

# THE *Ivy* LEAF

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★★★★★ ESTABLISHED IN 1917 TO HONOR THOSE WHO SERVE ★★★★★

SEPTEMBER 9, 2011



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Brandon A. Bednarek, 4th AAB PAO

Colonel Scott McKean, (left), and Command Sgt. Maj. Thomas Eppler, command team, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Armored Division, uncase the brigade colors during a Transfer of Authority Ceremony September 4, 2011, at Contingency Operating Site Marez, Iraq. "Highlanders" assumed responsibility of the Operation New Dawn mission in Ninewa province from 4th AAB, 1st Cavalry Division.

## 'Highlanders' embark on New Dawn mission

Spc. Brandon A. Bednarek  
4th AAB Public Affairs  
1st Armored Div., USD - N

CONTINGENCY OPERATING SITE  
MAREZ, Iraq – As the U.S. remains  
committed to reposturing forces in Iraq,  
a significant transition is redefining the  
relationship between the U.S. and Iraq.

In eight years, American forces have  
gone from full-fledged combat opera-  
tions, to advising, training and assisting  
Iraqi forces, to officially handing over  
bases, in accordance with the security  
agreement.

A similar transition is also occurred  
between two U.S. Army brigades in Iraq.  
For the past year, Soldiers with 4th

Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Cavalry  
Division, worked to accomplish their  
mission in support of Operation New  
Dawn. The "Long Knife" Soldiers as-  
sumed the mission of advising, training  
and assisting Iraqi Security Forces in  
and around Ninewa province October  
18, 2010.

See TOA pg. 3

STEADFAST AND LOYAL IRONHORSE FIT FOR ANY TEST DEVIL HIGHLANDER BLACK JACK

STEADFAST AND LOYAL IRONHORSE FIT FOR ANY TEST DEVIL HIGHLANDER BLACK JACK



# IRONHORSE S'TRONG:

## Soldier of the Week **STAFF SERGEANT MENTEE GAYE**



U.S. Army photo

Staff Sergeant Mentee Gaye, platoon sergeant from Company B, 15th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, tutors Spc. Rene Ocasio, a nuclear, biological and chemical specialist with Company B, in preparation for the Armed Forces Classification Test, Sept. 6, 2011.

Selfless service is an Army Value that Staff Sgt. Mentee Gaye lives by every day. The platoon sergeant's leadership ability has greatly contributed to the success of Soldiers in Company B, 15th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division.

Gaye explores ways to better himself and his Soldiers in everything he does, including training on improving Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery general technical scores.

The first iteration of the GT improvement course was a collective effort, but Gaye took the initiative to run the second course by himself.

"He took it upon himself to continue the GT improvement course," said Sgt. 1st Class Clem Strait, first sergeant of Company B. "He is a good guy, he always puts his Soldiers first."

Gaye voluntarily trains Soldiers for the Armed Forces Classification Test. He is continuing the course, which is taken to possibly improve GT scores, in an effort to open up more options for his Soldiers.

Many high level Army Military Occupational Specialties require a GT score of 110 or above to qualify. Soldiers looking to transfer into MOSs such as legal specialist, radiology specialist, journalist, COMSEC repair, and many intelligence specialties sometimes need to improve upon their original GT score.

A native of Darby, Pa., Gaye teaches in spite of having many responsibilities as a platoon sergeant and his unit's hazardous materials representative.

"He goes above and beyond, and sets the example for his Soldiers," said Strait. "There is always a willingness to help."

In addition to teaching, Gaye encourages his Soldiers to improve their physical fitness test scores and do whatever it takes to make themselves better. Gaye's efforts are unmatched among the 'Gambler' family, and his actions bring great credit upon himself and Company B, said Strait.

For his dedication to the mission and his Soldiers, Gaye is this week's "Ironhorse Strong" Soldier of the Week.

'RED DRAGON' MAINTENANCE  
PLATOON TRAINS IRAQI ARMY

Page 4

FACES OF FREEDOM:  
USD-N REFLECTS ON 9/11

Page 6

SOLDIERS HONOR LOST  
HEROES

Page 8

US, ISF DELIVER GOODWILL,  
GIFTS

Page 10

### THE IVY LEAF

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1st Infantry Division

2nd Advise and  
Assist Brigade  
1st Cavalry Division

4th Advise and  
Assist Brigade  
1st Armored Division



**TOA Cont'd from pg. 1 —**

The purpose of the ATA mission was to improve Iraqi Security Forces' capabilities and enable them to defend Iraq and its people from both internal and external threats.

Training such as Tadreeb al Shamil, Arabic for all-inclusive training, focused on teaching the Iraqi Army the individual tasks critical to their respective jobs. Once the individual tasks were mastered, ISF learned a number of unit-level collective tasks.

As 2011 began, Long Knife Soldiers led ISF training. A majority of this training was conducted within COS Marez at the Ghuzlani Warrior Training Center. Over the course of the next seven months, Iraqis assumed the lead in the conduct of all training, enabling Long Knife Soldiers the opportunity to take on an advisory role, assisting if necessary.

In July, GWTC hosted the culminating event of Operation Iron Lion: a capstone exercise which demonstrated cooperation between all ISF agencies.

With the Long Knife mission now complete, a new brigade has stepped in, ready to conduct their mission with "Strength and Honor."

The "Strength and Honor" motto is a symbolic reference to "Highlanders," 4th AAB, 1st Armored Div., who officially assumed responsibility of the OND mission in Ninewa province during a Transfer of Authority Ceremony Sept. 4, at Contingency Operating Site Marez, Iraq.

The histories of both brigades are intimately intertwined. The 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cav. Div., which was activated in October 2005 from Fort Bliss, Texas, was first deployed to Iraq in 2006 and again in 2008.

Upon returning to Fort Bliss from their second deployment, the unit was reflagged as 4th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Div., and 4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div., was then reassigned to Fort Hood, Texas.



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Brandon A. Bednarek, 4th AAB PAO

**Colonel Scott McKean, commander, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Armored Division, addresses senior U.S. and Iraqi generals, and guests during a Transfer of Authority Ceremony September 4, 2011, at Contingency Operating Site Marez, Iraq. "Highlanders," from Fort Bliss, Texas, assumed responsibility of the Operation New Dawn mission in Ninewa province from 4th AAB, 1st Cavalry Division.**

The ceremony marks the second time in their lineage that the "Long Knife" Brigade has transferred authority to the "Highlanders" while deployed in Iraq. The first occurred in 2009 while deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"The Long Knife and Highlander brigades have been bonded since our inception, and many of our Soldiers have served within each BCT's ranks," said Col. Scott McKean, Highlander commander.

Since arriving in early August, Highlander Soldiers have spent the weeks performing a relief-

in-place with their cavalry counterparts. The process, intended to seamlessly interchange two units, occurs when an incoming unit is scheduled to replace another.

"We're making sure the systems they had in place remain operational, and making sure all of our staff has the same situational awareness," said Command Sgt. Maj. Thomas Eppler, senior non-commissioned officer with 4th AAB, 1st Armored Div.

The mission that lies ahead for the Highlanders is one of great importance, but also one of constant change. Flexibility and discipline will be an essential

component to successfully maintain the course to success, said McKean.

"We will put forth every effort to create flexibility and opportunities for our leaders," he added. "We will ensure that our mission is done with the highest level of discipline and professionalism."

With a combined seven Iraq tours, and well over 40 years of military experience, both McKean and Eppler are experienced Soldiers, looking forward to leading their brigade to a successful mission.

"We will ensure success with honor," said McKean.

# 'Red Dragon' platoon trains Iraqis

2nd Lt. Amanda R. Fonk  
2nd AAB  
1st Cav. Div., USD - N

JOINT BASE BALAD, Iraq – When preparing for combat, nothing is more important than training.

Forward Support Company G, 3rd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, U.S. Division – North, hosted a training course on the maintenance of High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles with the 17th Iraqi Army Brigade at Joint Base Balad, Iraq.

The course, which began Aug. 17, lasted three days.

The humvees are fairly new to the Iraqi Security Forces, and some have become inoperable due to problems beyond their mechanics' scope of expertise, explained Sgt. John Modock, a mechanic with Company G.

In order to strengthen the 17th IA Brigade's vehicle fleet and allow them to continue with their force protection mission, the unit's maintenance section required some additional training on specific components and systems within the vehicles,

Modock added. Modock and Pfc. Matthew Castillo, also a mechanic with Company G, and San Antonio native, spearheaded the classroom instruction and hands-on training.

"You could see it in their eyes each morning they arrived that they were excited about learning something more about their equipment," said Sgt. Miguel Colon, from Brooklyn, N.Y., who escorted the IA personnel around for the training.

Class participants consisted of mechanics from the 17th IA Brigade, which sent two mechanics from each of its battalions to the training course.

The classroom instruction included training on humvee transmissions, engines, and fuel systems.

"These systems are quite complex and difficult to provide instruction on within a three-day span, so we focused on troubleshooting procedures and the use of training manuals to resolve issues," explained Modock.

Instruction also consisted of lessons on the wiring schematic of humvees. IA personnel walked through the electrical system on paper. Then instructors showed



U.S. Army photo

**Sergeant John Modock, a mechanic with Forward Support Company G, 3rd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, U.S. Division – North, describes how to use a technical manual to Iraqi Security Forces at Joint Base Balad, Iraq, Aug. 17, 2011.**

the process of visually locating certain wires of the vehicles.

Iraqi Captain Saddiq, head of the 17th IA Brigade Maintenance Section, had many questions on the U.S. Army's maintenance structure, such as how they managed to maintain their vehicles so thoroughly.

The instructors explained that the vehicle operators help the mechanics by conducting preventive maintenance checks and services daily to help mitigate vehicle faults.

Saddiq said it made sense to use these personnel to do routine fixes, as they were the ones using the vehicles most often, and that doing this would help take some of the work off of his mechanics.

During the course, the IA mechanics were given technical manuals to keep and use at their battalions. Despite the language barrier, they were instructed on how to maneuver through the manual, which will greatly assist them in dissecting any issues or problems with their humvees, said Castillo.

The hands-on portion of the course allowed the trainees to see the actual problems and ask any

questions related to their own vehicles.

Using vehicle parts as visual aids, the mechanics were able to break through the language barrier and realize the similarities between the mechanics, even if they were from different armies and parts of the world.

"I'm grateful to have had a part in teaching them the right thing to do and set them up for future success," said Castillo. As a mechanic, Castillo was able to use his technical expertise to provide solutions to common issues and problems within the humvees.

"Despite the language barrier, it is really interesting to work with the IA personnel and it is rewarding knowing that at the end of the day we learned from one another and built a lasting partnership," said Colon.

As the training came to a close, the IA mechanics left with more expertise to deal with the various problems and issues they face with their humvees, which will increase the 17th IA's combat readiness and lead to a higher number of ISF patrols and missions.



U.S. Army photo

**Modock and fellow mechanic Pfc. Matthew Castillo, a San Antonio native, teach Iraqi Army mechanics about humvee fuel systems during recent vehicle maintenance training at Joint Base Balad, Iraq.**





U.S. Army photo by Spc. Brandon A. Bednarek, 4th AAB PAO

A gunner with 2nd Platoon, Company C, 4th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Armored Division, makes last minute checks on a Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle Sept. 1, 2011, before conducting a route clearance patrol outside of Contingency Operating Site Marez, Iraq. Engineers locate and clear explosive threats on routes to counteract potential attacks.

# Engineers clear way for mission success

Spc. Brandon A. Bednarek  
4th AAB Public Affairs  
1st Armored Div., USD - N

**CONTINGENCY OPERATING SITE MAREZ, Iraq** – Although violence and attacks against U.S. forces in Iraq have dramatically decreased over the last few years, threats from improvised explosive devices still exist.

The Army depends on its engineers to locate and clear explosive threats on important mission and supply routes in order to counteract potential attacks.

Route clearance is one of several tasks engineers with 2nd platoon, Company C, 4th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Armored Division, are expected to perform while operating at Contingency Operating Site Marez.

“The objective is to maintain freedom of movement on routes, by searching for ... possible IEDs,” said 2nd Lt. Matthew Floyd, platoon leader with 2nd Platoon.

For Floyd and his Soldiers, route clear-

ance is a staple of their mission outside the gates of COS Marez.

“We make sure that everyone else can move freely without the threat of an explosive,” he said.

On mission nights, up-armored vehicles illuminate the motor pool with their lighting systems. Soldiers in the platoon load mission-essential equipment, including ice-filled coolers with drinks, and conduct preventative maintenance checks, and services.

Prior to movement, Floyd and the platoon sergeant conduct mission briefs so Soldiers are aware of recent enemy activity and are focused on the upcoming objective. Before the Soldiers venture on their mission, a nightly prayer is said in unison as Soldiers bow their heads.

The engineers spend hours traveling up and down routes with careful attention, cautiously monitoring suspicious vehicles and activity. External cameras mounted on vehicles assist in determining whether an object lying on the roadside is a potential threat.

Regardless of rank or experience, each

Soldier on the road has a responsibility and expectation to halt the patrol if witnessing something out of the ordinary.

“No one job or person is any more important than another,” Floyd said. “It doesn’t matter if it’s a (private first class) on his third patrol or if it’s me – everyone has the control to make that decision.”

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**“We make sure that everyone else can move freely without the threat of an explosive.”**

–2nd Lt. Matthew Floyd  
2nd platoon, Company C,  
4th BSTB

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Frequent radio chatter keeps patrol vehicles focused and in constant contact with one another. Occasionally, a joke can be heard on the headsets, revealing the level of unity that flows within the platoon.

**See ROUTES pg. 9**

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# Faces of Freedom:



"Prevention of complacency is very important and part of every deploying Soldier. You can use the aftermath of 9/11 as an example. This event brought the harsh reality that our proud nation does have an enemy. Freedom is something that has to be fought for in order to maintain."

-Specialist Kevin Cofield, motor transport operator, Forward Support Company D, 4th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, and an Aulander, N.C., native.



"It was a day that has changed my thinking forever. You have to be aware that anything can happen; it completely changed my perspective. We always have to be vigilant and aware now."

-Air Force Maj. Kathryn Payne, staff weather officer with 355th Fighter Wing, from Tucson, Ariz.



"The remembrance of 9/11, to me, is in honor of the men and women who lost their lives on this very tragic day in 2001. It is a celebration of the bravery shown that day. September the eleventh signifies the strength of the United States and its people. This day shows that even through the worst tragedy, the people of the U.S. will overcome any situation as long as we stand together."

-Private First Class Keith Ephraim, quarter-master chemical equipment repairman with Forward Support Company D, 4th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, from Biloxi, Miss.



"To me, the remembrance of 9/11 is a time when Americans should reflect on the need to protect the United States and the citizens within, from foreign and internal threats. Just like Pearl Harbor, this event symbolizes the ability for others to gravely impact American lives and the need to protect (our citizens)."

-Major Julian Avent, civil military operations officer with 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, and a native of Talbott, Tenn.



"I'm proud to be an American Soldier post 9/11, because it gives me the opportunity to do something for the country that has given me a lot."

-Specialist James Clardy, military policeman from Reno, Nev., assigned to "Punishers" 2nd platoon, 272nd Military Police Company, 1st Advise and Assist Task Force, 1st Infantry Division, serving in Kirkuk, Iraq.



# USD-N Reflects on 9/11



"I was in the 7th grade when it happened. I was definitely influenced by what happened during 9/11 to join the Army to help fight for my country."

-Sergeant Trevor Tong, fire direction patrol noncommissioned officer, from Milton, Fl., assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 1st Battalion, 5th Field Artillery, 1st Advise and Assist Task Force, 1st Infantry Division, serving in Kirkuk, Iraq.



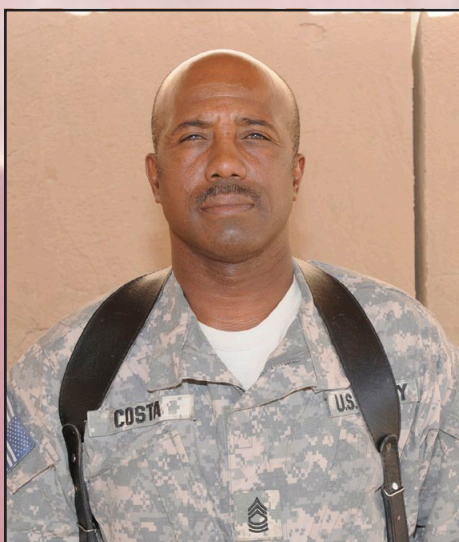
"To me, 9/11 is remembering and honoring the spirits of the innocent individuals who died due to an act of terrorism, as well as remembering the freedoms we tend to take for granted every day, and supporting those who survived but lost loved ones in the process."

-Sergeant Sean Barnett, imagery and intelligence analyst, from Penn Run, Pa., assigned to "Regulators," HHC, 1st Advise and Assist Task Force, 1st Infantry Division, serving in Kirkuk, Iraq.



"Their plan was to instill fear, but instead they brought us closer together. (We) rallied in unison, we wiped the tears from our eyes and stood tall. Taking up arms, to protect the ones we love (and) we moved forward. The world shook not from the fall of the towers, but from the roar of a nation."

-Specialist David Fortin, a computer detection system repairman with Forward Support Company D, 4th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, from Gorham, N.H.



"(9/11) made me want to stay in (the Army) longer to fight for my country. We have so many young Soldiers that need someone to lead them the right way."

-Master Sergeant Don Costa, liaison officer for 840th Transportation Battalion, Surface Deployment and Distribution Command, from Charleston, S.C.



"When 9/11 happened, it was a devastating blow to the people of the U.S. I was in a state of shock. It caused us to re-evaluate how we train and protect (ourselves)."

-Sergeant First Class Jamie Walls, liaison officer for 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, from New Orleans.





U.S. Army photo by Spc. Crystal Hudson, 29th MPAD

## Soldiers honor lost heroes

*'Workout to remember' pays tribute to 31 fallen warriors*

Major Matt Clark, operations battle major with 4th Infantry Division, and Tucson, Ariz. native, begins his part of the 31-minute workout to honor the 31 fallen service members, Sept. 2, 2011. The event was designed to memorialize service members who lost their lives in Afghanistan, Aug. 6, 2011. "Physical fitness is an important part of being in the military. It was an important part to the SEALs, and special operations (service members) who were lost," said Davis, after completing his exercises. "We thought it was a good way to honor their sacrifice."

Spc. Crystal Hudson  
29th MPAD  
USD - N Public Affairs

CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE SPEICHER, Iraq – Members of 4th Infantry Division, United States Division – North, participated in a "workout to remember" at Contingency Operating Base Speicher, Iraq, Sept. 2, 2011, to remember the 31 service members who lost their lives in Afghanistan on Aug. 6.

"Physical fitness is an important part of being in the military. It was an important part to the SEALs, and special operations (service members) who were lost," said Maj. Josh Davis, night chief of operations for 4th Inf. Div. and event organizer. "We thought it was a good way to honor their sacrifice."

The team-based workout challenged participants to complete as many rounds as possible in 31 minutes. Each round included one teammate running 400 meters with a 45 or 25lb weight while the other teammate completed as many repetitions of selected exercises during the lap.

The exercises included thrusters (full front squat into a shoulder press), towel pull-

ups and box jumps. The number of repetitions completed in each round was chosen based on the date the service members were lost, said Maj. Matt Clark, operations battle major with 4th Infantry Division and Tucson, Ariz. Native.

"I like the camaraderie. It shows that we are one team," said Staff Sgt. Manuel Montanez, night joint operations center fires non-commissioned officer from Houston.

Davis said the participants wanted to show some solidarity and support for the families of the service members who were lost.

"(The goal is) to get out and sweat and work hard as a team. It was one team going to rescue another team (in Afghanistan), so that's what it's all about, hard work and teamwork," said Davis, a native of Fayetteville, N.C.

The fallen service members included 17 U.S. Navy SEALs, two U.S. Navy explosives ordnance disposal technicians, three Naval Special Warfare Combat Support Sailors, two U.S. Army Aviators, three U.S. Army air crewmen, three U.S. Air Force special tactics operators, and one military working dog.



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Crystal Hudson, 29th MPAD

Staff Sergeant Manuel Montanez, night joint operations center fires noncommissioned officer with 4th Infantry Division, and Houston native, completes a round of towel pull-ups during the workout to honor the 31 fallen service members who lost their lives.



# 'Black Jack' engineers secure canal, enhance international relationships

Sgt. Quentin Johnson  
2nd AAB Public Affairs  
1st Cav. Div., USD - N

CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE WARHORSE, Iraq – For more than three years, no water has flowed through the Septia Canal, which once provided Iraqi citizens with irrigation for the farms surrounding Contingency Operating Base Warhorse, Iraq.

By the end of September, water will once again pour through miles of the canal, in and around the cities of Septia and Al Raga, said Lt. Col. Mark Davey, commander, 2nd Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, U.S. Division – North.

The project took one month to complete, and will provide more than 1,200 farms in the area with water, said Shawkat Kareem, the Septia Sheikh. Working with the Diyala Central Services and the U.S. Army, Kareem supervised the project from the beginning.

Engineers from Company C, 2nd STB, 2nd AAB, 1st Cav. Div., provided security

for Kareem and the Iraqi nationals working on the canal.

Workers cleared the canals of debris, weeds and concertina wire, said 2nd Lt. John Gilmore, platoon leader with Company C.

A working canal provides water to the farms, which in turn, provides food and work for families in the local villages, explained Kareem.

"The canal will help improve the standard of living around (Septia)," he added, "and will raise the income and economy."

Davey agreed with Kareem's expectations of the economy.

"This project will impact the economy of Diyala province in a very positive way," Davey said. "The project ensured good will between the USF, local governance and all people in Diyala."

Captain Louis-Philippe Hammond, commander of Company C, said he was grateful for the opportunity to help Kareem, and was impressed with the progress being made.

"I am very proud to see



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Quentin Johnson, 2nd AAB PAO

Captain Louis-Philippe Hammond, (left), commander of Company C, 2nd Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, U.S. Division – North, speaks to Shawkat Kareem, Sheikh of Septia, Iraq, about the canal project outside of Contingency Operating Base Warhorse, Iraq, Aug. 29, 2011. Soldiers from Company C, 2nd Special Troops Battalion, 2nd AAB, provided security during the month-long project to restore the flow of water to the canal.

the work that's been accomplished," explained Hammond, a native of Anchorage, Alaska. "It is all because of the Sheikh. His efforts have helped enhance the project."

Kareem was equally grateful for the efforts of the U.S. and the protection they provided his workers.

"(The Soldiers) have helped us and we are working in a safe environment," added Kareem. "I want to thank the

American forces for their effort to open the canal, their friendship and partnership."

**"This project will impact the economy of Diyala province in a very positive way."**

—Lt. Col. Mark Davey  
2nd STB, 2nd AAB

## ROUTES Cont'd from pg. 5——

"We are actually a really tight-knit platoon," explained Floyd, adding that the Soldiers are motivated, focused, respectful and work very well with each other.

In order to keep Soldiers safe on missions, preparation and training are essential cornerstones for leadership, said Floyd. Repeating rehearsals and scenarios are a common practice that keeps the platoon knowledgeable and calculated. It's also crucial to teach Soldiers not to react to IEDs the same way twice, he said.

"Everyone gets the job done, especially our leadership," said Spc. Chad Daniel, an engineer with 2nd platoon on his first deployment. "They make sure the lower enlisted is trained well."

Daniel, who mans a Common Remotely Operated Weapon while riding in a Buffalo Mine-Resistant Vehicle, found that the training he received has suited him for a life of uncertainty outside the wire.

"Everything I was expected to do, everything that I was trained to do, is exactly what I expected it to be," he said.

The adaptability of the Army and advancements in military technology have greatly improved since the first units arrived in Iraq almost eight years ago, including the methods and equipment used for route clearance, which have significantly decreased the amount of time that Soldiers need to be on the roads, said Floyd.

After a long night work, the platoon returns to COS Marez with their mission accomplished. Soldiers park and refuel vehicles, take time to recover, and perform maintenance and rehearsals until their next mission.



# US, ISF deliver goodwill, gifts

## Units team up to bring joy during Eid-al Fitr holiday

Sgt. Justin Naylor  
2nd AAB Public Affairs  
1st Cav. Div., USD - N

CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE WARHORSE, Iraq – Dozens of brightly clad girls and boys dressed in their holiday best stood in line, whispering and giggling back in forth as they waited their turn. One after another they were called forward into a schoolhouse, each walking out the other side with an armful of new toys, school supplies and gifts.

As part of the celebration of Eid al-Fitr, Soldiers with 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, “Black Jack,” 1st Cavalry Division, U.S. Division – North, and their Iraqi Security Force counterparts, shared goodwill and gifts with children from the village of Yethrib in Salah ad-Din province, Iraq, Aug. 31.

Eid al-Fitr marks the end of the Islamic holy month of Ramadan. Muslims generally celebrate the holiday with a special prayer service. The day is also often commemorated with feasts, social



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Justin Naylor, 2nd AAB PAO

**Iraqi Col. Mahmoud, an Iraqi Police officer, shares a smile with a young Iraqi girl after giving her a toy during an event celebrating Eid al-Fitr in the village of Yethrib, Iraq, Aug. 31, 2011.**

visits and gift-giving.

“We are celebrating Eid al-Fitr with some gift-giving to the local children,” said Lt. Col. Nathan Cook, commander of 3rd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd AAB, 1st Cav. Div.

“These gifts are just a small token of our appreciation to the people of the Yethrib area.”

This is our chance to show the people of this village and the surrounding area that we are here to help them and their children, said Iraqi Lt. Col. Radam Hassan Jawad, executive officer for the 4-17th Iraqi Army Battalion, which works closely with 3rd Bn., 82nd FA., in the area. “This shows them that we are here to serve them and help them.”

These types of events give villagers something truly positive to remember U.S. forces by, and help the ISF build stronger relationships with the population of Yethrib, said Radam.

The event also shows the villagers that Americans have a deep respect for days that are especially important to them, like Eid al-Fitr.

U.S. Air Force and Army units from Joint Base Balad, Iraq, provided a majority of the gifts for the event.

Driving through the village on the way to the event, children stood on the side of the road waving, happy to see U.S. forces and the ISF, said Cook. “Seeing their smiles makes it all worth it.”



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Justin Naylor, 2nd AAB PAO

**Lieutenant Colonel Nathan Cook, commander, 3rd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, U.S. Division – North, gives a toy to a young girl in the village of Yethrib, Iraq, Aug. 31, 2011, in celebration of Eid al-Fitr.**



# Always mission ready

## NCO aids Soldiers' readiness, efficiency in accomplishing tasks

Sgt. Kandi Huggins  
1st AATF Public Affairs  
1st Inf. Div., USD - N

CONTINGENCY OPERATING SITE WARRIOR, Iraq – After 14 years of service and three deployments serving as an infantryman and cavalry scout, Sgt. Reginald Alexander is in Iraq for a second time. This time he's keeping troops informed in support of Operation New Dawn.

During his first deployment to Iraq from 2004-2005, Alexander's unit was tasked to conduct combat patrols in Baghdad, he said. Now, Alexander has a different mission: Company Intelligence Support Team noncommissioned officer in charge, Company G, 1st Battalion, 5th Field Artillery.

"Before it was more hands-on, and I was more exposed to the Iraqi population," said the Magnolia, Ark., native. "We were responsible for keeping the district free of violent extremist groups... and provided security for the first democratic elections in Iraq."

Alexander said he spent 11 years in the national guard as a scout and infantryman, but decided to go active duty for stability, and to encounter new challenges.

Now, with little contact with Iraqis, Alexander works with Soldiers and interpreters to provide intelligence reports before they leave Contingency Operating Site Warrior for missions and engagements.

"As the COIST NCOIC, I follow attack trends, map the safest routes and plan alternate routes based on the current threat levels our (intelligence) has noted," said Alexander. "My job is pertinent because it gives the Soldiers situational awareness of threat levels, enemy tactics, techniques and procedures, and an idea of what they need to look for when they are out in sector."

"He is definitely an asset," said Staff Sgt. Eric Harleston, operations NCOIC, Company G. "Operations would be hurt without him. He sets up everything before the guys roll out. All they have to do is get in their vehicles and accomplish their mission."

Harleston, a Charleston, S.C., native, said since knowing and working with Alexander the past two years, his professional respect for him continues to increase.

"He works hard," said Harleston. "He is sometimes hard on his Soldiers, but he always leads by example."

"He is never the type of leader to just dictate and tell his Soldiers to do this or do that. He goes out there with his Soldiers and helps them, or learns what their job is to understand how it better helps him be more of an asset to their growth and development."

While Alexander spends most of his time at COS Warrior, Harleston said he goes out on missions from time to time, which aids his understanding of what his briefings can do for the unit before they go on missions.

"It's a good thing for him to go out because he is better able to visualize the terrain and area," said Harleston. "An area may look one way on a map, but when you see it firsthand it's different. With him going out on missions, he is able to... determine different things that will allow our operations to run effectively and efficiently."

Alexander said, even though it is a new experience and challenge, his time as COIST NCOIC has been rewarding because no personnel have been casualties of

enemy action while he has been doing his job.

He said he is grateful his experiences and prior deployments allow him to provide leadership and expertise to his fellow Soldiers and he looks forward to taking that experience with him as he progresses his career in the Army.



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Kandi Huggins, 1st AATF

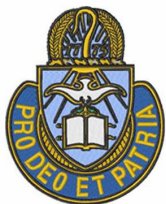
**Alexander conducts a mission brief to his Soldiers prior to the Company G Soldiers leaving COS Warrior, Aug. 24, 2011.**



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Robert DeDeaux, 1st AATF

**Sergeant Reginald Alexander, Company Intelligence Support Team noncommissioned officer, Company G, 1st Battalion, 5th Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Advise and Assist Task Force, 1st Infantry Division, looks up information regarding recent activities in the Kirkuk province prior to Company G Soldiers leaving Contingency Operating Site Warrior, Sept. 2, 2011.**





# Chaplain's Corner:

## Who is your battle buddy?

Chaplain (Capt.) Scott Ingram  
4th DSTB Chaplain  
U.S. Division - North

CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE SPEICHER, Iraq – Who is your battle buddy? Why do we have them in the military?

Battle buddies are partners assigned to Soldiers to assist one another both in and out of combat. Battle buddies look out for, protect, and help one another. The battle buddy system has also been highly successful in preventing suicide among our ranks. Battle buddies help protect our most prized commodity – America's sons and daughters.

Jesus was approached one day by an expert in the Jewish religious laws of his day and was asked what a person must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus responded by asking the young man what the Jewish law said. The man answered by quoting from two books in the Hebrew Scriptures (Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18). The two passages called for a whole-hearted love for God and for one's neighbor. Afterward, Jesus replied, "You have answered correctly...Do this and you will live."

Jesus put his finger on an area of our lives that strikes at the heart of where many of us live. How are we to help others and to what extent? With the advent of the internet, global travel, and digital communication, we can see and hear the stories of the less fortunate, and their pain, with so much clarity that they seem

to be within our arm's reach. The tragedies of Haiti's earthquake and Japan's tsunami are two such examples on a national scale. America, as well as other countries, and a host of organizations poured generous aid into Haiti and Japan. On an international level, Haiti and Japan are our neighbors.

Jesus then asked the young man a follow-up question, "Who is your neighbor?" In our Army culture, we might ask, "Who is your battle buddy?" What if another person is not your assigned battle buddy... are you responsible for him or her? Unlike previous generations, our pace of life today doesn't seem to support taking time to get to know people. Instead, we value efficiency, proficiency, and living the life of more. If we get to know folks in the process, then good. If not, oh well, it's all we can do to keep our own heads above water and take care of matters in our own lives.

In response to the lawyer, Jesus told him a story about neighborliness in order to help him answer the obvious question for himself. The story was about a traveler who fell victim to thievery and physical battery, and left for dead on the side of the road. The traveler was ignored by two supposed religious leaders who, by all accounts, should have helped but didn't. There was a third person who stopped, dressed the wounds of the half-dead man, took him to a local inn, and paid for his care. The third person was also considered a social outcast in first-century Judaism. Jesus turned the ques-

tion back to the young man by asking, "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The answer is obvious.

I ask you, "So, who is your neighbor?" Look around you. Take notice of those whom you pass and interact with each day: sweating at the gym, standing in line at the dining facility, gathering Sundays in chapel, looking for whatever the post exchange is out of, walking around division main, waiting at the barber shop, or at Green Beans. The list could go on and on. If we look with our eyes and listen with our ears, we will see and hear people who have been "robbed, beaten and left half-dead" during this deployment. Some fear what is waiting on them when they return back home after this deployment. It's all they can do to function and peddle through their days without having a total emotional, mental, and spiritual collapse. These are your neighbors... these are your battle buddies!

Battle buddies - good neighbors - are incredibly important in the Army and could literally save someone's life.

September is designated as Suicide Awareness and Prevention month. There are several meaningful activities planned to remind our Soldiers of the immeasurable value of every life. Ultimately, being a battle buddy is about the value of life and the investment we make in each other. Please take time this month to consider and remind one another of the value of our Soldiers and their Families.

### USD-N Social Media

To read more stories and see the photos that go with them, as well as some videos, check out the links below. Read and share what you see and pass along the Soldiers' stories.



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