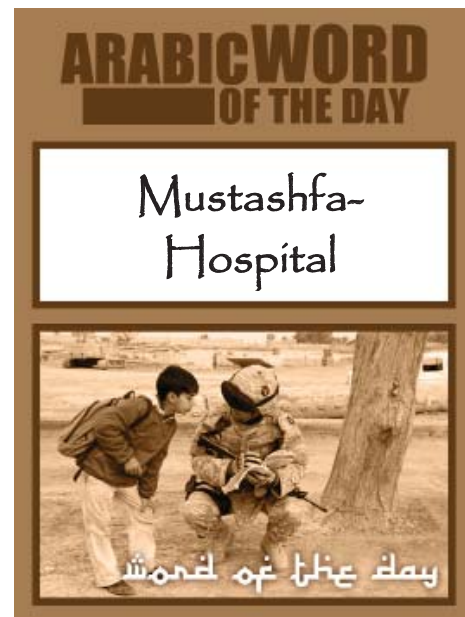
"Every time we come back through the gates and no one got hurt," Valencia said, "now, that's the most rewarding part of this job."

Soldiers ran down the list of what they were going to do after they parked and closed down their vehicles. Some were tired and couldn't wait to get

back to their rooms. Others were going to the gym. Others were meeting for breakfast as soon as it opened.

Most Soldiers on FOB Echo were still sleeping. The mission of clearing another route was complete - until the next day.

For more of SSG Hedrick's stories, visit: www.TheRedBulls.org/Hedrick



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Sunday, January 17, 2010

at the Red Bull USA Volleyball courts from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

This is an opportunity to sell your items privately, from service member to service member or to donate items to charity! Provide your own display, and set your own prices. Pick up bags to store donations* prior to Jan. 17 at the Red Bull MWR tent.

*SUGGESTED ITEMS - clean towels and bed linens, useable running shoes, civilian clothes, etc.

*PROHIBITED ITEMS - uniform clothing items, undergarments, any military equipment, any item with an NSN, and weapons.

*From Page 2***ROOTS**

the artillery was suffering because they weren't doing the traditional mission of artillery.

He said while he would buy that rustiness in artillery-specific skills could result from the lack of actual "fire missions," Bullimore could not agree with the idea that the demands placed on the artillery in current deployments hurt the abilities of the leadership to lead.

He harkened back to his deployment during Operation Desert Storm, when his men were trained and capable and able to respond to missions with little direction.

"The hardest thing I had to do was stay awake," he said of following behind the tank units in the first days of liberating Kuwait.

"If nothing else," he said, "the leadership has gotten stronger, and it's gotten better. We require them to make tougher decisions on a daily basis."

"I'm asking them to do things that are a lot tougher than I ever dreamed of when I was their age," he said.

Still, he felt no group was more capable of taking on those challenges than the artillery, he said, and listed off the roles his Soldiers from 17th FB are fulfilling, from route clearance and infantry duties to radar defense against indirect fire.

"Field artillerymen everywhere," he concluded, "hold your head high, we'll shoot again. Though it may just be [in training], we will shoot again; or, when your country asks for 'big steel on target.'"

For more of Sgt. Kibbey's stories, visit:
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Around the world in 34 seconds



TEHRAN- Reda al-Basha, 27, the DMI's Tehran news correspondent for about one year, was not on assignment when he went missing near his home on December 28. Earlier on Sunday, Tehran General Prosecutor Abbas Jafari Dolatabadi told the semi-official Fars News Agency the journalist had been freed. Basha was arrested the day after eight people were killed in clashes between security forces and supporters of opposition leader Mirhossein Mousavi on Ashura, a day of ritual Shi'ite mourning. It was the worst violence since that which accompanied protests immediately after the disputed presidential election in June. Opposition protesters say the vote was rigged in favor of re-elected President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, but the government denies this. The opposition website Rahesabz said on Wednesday that more than 180 people, including 17 journalists, 10 Mousavi aides and some members of the outlawed Baha'i faith, were arrested in the aftermath of the December 27 Ashura protests.



DETROIT - The Cadillac Converj will be the second GM vehicle built on the automaker's system combining a lithium-ion battery pack with a traditional engine as backup, GM Vice Chairman Bob Lutz said late on Sunday. The rechargeable or plug-in Cadillac is "heading for production" and will be designed, like the Volt, to be driven for 40 miles on battery power alone. The Volt is expected to be priced near \$40,000. The Cadillac variant will use technology developed for the Volt and will be aimed at consumers "who don't mind paying a large price for a luxury vehicle," Lutz said. He said production plans for the Converj had yet to be determined but that it would not go on sale before 2013.



GLENDALE, Arizona - Karlos Dansby scored on a fumble return in overtime to give the Arizona Cardinals a wild 51-45 victory over the Green Bay Packers in the highest-scoring NFL playoff game of all time on Sunday. Linebacker Dansby scooped up the ball and ran 17 yards for the winning touchdown after Michael Adams had jarred it loose from Green Bay quarterback Aaron Rodgers on the first series of overtime in the NFC wildcard game. My reaction was like, 'Damn!' Everything is bouncing their way right now," Dansby told reporters. "I was like, we got to do something." The win sends the Cardinals, the losers of last year's Super Bowl, to New Orleans on Saturday for a NFC divisional playoff against the top-seeded Saints.



ISLAMABAD - Pakistan is a conservative Muslim country where men hugging women in public is taboo and even men shaking hands with women is frowned upon. Drinking alcohol is illegal for Muslims. National field hockey team player Rehan Butt was fined 100,000 rupees (\$1,175) while coach Shahid Ali Khan and manager Asif Bajwa were fined 50,000 rupees (\$600) each, the chairman of the National Assembly's standing committee on sports said. "Islamic culture does not allow us to hug a lady and have alcohol," committee chairman Jamshed Ahmed Dasti told Reuters. Pictures run by a Pakistani television channel and posted on the Internet showed one of the men hugging a woman and another apparently drinking a beer. Another picture showed a group of men sitting at a table with glasses in front of them, apparently containing alcohol.