

VANGUARD VOICE

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Job well done!



Soldiers complete tour to Iraq



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On the Cover



First Sergeant Robert Keith, with A Company, 3rd Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment, receives the Bronze Star, May 3, for his accomplishments during the Vanguard Brigade's deployment in support of Operations Iraqi Freedom and New Dawn.
(Photo by Staff Sgt. Tanya Thomas)

Proud of who we are and what we've done

Our Army, and The Vanguard Brigade, exists to perform any task for which our Nation calls. In 2010, we deployed in support of OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM and subsequently OPERATION NEW DAWN to continue the mission of strengthening the Iraqi Security Forces and building an enduring strategic partnership. We did this and more during our time together in Vanguard. The past two plus years of conversion, preparation, and execution highlight your unmatched professionalism and dedication not only to mission accomplishment, but your commitment to our Nation. We should all be proud of what we have accomplished.

Because of the daily contributions to mission success from each of you, the Iraqis now have the ability to determine their own future. We strengthened their Army, Police, and security forces of all types so that they will have the necessary skills to secure their population and build a better country. In all of the exercises, training events and meetings we shared with them, your examples of professionalism and proficiency will serve as lasting examples of what right looks like.

What we accomplished required teamwork at every level. Our formation included specialties from every area of expertise in our Army. The individual contribution each of you made to your units' mission made our success possible. The teamwork and mission focus that all of you demonstrated during our deployment to Iraq should make us all proud of a job well done.

Being a Soldier is the most unique profession in the world. First and foremost you all volunteered to answer the call of a nation at war. You volunteered to deploy and serve as part of the greatest Army in the world. The Army is not great because of its weapons, its vehicles, its helicopters, or equipment. The Army is great because of the Soldiers and Families that serve it selflessly. The Vanguard Brigade represents the strength of our Nation and a legacy built on hard work and dedication to duty. The Vanguard Brigade legacy now consists of three combat deployments to Iraq; the Brigade's future legacy will continue to be forged from Soldiers and Families like you.

Your service makes you citizens of the highest order. You are among the 1% of citizens that volunteered to serve in the Armed Forces. All of you have served your Nation with honor and can look back with great pride and reflect on what you did to provide for a more safe and prosperous America.

Thank you for your contributions to our unit, our Army, and our Nation. I am truly humbled and honored to have served among your ranks.

COL Lou Lartigue
Commander
4th Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division



COL LOU LARTIGUE



CSM JOE ALTMAN



Spc. Derek Jackson, with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, helps an Iraqi Police officer learn proper picture-taking techniques during a crime scene investigation class held at the Ramadi Training Center, March 2. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Tanya Thomas)

1. Iraqi police officers pull finger prints as part of a crime scene investigation training exercise at the Ramadi Training Center, March 1. (Photos by Spc. Gary Silverman)

2. Iraqi police officers practice taking finger prints during a sensitive site exploitation course, March 1.

3. Spc. Johnathan Lainez, from Garfield, New Jersey, assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division demonstrates to Iraqi police proper finger print dusting techniques, at the Ramadi Training Center, Iraq. Lainez and other Soldiers assigned to 4/3 BSTB provided the Ramadi IP crime scene investigation classes in support of Operation New Dawn.



Troops teach CSI tactics

Staff Sgt. Tanya Thomas
4/3 AAB Public Affairs

Iraqi Police officers received a crash course on crime scene investigation as part of the 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division's ongoing mission to enable the Government of Iraq and provide the Iraqi citizens with a safer, more secure, and sovereign country.

Specialists Jonathan Lainez and Derek Jackson—both infantrymen and trained members of one of the Vanguard Brigade's special weapons exploitation teams—taught eight police officers evidence collection during a three-day class, beginning Feb. 28 at the Ramadi Training Center.

"For the last few days, we've been teaching them sensitive site exploitation; how to react on scene and how to gather evidence," said Lainez, a Garfield, N.J. native, on the final day of the class. "The Iraqi Police learned how to take photographs from different perspectives; that way they are able to find different angles on how to photograph a scene. They're now able to sketch diagrams of a scene, and they're able to dust for fingerprints on any kind of surface that we give

them."

Lainez is part of a four-man team, who operate in and around Ramadi. The Vanguard Brigade has two additional SWET teams who advise and assist the IP and the Iraqi army in Fallujah and Al Asad. The CSI Soldiers—most of them trained infantrymen—took a seven-week weapons intelligence course at Fort Huachuca, Ariz., prior to the deployment.

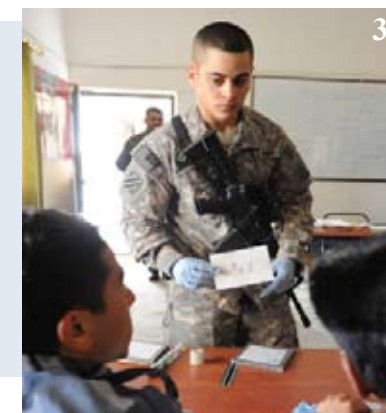
"It was a very in depth course," said Lainez, explain that the weapons intelligence course taught everything from lifting fingerprints to specialized equipment to use at a crime scene.

"That training certified us to train the (Iraqi Security Forces)."

The 4/3 AAB SWET teams have taught more than 30 classes over the past eight months in an effort to help develop the ISF.

"We throw as much information as possible to them," Lainez said. "Even though, it might be overwhelming at first, they are able to overcome the challenge."

"It makes me feel great knowing that they're (IPs) using my techniques and my training to help protect their country, further enable their country, and become more stable."





Sgt. Ryan Fox, with B Company, 3rd Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, assists Iraqi Army soldiers with the 8th IA Brigade, 1st IA Division, as they practice Military Operations in Urban Terrain procedures during Operation Eagle's Talon, a training exercise at Camp Taqaddum, Iraq, March 8. (Photos by Staff Sgt. Tanya Thomas)

Operation Eagle's Talon

U.S. troops help Iraqi Army soldiers sharpen basic-infantry skills

Staff Sgt. Tanya Thomas
4/3 AAB Public Affairs

CAMP TAQADDUM, Iraq – Gusty winds and low visibility during another Iraq sandstorm didn't deter Soldiers from the Iraqi Army's 8th Brigade, 1st Iraqi Army Division willingness to train.

About 30 Soldiers from the Iraqi brigade joined U.S. Soldiers from 3rd Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division at Camp Taqaddum, Iraq, recently, to take part in Operation Eagle's Talon, a five-day exercise that allows the Iraqi and U.S. troops the opportunity to share their tactical expertise while training together.

“We just want to train them so that they can be proficient and become better Soldiers for their country.”

Staff Sgt. Tripler Soalo
Platoon Sergeant, B Co., 3-15 Inf.

“We’re trying to increase the basic skill level of the Iraqi Soldiers in this brigade, as well as trying to focus on their leadership so that once we leave (Iraq), their (non-commissioned officers) and their junior officers are able to effectively train their junior Soldiers on their own,” said 1st Lt. Steven Alquesta, platoon leader with B Company, 3rd Bn., 15th Inf. Regt., and East Canaan, Conn., native.

Alquesta and his Soldiers worked with the IA Soldiers on the basic fundamentals of marksmanship, how to react to contact, team and squad movement techniques, as well as other tactical skills.

“They’ve been doing quite well,” Alquesta said.

“You can see much improvement from the beginning of the class to the end. Marksmanship is somewhat of a challenge (to teach) and a lot of that is (due to) the language barrier. (Also), some of these guys are very new and a lot of the techniques that we’re teaching them they haven’t seen before.”

Continued next page



TOP: Spc. Frank Novosel, with B Company, 3rd Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, looks on as Iraqi Army Soldiers with the 8th IA Brigade, 1st IA Div. practice basic rifle marksmanship during a training exercise known as Operation Eagle's Talon March 7, at Camp Taqaddum, Iraq.

CENTER: Staff Sgt. Tripler Soalo, platoon sergeant with B Company, 3rd Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, goes over marksmanship techniques with a Soldier from the 8th Iraqi Army Brigade, 1st IA Division, during an M-16 rifle exercise at Camp Taqaddum, Iraq, March 7.

BOTTOM: Iraqi Army soldiers with the 8th IA Brigade, 1st IA Division, withstand a sandstorm as the practice ‘react to ambush’ operations at Camp Taqaddum, Iraq, March 9.

Making a Difference

IP take the lead, help community in need

Staff Sgt. Tanya Thomas
4/3 AAB Public Affairs

RAMADI, Iraq – In the wake of the murder of a 10-year-old boy Tameem, Iraq, Iraqi Police in the area have been taking steps to build greater ties to the community while ensuring the safety and security of local residents.

“The police wanted to do something for the families in order to help them go through the healing process of this great tragedy,” said Capt. Steven Pierce, commander of D Company, 3rd Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, United States Division—Center, whose unit has been partnering with IPs assigned to District Headquarters II in nearby Ramadi. Together, the two forces came up with a plan to donate school supplies and other items to the elementary school where the boy attended as a way to both highlight their presence in the area and alleviate any fears those at the school may have.

“The children in the community have been afraid to go to this school (since the murder incident),” said Pierce, “so this is a chance for the police to show their community that they really care.”

The IP met up with D Company Soldiers at Camp Ali, an Iraqi Army installation, March 5 and loaded 300 bags of pencils, notebooks and other school necessities into their vehicles.

“We will take these (items) to

the school and distribute them,” an Iraqi Police officer assured Pierce after stowing the items onto the bed of his pick-up truck.

Pierce said that normally the American Soldiers and their Iraqi Security Forces counterparts jointly host combined community outreach events or distribute humanitarian assistance.

“But we wanted this in particular to be something that the community views as an IP effort,” said Pierce, adding that the goal is to build a greater trust between the IP and the local community. Pierce and his men watched as the IP drove off of the army camp with the boxes of donated school supplies. He said it was good to see first-hand the ISF progression.

“I was here in (a few years ago),” said Pierce. “It was really just blazing your way through this country and you’d see that it was just completely destroyed. Being a part of this phase of the war—seeing that the Iraqi (security forces) are a professional organization and really taking ownership of security, and that they really care about their country just like I care about my country—it’s closure for me too.”

Pierce said that after the IP distributes the items to the school, they will meet again to discuss the



TOP: Iraqi Police officers of District Headquarters II in Ramadi, load boxes of school supplies onto the back of their truck, March 5.

BOTTOM: Capt. Steve Pierce, commander of D Company, 3rd Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment, applauds an Iraqi Police officer's efforts as he and prepares to take donated school supplies to an elementary school in Tameem, Iraq, March 5.

outcome of the event and other ways forward to work with the community.

“We’ll provide an overall assessment for them,” he said. “Ultimately, we’re here to ensure they achieve complete success.”

The U.S. Soldiers worked with the IA leaders separately, then took on an advisory role and watched as the IA leaders took the information they learned and taught their Soldiers.

“What we’re really trying to do is get their NCOs to be able to take the lead with these kinds of (soldiering) tasks so that they will be able to continue doing this after we leave,” Alquesta said. “It is important that they continue this kind of training often and effectively, even when no one is watching.”

Staff Sgt. Tripler Sooalo, platoon sergeant with B Co., and native of Pago Pago, American Samoa, said he was glad that the IA students showed a great interest in the training.

“They asked a lot of questions, and we gave them a lot of answers,” he said. “It’s a good feeling to know that when you teach somebody our basic fundamentals, and our tactics, that they’re willing to learn. We just want to train them so that they can be proficient and become better Soldiers for their country.”

Operation Eagle’s Talon is also underway at other IA training areas in Iraq. Soldiers from throughout the 3rd Bn., 15th Inf. Regt plan to continue instructing the course throughout their deployment.

Sgt. Ryan Fox, with B Company, 3rd Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment, instructs an Iraqi Army soldier with the 8th IA Brigade, 1st IA Division, as part of Operation Eagle’s Talon, March 8.



Combat Casualty Care

*‘Maintain’ Battalion hosts Iraq’s first
field medical badge competition*

Staff Sgt. Tanya Thomas
4/3 AAB Pubic Affairs

AL ASAD AIR BASE, Iraq – More than 30 Iraqi Army soldiers showcased their medic-skills and took a stab at Iraq’s first Field Medical Badge competition, May 2-4, at Al Asad Air Base.

The three-day competition was a culminating exercise, highlighting the successes and lessons learned from U.S. Soldiers assigned to the 703rd Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division.

“The IFMB is much like the (U.S. Army’s) Expert Field Medical Badge competition,” said Sgt. Kenneth Stover, a medic assigned to C Company, 703rd BSB and Philadelphia, Penn., native. “They (IA soldiers) were held to the same standard as us. It took me three times to earn my EFMB; it’s not an easy badge to get. Competing for the IFMB is a chance for the Iraqi Army medics to prove themselves amongst their peers.”

Continued Page 12



An Iraqi Army Soldier carries Pvt. Jose Carrera, of Company A, 703rd Brigade Support Battalion, who was playing the role of a casualty as part of the emergency trauma station during testing for the Iraqi Field Medical Badge Al Asad Air Base, Iraq, May 2. The emergency trauma station was one portion of the competition, which also included a six-mile ruck march, extensive written testing and additional training lanes where competitors had to evaluate and treat the wounds of simulated casualties. The competition was based largely on the requirements for the U.S. Army’s Expert Field Medical Badge. (Photos by Staff Sgt. Tanya Thomas)

The competitors of the 1st and 7th Iraqi Army Division and Iraqi Special Operations Forces arrived at 4 a.m. on Day 1 for a physical fitness test. Dressed in their military uniform and combat boots, the Al Anbar medics attempted one minute of push-ups, one minute of sit-ups, and a one-mile run. The medics then switched gears and were challenged with a comprehensive written exam. The competition intensified on the second day as each soldier navigated through a trauma lane, treating simulated combat casualties at seven separate stations. The



event concluded on Day 3 with a six-mile forced road march.

“It was real hard work; this is the toughest thing I’ve ever had to physically and mentally,” said Cpl. Hameed Firas, of the 1st IAD.

Firas credited months of training with the U.S. Soldiers to his overall success.

“All of the training in Fallujah has paid off,” he said.

“Due to all the practice, I was able to do very well here.”

Several of Firas’ competitors also did well during the event and stayed motivated despite the grueling tasks at hand.

“We’ve never experienced this type of event,” said Sgt. Baha Salman Hasan, with the 7th IAD, “but our love for our jobs as medics and the encouragement of the American Soldiers has kept us strong until the end.”

The IFMB competition marked a major milestone for Iraq, and as one U.S. Soldier says it was a true test of the advise-and-assist mission’s effectiveness.

“It’s a great feeling to see how much the whole group accomplished,” said Sgt. 1st Class Erendira Cortez, a Rialto, Calif., native assigned to C Company, 703rd BSB. “It was especially great to actually see them perform the medical skills with little or no guidance from our (U.S.) medics. It was like they showed us, ‘This is what you taught me; look what I can do now.’”

Specialist Joseph Chaffin, a Tampa, Fla., native and A Company, 703rd BSB Soldier, shared similar sentiments.

“This was beyond everything I’ve ever seen,” said Chaffin after completing the forced road march alongside one IA soldier. “The Iraqi Army has such a drive to learn and such a drive to succeed. They want to be the best at what they do. I’ve earned a lot of respect for them; this was an eye-opening experience.”

Though there could only be one top finisher at the end of the IFMB competition, many agreed that the premier event in itself was an overall win - for the country of Iraq and the ‘Maintain Battalion’ Soldiers who trained them.

LEFT: An Iraqi Army Soldier runs through an obstacle course during the trauma lane portion of testing for the Iraqi Field Medical Badge



TOP: Iraqi Army Soldiers look on as Spc. Diamond Madison, with C Company, 703rd Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division goes over the performance steps of giving a patient an intravenous injection, as part of testing for the Iraqi Field Medical Badge Al Asad Air Base, Iraq, May 2. **BOTTOM LEFT:** Iraqi Army Soldiers rush a simulated casualty to an ambulance during the casualty evacuation portion of testing for the Iraqi Field Medical Badge. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Sgt. Kenneth Stover, a medic with C Company, 703rd Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, grades and Iraqi Army Soldier as he tries to complete as many push-ups as he can in one minute during testing for the Iraqi Field Medical Badge at Al Asad Air Base, Iraq, May 2.



Pfc. Diamond Madison, with C Company, 703rd Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, helps fit a pediatric wheelchair to a disabled child at the Anbar Operations Center, Ramadi, Iraq, April 2. Soldiers with the 4th AAB, 3rd Inf. Div., helped distribute 21 wheelchairs to disabled Iraq children. (Photos by Staff Sgt. Tanya Thomas)



Staff Sgt. Tanya Thomas
4/3 AAB Pubic Affairs

McCoy was referring to April 2, a day that fellow 4th AAB Soldiers spent at the Anbar Operations Center in Ramadi, Iraq, distributing 21 pediatric wheelchairs to disabled Iraqi children.

“This is by far the best thing we’ve been able to see this deployment,” he said. “The quality of life for these children has now significantly improved and to be a part of that is amazing.”

The event was made possible thanks to Brad Blauser, a Dallas native who founded the non-profit organization Wheelchairs for Iraqi Kids in August 2005.

Blauser said that in Iraq, many children are born with cerebral palsy and spina bifida, causing the physical disability in movement. He added that many children have also become double amputees as a result of violence in the country, “so I came up with a plan in August 2005 to help,” he said.

“I mean, who else is going to do this,” said Blauser of his reasons to continue supporting this program for the last 5 ½ years. He credits, also, support from Gen. David Petraeus, former commander of U.S. forces in Iraq who during his time in that position helped Blauser



TOP LEFT: Spc. Charles Felder, with G Company, 703rd Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division helps adjust a pediatric wheelchair for a disabled child at the Anbar Operations Center, Ramadi, Iraq, April 2.

RIGHT: Children receive new pediatric wheelchairs at the Anbar Operations Center in Ramadi, Iraq, April 2.

jump-start the program. But it is the continuing support of U.S. citizens who donate money to fund the \$385 wheelchairs—which are then given at no cost to the families who receive them—and the U.S. service members who donate their time to assemble and distribute them that help the program along. Blauser helped teach 4th AAB Soldiers and Ministry of Health rehabilitation center employees how to fit the wheelchairs to children.

“They will be able to adjust the wheelchair to fit the child, and as the child grows, the wheelchair grows also,” he said.

Blauser also said that there is a plan in the works to help continue supporting this program after the U.S. withdraws from Iraq at the end of this year.

“We’ve teamed up with the Iraqi Disable Alliance Organization and the plan is to have the Iraqis even-

tually manufacture the wheelchairs and distribute them to not only Iraqi children, but perhaps Afghani children as well,” he said.

Until then, Blauser said he has about 60 more wheelchairs he’s planning to distribute with the hope to positively affect the lives of more Iraqi families in the near future. And with those 60 wheelchairs, that puts the total number of wheelchairs distributed to just under 1000.

Spc. Gwendolyn Cousin, with G Company, 703rd Brigade Support Battalion, 4th AAB, who was on-hand to support the Ramadi distribution, said that participating in the event was a blessing.

“I’m humbled to be a part of something that is so rewarding,” she said.

“To be able to come out here and make a difference in someone’s life, it’s beautiful.”

Wheelchairs for Iraqi KIDS

“Today is the kind of day where it makes you proud to be a Soldier,” said 1st Lt. Jonty McCoy, platoon leader with 1st Battalion, 76th Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division.



An Iraqi Army mechanic loosens the lug nuts on a Humvee tire as he and his team races to finish first and claim the title of ‘Best Mechanic Team’ during a maintenance rodeo held by the 703rd Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division at Al Asad Air Base, Iraq, April 27. (Photos by Staff Sgt. Tanya Thomas)

BIG Wheels Keep On Turning

IA soldiers vie for ‘best mechanic’
during Anbar’s first maintenance rodeo



LEFT: Sgt. 1st Class Andre Oliver, with B Company 703rd Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, looks on as an Iraqi Army mechanic replaces a Humvee tire during a maintenance rodeo competition at Al Asad Air Base, Iraq, April 27. CENTER: An Iraqi Army mechanic rotates Humvee tires as he and his team races to finish first and claim the title of ‘Best Mechanic Team’ during a maintenance rodeo held by the 703rd Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division at Al Asad Air Base, Iraq, April 27. RIGHT: An Iraqi Army soldier fixes a tail light on a Humvee during a maintenance rodeo competition at Al Asad Air Base, Iraq, April 27.

Staff Sgt. Tanya Thomas
4/3 AAB Public Affairs

Wrenches turned quickly and so did the second hand on the clock as Iraqi Army Soldiers showcased their vehicle maintenance skills while competing for their chance at the ‘Best Mechanic Team’ in Anbar, Iraq. The competition—held April 25-27 and known as a maintenance rodeo—was orchestrated as a culminating event for Soldiers of the 703rd Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division who have advised and assisted these IA mechanics for the past 10 months.

The event was held at the Al Asad Air Base medium workshop and invited four teams of five mechanics from the 1st and 7th Iraqi Army Divisions and from the 9th Regional Commando Battalion (Iraqi Special Operations Forces).

“The purpose of the maintenance rodeo was to establish a subject matter expert in maintenance for each of the four Iraqi maintenance workshops,” said Capt. Missy McNeill, officer in charge of the Sustainment Partnership Operations Center, 703rd BSB. “They will be the sustainment ‘go-to’ guys when the U.S. forces leave (Iraq).”

The three-day competition included a written test and then the mechanics were tested on their ability to identify maintenance faults on a Humvee, order

replacement parts and repair the faults. Additionally, the teams had to rotate all four of the 80-pound tires—manually. The first team to complete all actions to standard was the winner.

The ISOF finished first and the other teams closely followed. A ceremony was held in their honor April 28 and the top three teams received trophies, a new tool kit, certificates and skill identifier patches.

“This is an incentive to give and exert more effort to serve our brave army,” said one of the Iraqi Army commanders during the ceremony.

Sgt. Michael Blanchard, with B Company, 703rd BSB and noncommissioned officer in charge of the rodeo, said he and his comrades took pride in knowing they had a major hand in helping progress their Iraqi Army counterparts.

“At first, they would just fix a broken part, but now we’ve taught them how to troubleshoot, how to use a technical manual and how to save time, manpower and money,” Blanchard said about teaching vehicle maintenance tactics to the IA during his deployment. “But really, we learned a lot from them, just as they’ve learned a lot from us. It’s been a great experience.”

McNeill said she is proud of the overall success of the event.

“What I’d like to see is the IA replicating this event in the future, and make this maintenance rodeo an annual event,” she said.



Capt. Robert Noble, commander of B Company, 3rd Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment officially hands over control of Camp Taqaddum to the 8th Brigade, 1st Iraqi Army Division May 16. Soldiers with B Company turned over the base to the Iraqi Ministry of Defense and transitioned to Camp Ramadi. (Photos by Staff Sgt. Tanya Thomas)

Drawing Down

More U.S. bases close in Iraq as Vanguards heads home

Staff Sgt. Tanya Thomas
4/3 AAB Pubic Affairs

Soldiers of the 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, have begun their departure home to Fort Stewart, Ga., and as their deployment comes to a close, so have three U.S. military installations they occupied during their year-long tour.

The base closures are part of the current plan to remove American forces from the country by the end of this year.

Members of the 28th Brigade, 7th Iraqi Army Division signed for Camp Khalid, May 8, and former U.S. tenants with D Company, 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment, 4th AAB, 3rd Inf. Div. departed and joined the rest of their team at Al Asad Air Base.

On May 12, 80 Soldiers with C Company, 3rd Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment, 4th AAB, 3rd Inf. Div. rolled out of Camp Tariq, after the 2nd Brigade, 1st IA Quick Reaction Force Division signed for the compound.

Infantry Soldiers who've spent the



A member of the 8th Brigade, 1st Iraqi Army Division signs for Camp Taqaddum, Iraq, May 16. Soldiers with B Company, 3rd Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment, 4th AAB, turned over the base to the Iraqi Ministry of Defense and transitioned to Camp Ramadi.

past 11 months at the small outpost say its closure was bittersweet.

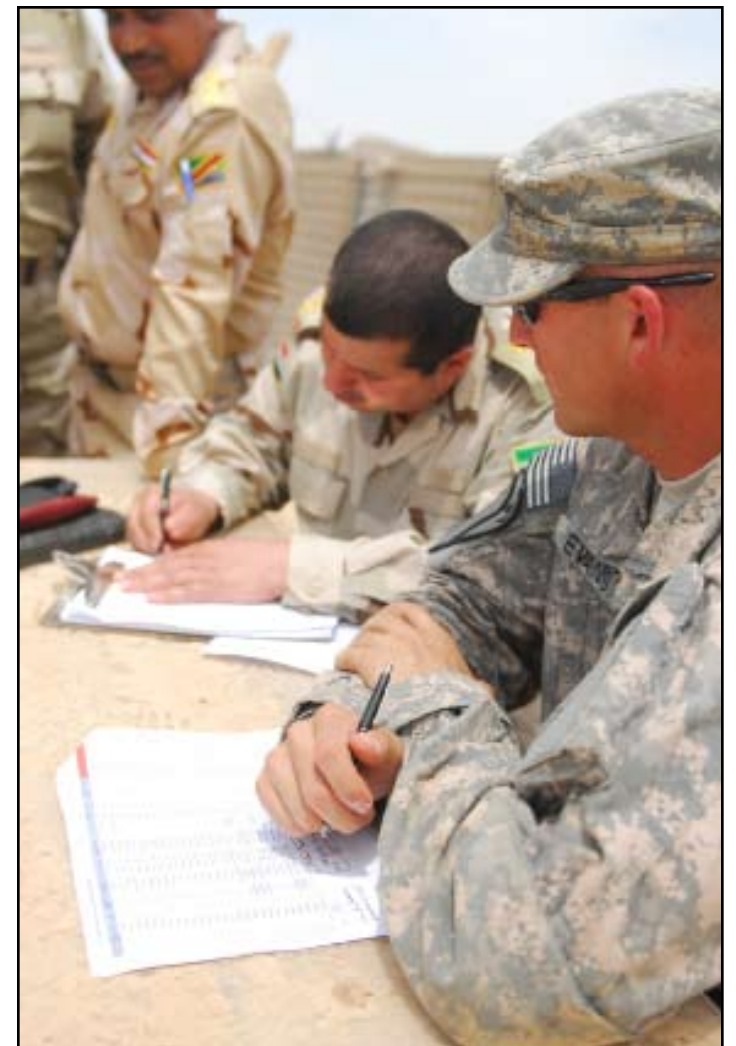
"We've built this place up since we arrived here," said Staff Sgt. Nacoma Williamson, a squad leader with C Co., and Sheffield, Ala., native, explaining that his Soldiers constructed fighting positions, a gym, an entry control point, a stage, and set up defensive barriers upon their arrival in July 2010. "But we also came here to help (the Iraqi Army), and I feel that we've successfully done that."

Williamson and Staff Sgt. Jonathan Mrnak said that during its deployment C Company, 3rd Bn., 15th Inf. Regt. was tasked with teaching basic soldier skills to Iraqi Army members.

"We brought them to the range, showed them how to shoot, taught them things like ambush techniques, patrols, team movement, security and vehicle searches – on a weekly basis," said Mrnak, a Twin Lakes, Wisc., native. "They (now) understand checkpoint (operations). They know how to zero their weapons, among other things. It seems like they've learned a lot from us. They put their own spin on things, but they are ready to do this job on their own."

Williamson, who deployed to the Al Anbar province during the Iraq Invasion in 2003, said that much has changed over the past eight years and that base handovers, like Camp Tariq, are noted successes for the both the U.S. and the Government of Iraq.

"Think about how awesome it is to change an entire country," he said. "I know America wants us to come back home, but we're here to help make a change for this country, and now, we can say we



Capt. Daniel Evans looks on as an Iraqi Army leader with the 2nd Brigade, 1st Iraqi Army Division Quick Reaction Force signs for Camp Tariq, Iraq, May 12. Evans, commander of C Co., 3rd Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment and about 80 of his Soldiers moved to Camp Fallujah after turning over Tariq to the Iraqi Ministry of Defense.

have."

The C Co. Soldiers moved to Camp Fallujah, where they will finish out the remainder of their deployment. Soldiers from B Company, 3rd Bn., 15th Inf. Regt. transferred Camp Taqaddum May 16 to Iraqi Army Soldiers of the 8th Brigade, 1st IA Div.

"This is all part of the future of re-posturing in Iraq," said Lt. Col. Jeffrey Shoemaker, commander of 3rd Bn, 15th Inf. Regt., who was on hand to witness the milestone at Taquaddum. "But, we're not saying good bye. This is not the end of our partnership or our friendship (with the IA)."

Command Sgt. Maj. Mark Barnes, the battalion sergeant major of 3rd Bn., 15th Inf. Regt., told his Soldiers they have contributed to their nation's history and helped with the development of Iraq. "This is all because of your hard work and efforts," he said. "You can all be proud."



Staff Sgt. Tanya Thomas
4/3 AAB Public Affairs

Although violence in Iraq has decreased, the threat of improvised explosive devices still exist. Soldiers of Company A, Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, are helping their Iraqi Army counterparts learn how to defeat this threat in an effort to make the streets of Anbar safer.



LEFT: Iraqi Army soldiers disassemble an improvised explosive device during a training exercise help by A Company, Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, at Al Asad Air Base, Iraq, May 18. TOP LEFT: A U.S. Army Soldier with A Company, Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, hides a simulated IED along a training route during a route-clearance exercise set up for members of the 7th FER, May 18, at Al Asad Air Base, Iraq. TOP RIGHT: An Iraqi Army soldier reports IED activity to higher during a route clearance training exercise at Al Asad Air Base, Iraq, May 18. (Photos by Pfc. Brian Chaney)

Safer Streets

Combat engineers test IA soldiers' route clearance abilities

After working side-by-side with members of the 7th Field Engineering Regiment, 7th Iraqi Army Division for the past 11 months, U.S. Soldiers put the 7th FER Soldiers to the test and hosted a culminating exercise at Al Asad Air Base, May 17-19 that focused on route-clearing procedures.

"We're not going to be here for too much longer," said Staff Sgt. Raul Gutierrez, a combat engineer with A Co., and New York City native. "So, it's important for them to understand these route clearance techniques as they take will soon take on this critical mission by themselves."

Gutierrez and his fellow Soldiers hid simulated explosives along a road and instructed the Iraqi troops to detect, interrogate and report the bomb-findings up to higher.

"We used the environment—twigs, trees branches, trash—to mask the IED," said Spc. Shawn Leblanc, Avondell, Ariz., native, and member of Co. A, BSTB. 4th AAB, 3rd Inf. Div. "Everything was pretty much hidden very well. It made for very realistic training." Leblanc added that they tried to make the training as complex as possible, and the IA Soldiers located all IEDs but one.

"They have a very keen eye," he said. "What may look normal to us is not necessarily normal to them. They know how the IEDs are placed. They see this and deal with this on a daily basis."

Leblanc, who deployed to Iraq in 2007, said the Iraqi security forces have drastically improved their abilities to clear routes.

"We did some partnered route clearance on my last deployment," he said, "but they had a lot to learn. This rotation it seems they have picked up a lot of things. They are more confident, I think they've progressed very well."

Reflecting back on his first deployment in 2003, Gutierrez agreed with Leblanc that the IA has improved and said they are ready to take the reins as the U.S. approaches its expected withdrawal deadline.

"In '03 they were just driving around and getting hit and now they know how to approach (IEDs) and what to look for," he said. "It feels good to be able to come back and see this big change. It's definitely an accomplishment to know that I've had a hand in making a difference. They want to take charge, and we were able to help them do that. We're the same people, from different places, fighting for the same cause."



We're Back!

Vanguard Brigade begins redeployment to FSGA after year-long Iraq tour

Sgt. Robert Schaffner
3rd ID Public Affairs

The first two hundred of approximately 3,000 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division Soldiers serving in Iraq returned home from their year-long advise-and-assist mission in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation New Dawn to cheering Family Members, fellow Soldiers and friends, May 14, at Newman Fitness Center.

The first wave of the Vanguard Brigade's advanced echelon personnel and "torch party" returned to assist in setting up operations in their brand new 4th IBCT complex. After much-deserved leave to spend quality time with their Families, these Soldiers will be tasked to ensure a smooth transition for the balance of the brigade when they, too, redeploy home.



ABOVE: Soldiers with the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division 'Advanced Party' arrive at Fort Stewart, Ga., after completing a tour to Iraq, May 13. (Photos by Sgt. Robert Schaffner)

RIGHT: Sgt. Shawn Allison, with the Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Inf. Div., embraces his child after returning from his deployment to Iraq, May 13.

Although many 4th IBCT Soldiers are still in Iraq, dozens of Vanguard Family Members – of Soldiers who are still deployed – came out and showed their support.

“I came here today to greet one of my husband’s Soldiers, whose wife is in the Dominican Republic and couldn’t be here to welcome him home,” said Karen Springfield. “I brought dinner for him, it’s the least I could do.

“If I was away and I couldn’t be here, I would want someone here to greet my husband and welcome him home,” she added.

The sentiment of support from the Family Members of still-deployed Soldiers was vast throughout the gymnasium.

“I am here today to welcome our Soldiers home,” said Tamara Dupuis, whose husband, Capt. Jason

Dupuis with D Company, 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment, awaits his turn to come home from Iraq.

For one seasoned married couple, the experience of a deployment separation came late in their marriage, but early in their Army career.

“We were married 19 years before he joined the Army and left for Iraq almost immediately,” said Tammy Wedeking.

After the intentionally-brief speech, the zealous crowd stampeded their way out of the bleachers and onto the gymnasium floor to hug, kiss and hold their returning Soldier.

While receiving a group hug from his wife Tammy and his daughters Kailee, 14, and Danielle, 16, Spc. Jon Wedeking, with C Company, 703rd Brigade Support Battalion, 4th IBCT said, “It’s great to be back home.”



Family Readiness

Traci Wheeler
Vanguard Family Readiness Support Assistant

I want to take a few minutes and express our deepest appreciation to all of our Family Readiness Groups within the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team. Without the love and support of all of our Volunteers, this deployment would not have been as successful. The immeasurable time you have dedicated to support the Soldiers and their Families does not go unnoticed.

Thank you for your devotion to making sure the communication between the Soldiers forward and the Family Members here at home continually took precedence. The Families

will forever be in your debt for your contributions these past 12 months. The sacrifice of your time during our deployment not only improved the wellbeing of our Family Members, but enabled our Soldiers in Iraq to focus on their mission, so they could return home safely. We are truly grateful for all of our Volunteers, without them we would not have Family Readiness Groups.

I am reminded of a quote made by a popular writer.

Volunteers are the only human beings on the face of the earth who reflect this nation's compassion, unselfish caring, patience, and just plain love for one another - Erma Bombeck.



Soldiers and Family Members of the Vanguard Brigade pose for a photo after the 'Brigade Bash' event hosted by the Family Readiness Groups, May 7, at Fort Stewart, Ga. (Courtesy photo)

3-7 IN FRSA: Stacy Breithaupt	767-0317	4-3 BSTB: Christi Kisko	767-5370
3-15 IN FRSA: Johnny Robinson	767-7498	703rd BSB FRSA:	767-7498
6-8 CAV FRSA: Lisa Partington	767-0143	HHC, 4IBCT Traci Wheeler:	767-9310
1-76 FA FRSA: Kimberly Walker	767-5370		

Vanguard Brigade thanks Eagle Scout

Personal items were delivered to deployed Soldiers of the 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division by Eagle Scout, Jake Lartigue. Your achievements and contributions enhanced the morale of the Vanguard Soldiers. Thank you for your support!



Chaplain (Maj.) Dave Cromeenes
4/3 AAB Chaplain

Redeployment, reunion, reintegration; these are phrases used to indicate something is about to happen that requires a process of returning to normal. I can assure you, returning to normal will be a process of skillfully merging the lives of our deployed Soldiers and Families back together.

During our redeployment briefings I describe this process as being similar to merging with traffic from the on-ramp of a highway. If you drive too slow traffic builds up behind you; if you drive too fast the traffic becomes hazardous; entering traffic on the highway requires speed adjustments, proper signaling and cooperation of other drivers to allow you into the flow of traffic smoothly. It's a process.

As we return to our friends and Families our lives will merge together in the relationship highway of our homes. Vanguard Families have been moving along nicely at a steady pace and our Soldiers will be exiting the Deployment Highway to merge into the Family Freeway. Soldiers and Family members will need to make some adjustments, watch their speed, use proper signals and allow each other into the flow of relationship traffic. This is a fun, but realistic illustration of how to experience a successful and healthy reunion with those who matter most.

Thank you for your overwhelming support during the past 12 months. We are ready to come home and merge our lives with yours on the road to success.



An Iraqi Army soldier with the 1st Iraqi Army Division practices military operations in urban terrain during a training exercise at Fallujah, Iraq, April 16. The training covered squad movement techniques, marksmanship exercises and moving under fire as well as other skills. (Photo by Capt. Tiffany Collins)

Check out the
Vanguard Brigade
on the Web

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www.facebook.com/4th-Brigade-3rd-Infantry-Division