



Iraq, U.S. Forces Hit City With Security, Service Combination

Page 14



Paratroopers Make Progress Against Insurgents

Page 23



Injured Soldier Still "Coach" at Heart

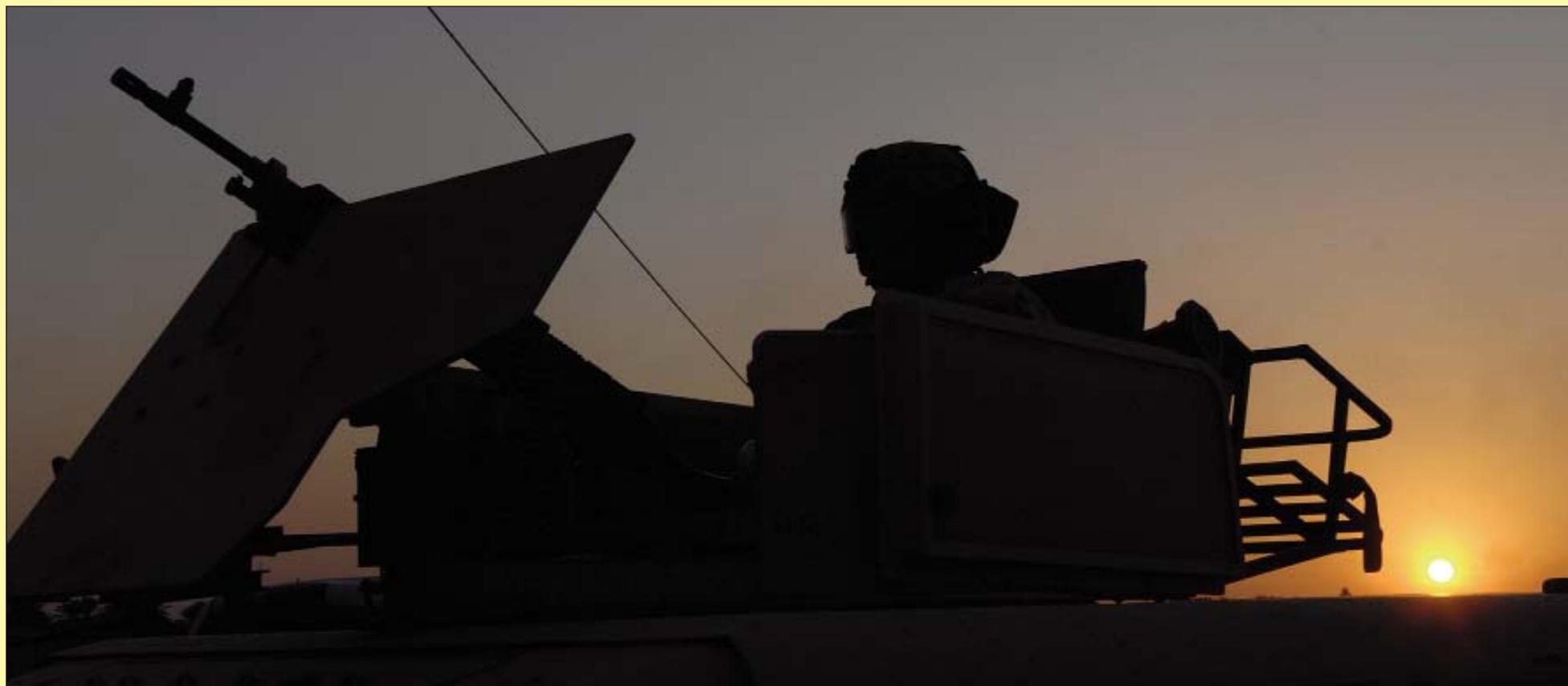
Page 26

Crossed Sabers

Volume I, Issue 10

"Telling the MND-Baghdad Story"

Monday, April 16, 2007



(Photo by Sgt. Marcus Butler, 4th BCT, 25th Inf. Div. Public Affairs)

Never Quitting Until Mission is Complete

Spc. Gerald Scott, a native of Buchanan, Mich. and gunner for 3rd Platoon, 127th Military Police Company sits in the turret of his humvee as his platoon visits a Iraqi Police check point as the sun sets March 22 south of Baghdad. (See story on Page 19)

Army News Brief

Intelligence Field Recruiting Seasoned NCOs

The Military Intelligence Corps is looking for seasoned noncommissioned officers in the ranks of staff sergeant and sergeant 1st class to reclassify into the 97E career field - Human Intelligence Collector.

Training is 24 weeks and four days or 27 weeks and four days, depending on the follow on assignment. Graduates will be assigned to units preparing for deployment or currently deployed in support of OIF or OEF. The application deadline for the first class is March 30.

The 97E military occupational skill is the U.S. Army's MOS for HUMINT Collectors. HUMINT Soldiers are responsible for collecting intelligence information from human sources, analyzing HUMINT information, and conducting debriefings and interrogations. The career field currently offers a Selective Reenlistment Bonus of up to \$30,000 or a critical skills retention bonus of up to \$50,000 for SFC, and a MOS Conversion Bonus of up to \$4,000 for SSG. Soldiers interested should be U.S. citizens with a SECRET security clearance.

More information about this career opportunity is located on the G2 SGM website at <http://www.dami.army.pentagon.mil/sgm/index.asp>. Additionally, Sgt. Maj. Ronald Wheelock at Fort Huachuca is fielding calls from eligible NCOs at (520) 533-1174.

Troops Assist in Returning Kidnapping Victims Home

By Staff Sgt. Jon Cupp
1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD, Iraq -- Three Iraqi men, battered and beaten after many days of being held hostage by terrorists near the town of Fallujah, entered the Company A, 115th Brigade Support Battalion's headquarters on Camp Taji, Iraq.

The men, who all smiled when greeted by the U.S. Soldiers, had been kept on the camp for medical treatment and were waiting just a few short hours before being driven to Baghdad and from there to Fallujah to be reunited with their families.

This was the scene as Soldiers from the 1st Ironhorse Brigade Combat Team participated in a joint effort with Iraqi Police in Fallujah and Marines from the 6th Regimental Combat Team (RCT) to get the men back home March 25. The liberated

hostages had been rescued by coalition troops March 22 near the town of Karmah, Iraq, just hours before insurgents could fulfill their plans to execute the men.

On the first leg of their journey, they were escorted by Soldiers from the 115th Brigade Support Battalion from Camp Taji, Iraq on a convoy to Baghdad where they were then linked up with other Ironhorse Brigade troopers from Company E, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment on Camp Liberty, Iraq.

The Co. E troops then drove the men to a link up point near Fallujah, where Marines from the 6th RCT took them to the Fallujah Iraqi Police station.

From Fallujah, the IPs then reunited the men

See **Kidnap** Page 3

Troop Keeps Soldiering After 21 Years

By Sgt. Nicole Kojetin
1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq - Few children know exactly what they want to be when they grow up. Often the childhood fantasies revolve around being a cowboy, astronaut or being president.

But newly-promoted Sgt. Maj. Clarence Miller Jr., knew exactly what he wanted to be... a Soldier.

"Since probably the sixth grade, I knew that I was going into the military," the Pensacola, Fla., native said.

It was sort of a family affair.

"I would see relatives in the military who always seemed to have it together and have direction in their lives," Miller said. "It never seemed like they were scraping pennies like other people back home. It inspired me."

From the beginning, he knew what field he wanted to go into. Although the family members who were in the military were in the Army, he wasn't sold on which branch in the military to go into. His choice of a job made the choice for him.

"I went to the Marine Corps first and requested communications," Miller said. "They told me that my job was to be a fighter first, and they would make the choice of what job I would have."

The Army, on the other hand, had given him his choice. In 1984, a month and a half after graduating high school, he left for the basic training. As far as he was concerned, it was the only option.

"I was from a small town and neither one



(Photo by Sgt. Nicole Kojetin, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Sgt. Maj. Clarence Miller Jr., grins during a conversation, prior to his promotion ceremony March 3 on Camp Liberty, Iraq.

of my parents had much of an education," Miller said. "My father's father died when he was about eight, and he was the oldest. He quit school to help the family. My mother quit school in 11th grade. They were just proud of me for graduating from high school. They never expected me to go to college.

"So, I never really had any intention to go to college. I really just wanted to be a Soldier," he added.

When his childhood dreams finally came true, it wasn't quite bliss. He said his

mom wasn't keen on him being away. Since the beginning, she had a hard time letting go of her son and pressured him to come home.

After his mother had some health problems, including open-heart surgery, Miller made the hard decision to get out of the military.

"I have strong family ties," he said. "She needed me."

It didn't last long, although he felt he was needed at home, his family understood that his heart was still with the Army.

"I love the institution and taking care of Soldiers," he said. "It gives me the chance to counsel people without being a psychologist and I truly enjoy it. From the beginning, it was my intention to stay in and retire."

The conflict of heart was resolved by a conversation with his father.

"My father sat me down and told me that I needed to start living for me and not for others," Miller said.

A year and a half after leaving active duty, with his family and God on his side, he was back in the military.

It is a good thing he did, too. He met his bride, Alcer, in the Army, and they have now been married for 12 years. They have two sons.

"Beside's my mom, she is my biggest fan," Miller said. "Whenever I get the smallest bit tired, she motivates me to keep going."

The bond with his family helps him through hardships and he loves spending time with them.

"I could spend 10 hours just sitting and talking to my wife, not really doing anything," he said.

He looks forward from getting back

from this deployment do just that, along with a little fishing. According to him, Z-Lake, the manmade lake which serves as a borderline between Liberty and Camp Victory, just doesn't cut it. Plus, he doesn't have much free time in Iraq, anyway.

His job as the radio noncommissioned officer-in-charge for the Multi-National Division - Baghdad headquarters keeps him on his toes. He is also very active at church, singing in the choir and learning as much as he can about his religion.

"Serving God keeps me sane," Miller said.

Also, his views on college have changed drastically since he was a teenager, and is currently taking classes.

"I realized that education is the key, that even though I am a Soldier, I needed to better myself through civilian education," Miller said. He has made great strides in that direction.

Miller currently has an associate's degree in liberal arts with the University of Maryland, a Bachelor's of Science with a concentration in management, and is six courses away from a Master of Business Administration degree with a concentration in military operations.

He is planning on using what he has learned to educate others when he retires.

Miller is looking into the Troops to Teacher's Program or possibly teaching college courses, maybe history or humanities.

He still has a few good years left in the Army, though. He's planning on enjoying them until it is time for him to move aside for another Soldier to take his place.

When will that be? Only time can tell.

Commanding General:

Maj. Gen. Joseph F. Fil, Jr.

Public Affairs Officer:

Lt. Col. Scott Bleichwehl

Command Information Supervisor:

Master Sgt. Dave Larsen

Print NCOIC:

Sgt. Michael Garrett

Editor:

Sgt. Nicole Kojetin

Contributing Writers:

Sgt. 1st Class Kap Kim, Sgt. 1st Class Robert Timmons, Sgt. Jon Cupp, Staff Sgt. W. Wayne Marlow, Staff Sgt. Angela McKinzie, Sgt. Robert Yde, Sgt. Robert Strain, Sgt. Joy Pariente, Spc. Alexis Harrison, Spc. Nathan Hoskins, Spc. Shea Butler, Spc. L.B. Edgar, Spc. Ryan Stroud, Spc. Jeffrey Ledesma, Spc. Alexis Harrison, Spc. Chris McCann, Pfc. William Hatton, Pfc. Benjamin Gable, Pfc. Ben Fox, Pfc. Nathaniel Smith

Contact Crossed Sabers at VOIP 242-4093, or DSN 318-847-1855 or e-mail david.j.larsen@mnd-b.army.mil or nikki.lemke@mnd-b.army.mil.

Crossed Sabers is an authorized publication for members of the U.S. Army. Contents of Crossed Sabers are not necessarily official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, Department of Defense, Department of the Army or the First Cavalry Division. All editorial content of Crossed Sabers is prepared, edited, provided and approved by the 1st Cavalry Division Public Affairs Office and posted on the First Team website at www.hood.army.mil/1stcavdivl.

Public Affairs Officer:

Lt. Col. Scott Bleichwehl

Command Information Supervisor:

Master Sgt. Dave Larsen

Print NCOIC:

Sgt. Michael Garrett

Editor:

Sgt. Nicole Kojetin

Contributing Writers:

Sgt. 1st Class Kap Kim, Sgt. 1st Class Robert Timmons, Sgt. Jon Cupp, Staff Sgt. W. Wayne Marlow, Staff Sgt. Angela McKinzie, Sgt. Robert Yde, Sgt. Robert Strain, Sgt. Joy Pariente, Spc. Alexis Harrison, Spc. Nathan Hoskins, Spc. Shea Butler, Spc. L.B. Edgar, Spc. Ryan Stroud, Spc. Jeffrey Ledesma, Spc. Alexis Harrison, Spc. Chris McCann, Pfc. William Hatton, Pfc. Benjamin Gable, Pfc. Ben Fox, Pfc. Nathaniel Smith

Contact Crossed Sabers at VOIP 242-4093, or DSN 318-847-1855 or e-mail david.j.larsen@mnd-b.army.mil or nikki.lemke@mnd-b.army.mil.

Crossed Sabers is an authorized publication for members of the U.S. Army. Contents of Crossed Sabers are not necessarily official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, Department of Defense, Department of the Army or the First Cavalry Division. All editorial content of Crossed Sabers is prepared, edited, provided and approved by the 1st Cavalry Division Public Affairs Office and posted on the First Team website at www.hood.army.mil/1stcavdivl.

Spur of the Moment

(Photos by Spc. Jeffrey Ledesma, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

"What is the one thing you look forward to the most after a long day outside of the wire?"



Spc. Andrew Lynn

Company C, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division

"I look forward to getting back to my room and relaxing, just having that time to rack out."



Spc. Ray Villa

Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division

"After a long 12 hour work day, it's definitely not the gym."



"Eating chow, you get really hungry after a long day of clearing operations."

Spc. Glenn Meadows

Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division

"I look forward to calling my fiancée. I try to call her every night unless I'm dead-dog tired."

Spc. John Aycock

Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division



"Checking and replying to my Myspace messages. It's the quickest way to stay in touch with friends and family back home and it makes it so you don't have to use the phone and call them at the most ungodly hours."



Spc. Shawn Christensen

Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division

Baghdad News Briefs



(Photo by 1st Lt. Brian Cooke, Btry A, 2nd Bn., 32nd Field Artillery Reg.)

Weapons are inventoried from a cache found in Baghdad's Yarmouk district on Apr. 3. Among the illegal weapons, explosives, and IED components found were 9mm handguns, 60mm mortars, 82mm mortars, and 57mm projectiles as well as numerous AK-47s and other contraband. Fourteen men were detained during the operation and are no longer on the streets.

14 Detained at cache site

BAGHDAD—A large weapons cache was found in the Yarmouk neighborhood on Apr. 3, as security operations continue in western Baghdad.

Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 5th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army, and Battery A, 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, conducted a joint operations raid that discovered a stockpile of weapons in the nation's capital.

Among the items confiscated were, explosives, IED making materials, 9mm handguns, 60mm mortars, 82mm mortars, and 57mm projectiles as well as numerous AK-47s and other contraband.

Fourteen men were detained during the operation and are being held for further questioning.

Improving Iraqi Educational Opportunities One Small School at a Time



(Photo by Sgt. Jeremy Hammon, 1st Battalion, 7th Field Artillery Regiment)

Sgt. Kelly Bandy walks through a freshly painted breeze-way March 22 of a school Headquarters Battery, 1st Battalion, 7th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division is helping to renovate. This main goal of the project is to improve the infrastructure and add classroom space for the growing student population of the Al Swaib School. Projects such as these provide employment for local residents.



(Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Robert Timmons, 4IBCT, 1st Inf. Div. Public Affairs)

Ambassador Visit

Col. Ricky D. Gibbs, commander, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Inf. Div. and a native of Harker Heights, Texas, talks to the U.S. ambassador to Iraq, Ryan C. Crocker, shortly after he landed at Forward Operating Base Falcon in Baghdad April 5. Gibbs escorted Crocker and Lt. Gen. Ray Odierno, commanding general of the Multi-National Corps-Iraq, on a trip to Baghdad's Doura Market.

Brigade Helps Return Iraqis to Their Families Kidnap

From Page 1

with their awaiting families.

Pfc. January Schectman, a combat medic for Medical Company C, 115th Brigade Support Battalion and a native of Whitefish, Mont., offered the men some crackers and other foods prior to their departure, but said it was hard to fathom what the men had been through over the past few days.

"They're a little traumatized so it's been hard for them to eat," she said as she gave food to two of the men, while the other man laying on his side smiled at her but turned down the food, due to pain from his injuries. "It's sad that the insurgents would do such things to them."

Schectman felt it was important to show the men compassion, something, she said, the insurgents who kidnapped the men were lacking.

For Richmond, Texas native, Capt. Jay Wisham, commander, Co. E, 2nd Bn., 5th Cav. Regt., the mission, he said, was an honor.

"I'm all about doing this, and our willingness to transport these hostages, who we freed from the insurgents, more than 100 kilometers back to their homes shows that we're here to support the Iraqi people."

"It really illustrates the exact differences between us and the insurgents who torture, kill and kidnap people with no regard for the families involved," added Wisham. "We are willing to go to extraordinary lengths to reunite them."

Wisham and his troops often perform missions near Baghdad. Over the course of their missions they have captured a lot of insurgents and routed out terrorist cells, all the while being involved in humanitarian efforts to help the people in the villages in which Co. E patrols. So Wisham said helping the freed men was something his Soldiers were more than glad to participate in.

"This has been a great opportunity to show the



(Photo by Staff Sgt. Jon Cupp, 1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Soldiers from Company E, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment and Marines from the 6th Regimental Combat Team assist three liberated hostages March 25 near Fallujah, Iraq.

Iraqis that we care for them," said Sgt. Justin Harris, a combat engineer who is a team leader for Co. E and hails from Roseville, Calif. "You can see the Iraqis really want our help and seeing and experiencing their attitudes toward us, it's a good feeling and it's pretty awesome."

"We're not just here to shoot bad guys and get rid of insurgents, we're here to help the country and its people," he said.

As Harris reflected on the day's mission, he also drew comparisons between Americans and Iraqis in their wanting to be free and live free of violence.

"The Iraqi people are just like us, they just want to work, support their families and then come home without having to be worried about being abducted from their homes," said Harris. "Sometimes there are a few bad apples who are insurgents and the civilians are not equipped to take care of that, but we're more than happy to continue assisting (the Iraqi security forces) in getting rid of the bad guys."

“Just one day left. I just got to make it through this last day.” Soldier is Ready for Rest, Relaxation

By Spc. Jeffrey Ledesma
1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD – The twisted razor wire the curls high above the fortified walls of the base camp, the Soldiers’ home away from home, is the obscure thin-red line that separates the feeling of security and the one of danger.

Spc. Andrew James Lynn, an infantryman with Company C, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, makes it through a major clearing operation, “Arrowhead Strike 9,” days before leaving for home on environmental morale leave.

But he is a little nervous, because there is always a lingering sense of danger in a combat zone.

“We’ve had a lot of close calls, but it’s our job,” said the 21-year-old on his second deployment.

During his first month in the Iraqi capital, he was a driver and received a rude awakening when his patrols were hit by two roadside bombs.

“There were two people who were killed in the same place I hit an (improvised explosive device). Those were some pretty close calls, but luckily, Strykers are some tough vehicles,” said Lynn, a native of Hagerstown, Md.

He said that despite going outside the wire being nerve-racking, he understands the importance of looking past the thought of something life-threatening happening to complete the mission, even when he knows he is days away from going home to see his family.

In the most recent operation, as part of a push for Baghdad security, his battalion was responsible for clearing operations in parts of the Al Mansour neighborhoods of the Iraqi capital.

As he stood on the bench manning his weapon, peeking up above the hatch, he realized he was all too familiar to the neighborhood they were driving through.

“We’ve been here before and we know the dangers this place is capable of,” Lynn said. “It definitely makes me nervous a couple of days before I get to go home.”

However, Lynn added that thoughts about all the pos-

sible dangers disappear when he drives out into the city and focuses on his job, and that he’s done it time after time.

After conducting clearing operations March 21, all Lynn had to do was survive the next day’s mission and he would be home free.

“Just one day left. I just got to make it through this last day,” he said.

After his company operated from an observation point, they assisted in clearing houses March 22.

Finally the last couple of hours of the operations began to tick away.

“Thoughts of being inches away from being home with my family would pop into my mind, but then I had to refocus and remember I am here to do a job and I have to stay aware of my surroundings and what’s going on,” Lynn said. “I never let my guard down.”

He was glad when he rolled safely past the high walls of his ‘home away from home’ in one piece.

“A lot of people at my church really support what I do,” Lynn said. “They pray for me everyday and that’s one of the reasons why I think nothings happened to me.”

Back in the embrace of the tall walls the next day, the six-foot-tall Soldier slept in, got a haircut, got his bags packed and swims in the confort of knowing that soon he would be on his way back to the states to visit his family and friends in the Old Line State.

Although Lynn has made it through ten months of being in a combat zone, some people – both here and back home – haven’t.

Unfortunately, during his deployment he lost his uncle, a Vietnam veteran, retired Sgt. Ronnie Swope.

“My uncle was the guy who told me stories and what being in the military was like,” Lynn said. “I am kind of carrying out his legacy.”

Though his uncle won’t be there when he returns, he will be surrounded by friends and family just the same.

While on EML he will be spending his time catching up with everyone, and going to the beach.

Lynn added, when he finally sets foot on solid ground



(Photo by Spc. Jeffrey Ledesma, 1st Cavalry Division Public Affairs)

Spc. Andrew James Lynn, an infantryman with Company C, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, relaxes before the start of operation “Arrowhead Strike 9” March 21 in the Ghazaliyah district of Baghdad.

in the state he plans on making the most of his time, but until then he’ll be listening to Tiger Army and other “Psycho-Billy” bands, a music style resembling a mix of 1970s British punk rock and American bands of the 1950s.

Honoring Our Fallen Heroes

Sgt. John Allen, HHT, 2-12 CAV, 4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div.
Staff Sgt. Jason Arnette, Co. C, 2-14 IN, 2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div.
Spc. James Arnold, Troop B, 1-8 CAV, 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div.
Staff Sgt. Shane Becker, Troop A, 1-40 CAV, 4th BCT, 25th Inf. Div.
Sgt. William Bowling, HHC, BSTB, 2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div.
Sgt. Emerson Brand, Troop B, 1-8 CAV, 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div.
Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Brevard, Co. A, 1-501st PIR, 4th BCT, 25th Inf. Div.
Spc. Joseph Cantrell, IV, HHC, 2-8 CAV, 1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div.
Sgt. Robert Carr, HHC, 2-12 IN, 2nd BCT, 2nd Inf. Div.
Cpl. Brian Chevalier, Co. B, 5-20 IN, 3rd SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div.
Pfc. James Coon, Troop B, 1-8 CAV, 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div.
Sgt. Wayne Cornell, HHC 1-28 IN, 4th BCT, 1st Inf. Div.
Pfc. William Davis, Co. A, 2-12 CAV, 4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div.
Pfc. Gabriel Figueroa, HHC, 1-8 CAV, 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div.
Cpl. Wilfred Flores, Jr., Co. C, 2-14 IN, 2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div.
Pfc. Alberto Garcia, Jr., Co. C, 1-26 IN, 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div.
Sgt. Freeman Gardner, Jr., 18th EN Co., 3rd SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div.
Pfc. Derek Gibson, Co. A, 2-12 IN, 2nd BCT, 2nd Inf. Div.
Sgt. Curtis Glawson, Jr., Co. E, 610 BSB, 4th BCT, 1st Inf. Div.
Pvt.(2) Mark Graham, HHC, 2-5 CAV, 1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div.
Sgt. Ryan Green, Troop B, 1-8 CAV, 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div.

Staff Sgt. Darrell Griffin, Jr., Co. C, 2-3 IN, 3rd SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div.
Spc. Marieo Guerrero, Co. A, 1-18 IN, 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div.
Staff Sgt. Blake Harris, HHC, 1-8 CAV, 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div.
Spc. Stephen Kowalczyk, Co. C, 6-9 CAV, 3rd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. (MND-N)
Pfc. John Landry, Jr., Co. A, 2-12 CAV, 4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div.
Sgt. Thomas Latham, Co. C, 2-14 IN, 2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div.
Sgt. Nicholas Lightner, HHC, 1-8 CAV, 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div.
Spc. Sean McDonald, Co. A, Eng. Bn., 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div.
Sgt. Robert McDowell, HHC, BSTB, 2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div.
Staff Sgt. David Mejias, HHC, BSTB, 2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div.
Sgt. Joe Polo, Co. A, 2-12 IN, 2nd BCT, 2nd Inf. Div.
Staff Sgt. Terry Prater, Troop B, 1-8 CAV, 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div.
Spc. Stephen Richardson, HHC 1-28 IN, 4th BCT, 1st Inf. Div.
Spc. Adam Rosema, Co. E, 215th BSB, 3rd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. (MND-N)
Sgt. Ed Santini, Co. A, 2-12 CAV, 4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div.
Spc. Jason Shaffer, HHC, 1-12 CAV, 3rd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. (MND-N)
1st Lt. Neale Shank, HHT, 1-89 CAV, 2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div.
Spc. Jonathan Smith, Co. F, 115 BSB, 1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div.
Sgt. Lance Springer, II, HHT, 1-40th CAV, 4th BCT, 25th Inf. Div.
Staff Sgt. Eric Vick, HHC, BSTB, 2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div.
Staff Sgt. Christopher Webb, HHC, 2-5 CAV, 1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div.



(Photo by Sgt. Raymond Kokel, 1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Soldiers Tackle Cookie Shipment

Sgt. Robert Yesia (left), who hails from Denver, and Spc. Ryan Hahn, a native of Morgan Hill, Calif., both from the 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, chow down on Girl Scout cookies delivered to the battalion March 27 on Camp Taji, Iraq. The cookies were sent thanks to a combined effort of several organizations in Walled Lake, Mich., a suburb of Detroit. The organizations arranged to have the cookies shipped to the troops, and each Soldier received a box, personally addressed to them, which contained five different boxes of cookies.

Lancer Troops Work to Make Streets Safe for Iraqis

By Staff Sgt. Jon Cupp
1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

KHAN DARI, Iraq – Making the streets safer for Iraqi civilians in their area of operations has been one of the main goals for troopers from the 2nd “Lancer” Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment.

After three improvised explosive devices (IEDs) detonated, including one that injured two children near a school here March 25, Company E, 2nd Bn., 5th Cav. Regt. Soldiers were out gathering information March 26 to help catch those responsible and to continue building relationships with the people living in the village.

The children who are in good condition were sent to a local area hospital where they

are recuperating from their injuries. No one was hurt in the other two incidents.

“After seeing what happened to those kids, we know if we can continue getting information from anyone who can help us clean out insurgents here and find weapons caches, we’re making this a safer place down the line for the local nationals,” said Marietta, Ga. native Staff Sgt. William Stone, a squad leader from Company E, 2nd Bn., 5th Cav. Regt. “All the people here say the same things, they want our help, they want safety and they want the insurgents to go away.”

As the troops from Co. E conducted a foot patrol they went from house to house, asking about the IED strikes the day before, inquiring about the welfare of the people living there and collected information on terrorists and insurgent cells operating in the area.

Every so often, they would find homes where there were children and give them crayons and jump ropes.

On their first stop, an Iraqi family eagerly greeted the U.S. troops, offering them tea, a sign that shows the difference between how the people in the villages feel about the insurgents compared with their feelings for U.S. troops, according to Miles City, Mont. native Sgt. 1st Class Anthony Pluhar, a platoon sergeant for Co. E, 2nd Bn., 5th Cav. Regt.

“To hurt children just goes to show that the bad guys don’t care about the people living here,” Pluhar said. “Apparently the insurgents don’t have families or feelings like normal people, they’re simply ruthless thugs.”

At one house, Pluhar spoke to an Iraqi farmer, who told Pluhar he had not heard about the IED strike by the school but would be willing to give information if he did.

“Let us know if you see or hear anything. If the insurgents don’t care about killing Americans or Iraqi security forces, they certainly don’t care about hurting inno-



(Photos by Staff Sgt. Jon Cupp, 1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Los Angeles native Sgt. Jose Martinez (left), a team leader, and Spc. Joshua Beard, a mortarman who hails from St. Louis, both with Company E, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, keep their eyes open for anything suspicious as they pull security in the courtyard of a house near Khan Dari, Iraq March 26.

cent civilians to achieve their goals,” said Pluhar, speaking to the man through an interpreter and referring to the IED strike near the school. “So please let us know if you see anything, help us help you.”

On one of their last stops, an Iraqi man thanked the U.S. troops for their help telling them that he felt safe when they were patrolling his neighborhood.

“When you meet people like that you really feel like we’re doing some good,” Stone said.

Although the mission did not yield much information on the three strikes, the Soldiers said that they have had a lot of cooperation from the people in getting information leading to the capture of insurgents on previous

patrols, which is due, they say in large part to their building of trust with the Iraqis living in the villages in which they patrol.

Sumner, Ill. native Spc. Michael Evans, a mortarman for Co. E, reflected on what the day’s mission meant to him.

“It’s a great feeling to know we’re contributing to getting insurgents off the streets so the people don’t have to live in fear from someone killing their children or hurting them,” said Evans.

“I’ll be coming away from this with a lot bigger appreciation of life in general and knowing that I was doing something to help the Iraqi people and the American people—for us, so that what happened on 9-11 never happens again,” he added.



Los Angeles native Sgt. Jose Martinez, a team leader for Company E, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, peers over vegetation in the courtyard of a house to look out for anything suspicious while pulling security March 26 near the village of Khan Dari, Iraq.

Iraqi Army Medics Team Up With Ironhorse Troops to Bring Medical Care to Sheik Hamad

By Staff Sgt. Jon Cupp
1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

SHEIK HAMAD, Iraq - Iraqi Army medics from the 2nd Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division (Mechanized) who recently participated in a tactical combat care course on Camp Taji in early March, had the opportunity to perform some of their medical skills outside of the classroom, treating civilian patients, during a civilian healthcare outreach project here.

The IA medics teamed with U.S. Soldiers from the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division to bring health care to people in the village here March 22.

The joint effort was coordinated by the medical staffs from the 2nd Bde., 9th IA Div. (Mech) and the 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment who along with their own battalion surgeon's staff arranged to bring in other healthcare specialists from 1st BCT units on Taji. Some of the medics and doctors came from the 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment and the 115th Brigade Support Battalion.

"This was definitely an interesting change of pace and there were a lot of working parts," said Honolulu native Capt. Jason Nakamura, battalion surgeon for the 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment. "We have one Iraqi medic issuing out medications, one doing triage and another handling acute care, much like the care you would see being



(Photo by Staff Sgt. Jon Cupp, 1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Pfc. Whitney Elenbaas, a Charlie Medical Company, 115th Brigade Support Battalion combat medic, uses hand signals to ask an Iraqi girl if she has a sore throat March 22 in Sheik Hamad, Iraq during a healthcare outreach visit.

given during a sick call."

"We want the Iraqis to see that their own people are doing some of the medical treatment and want them, the IA medics, to have their face on many of these projects by having them eventually take the lead, working in various capacities," he continued.

Patients were seen in different treatment rooms by either an Iraqi doctor and an Iraqi

medic or by a U.S. doctor and U.S. medic.

"The care we're giving today is very basic," said 1st Lt. Juan Briones, a doctor with Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 1st Squadron, 7th Cav. Regiment and a native of San Diego, Texas. "We ask them what their problems are, such as heartburn, and then give them the closest medication we have that will help them with that particular

problem."

Over the course of the day, hundreds of patients were treated for ailments ranging from common colds, minor burns, open wounds, aches and pains, allergies, ear infections to other minor maladies.

In addition, Iraqi Army troops and U.S. Soldiers gave out free toys, food, water, hygiene items, blankets, note books and other things to the villagers.

"Everyone leaves with something, whether medicine for headaches or vitamins for children, and all kinds of goodies. We always try to have something for them on every mission," added Briones. "We also provide information and give them the tools they need on how better to treat themselves medically and physically."

"I feel good about what we're doing here, but I wish that I could do more, but we do what we can with what we've got," added Briones. "But just that little bit that you can do goes a long way and even with just a bottle of water, you can see the gratefulness in the people's faces."

Soldiers said that helping the IA medics is helping Iraq become self-supporting nation. There is also a piece in it for the Soldiers.

"The sooner we help them transition to taking over for their own (healthcare) and government, the sooner we can go home, so helping them, helps us," said Sgt. Jason Zahley, a combat medic for HHT, 2nd Bn., 8th Cav. Regt.

City Council Opens Center

As city council members and tribal sheiks watch, Allentown, Pa. native Capt. Adrian Spevak, commander, Company B, 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment assists an Iraqi boy with the cutting of the ribbon marking the grand opening for the youth center in Mushada, Iraq March 22. City council members, tribal sheiks, Iraqi Police and Soldiers from Co. B opened the center, tested out the equipment, handed out T-shirts and donated wheel chairs.



(Photo by Sgt. Raymond Kokel, 1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Transition Team Celebrates Iraqi NCO Graduation

By Spc. Alexis Harrison
2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE HONOR, Iraq – For a week, Iraqi soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 5th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, were put to the test in order to become noncommissioned officers.

The 2-5-6 Military Transition Team from 2-12 Infantry attached to the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division led the NCOs while training them into the leaders and warriors that would one day lead their soldiers and country to victory.

The training culminated in a formal graduation ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in the International Zone, but leaders from the transition team said it took a lot of dedication from the soldiers to get to where they are and where they hope to lead the Iraqi Army.

According to the team's top NCO, 1st Sgt. Harold Drager, the idea to train the NCOs into better leaders came from the Iraqi Army Battalion's commander and top NCO.

"The new battalion commander and command sergeant major wanted to empower the NCOs and have them be more like what the American NCO corps is like," said



Soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 5th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division Military Transition Team, attached to the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, lead Iraqi noncommissioned officers through a session of physical training on Forward Operating Base Honor in the International Zone March 27.

Drager. He added that just about everything the Iraqis learned throughout the week was the same as what American NCOs learn throughout their careers.

The course wasn't exactly like the one taught by the Special Forces in years past, said Drager. He said that it was crafted to suit the demands and situations the Iraqi NCOs

face while trying to reclaim their country.

Day by day the "Titan" team forged the Iraqis into soldiers capable of leading troops and taking responsibility.

While the specific classes changed every day, physical training and the instruction on what it takes to make a leader effective were a part of every lesson.

"One of the most important things we taught them was Army Values and leadership traits," Drager said. "It's important because every other task we train is a normal, individual task, but without a leader leading with the Army values in mind – doing things the right way, they wouldn't be able to conduct successful raids and operations."

The team would show up every morning to lead the physical training session before personal hygiene and the leadership how-to courses began.

In most afternoons, however, the Iraqi NCOs would learn more specialized skills like medical training, room-clearing procedures, marksmanship skills and even a confidence course that would test their resolve as not only individuals but as teams.

Five men at a time would go full steam through the confidence course. They encour-

tered a sandbag sprint, a Humvee pull, a 4000-meter relay and more before finishing out that day's training with sweat pouring down their faces.

All the events and training culminated in a trip to the city streets the NCOs would soon be in charge of leading soldiers through. They went to a traffic control point to observe and make suggestions on how to improve security for the busy marketplace. They also did a friendly, cordon-and-knock mission to engage with the locals and prove just how professional they had become.

"We've all learned a lot from this training," said an Iraqi soldier who didn't want to be named. "I hope to help my soldiers with what I've learned."

During the week, the team also watched as the confidence level rose and the NCOs began to use more and more of the skills they leaned and posses.

"They knew a lot more than we thought they did," said Sulphur, La., native, Sgt. 1st Class Anson Sitton. "When they started, they weren't confident enough to take charge but now they are. This looks like a whole new battalion since they've been through this course."

All throughout the course Drager and his team observed who rose to the top and personified every quality a leader should have.

They chose three students to be coined by on of their own sergeants major for outstanding performance during the course.

The group of NCOs stood tall as several high-level officers and sergeants major watched the graduation take place. After the soldiers filed past their brigade commander and command sergeant major to accept their certificates of completion and new rank, they stood at attention and recited the Iraqi Army NCO creed as loud as they could.

"They are much more prepared to lead now than they were a week ago," Drager said. "They're becoming more capable help us, the Army and the military as a whole. It's all about them taking back their own country in the end."



(Photos by Spc. Alexis Harrison, 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

An Iraqi soldier from the 2nd Battalion, 5th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division takes aim at a target while practicing his marksmanship skills at the Muthana Airfield range March 29.



Sgt. 1st Class Anson Sitton, a Sulphur, La., native and an intelligence noncommissioned officer advisor with 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, gives some tips on marksmanship to an Iraqi soldier during rifle training at Muthana Airfield March 29.



(Photo by Spc. Alexis Harrison, 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Staff Sgt. Buaka Tamu, a Sierra Leone, West Africa, native and 4th Battalion, 9th Cavalry Regiment Military Transition Team member, observes some Iraqi soldiers as they move into a house where a sniper had been shooting from March 19. Tamu and the transition team were checking out the fighting positions and living conditions of the Iraqi soldiers in one of the team's new areas of operations when they came under contact.

Team Continues to Make Progress Despite Challenges

By Spc. Alexis Harrison
2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE PROSPERITY, Iraq – A few months ago, Haifa Street was considered one of the most notorious places in Baghdad. The 4th Battalion, 9th Cavalry Regiment Military Transition Team had been training for the moment to reclaim that area and fight alongside their Iraqi brothers from the 3rd Battalion, 5th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division.

As abruptly as the fighting ended, the team and its counterparts were reassigned to a different area in Hateen where they fought an equally aggressive enemy. After spending more than two months gaining trust and rebuilding the structure of the neighborhood, the Soldiers, both Iraqi and American, were called upon to move to another area.

Now, the team and the Iraqi Army battalion patrol a predominately Shi'a sector just west of the International Zone. And after more than 90 days of tough lessons learned on Haifa, the team takes its training of their counterparts more seriously than ever.

Staff Sgt. Colin Davis said that although the move presents challenges, it's also proved to be good in many ways.

He said that staying in an area for too long can lead to complacency. He stressed the importance of learning how to adapt and overcome every challenge that's been placed on the Soldiers he fights with.

As much as they'd faced in the past, the team still knew

how important it was to never lower its guard, because a Soldier can never predict what is going to happen on the ground.

For example, what started as a routine patrol through one of the neighborhoods in Docklia turned into a valuable lesson on how to react to contact.

A sniper fired upon the team's vehicles while they were entering the muhalla. Within seconds, the Soldiers reacted attempting to capture the sniper. The sniper had fled before the soldiers could get to him, but Maj. Chris Norrie said it's still a valuable lesson to know how to react when situations like this arise.

The original plan for the day didn't call for a lesson like the one that was taught. The team's plan was to check out the living conditions, fighting positions and overall attitude of the soldiers who stay out in the area.

Along with the security-related concerns, Norrie and his men wanted to spread a little cheer to a few children while they were in the area.

Inside their trucks, they had several new backpacks that they wanted to give away, but all that changed when the team had to engage an insurgent.

Norrie said that when coming into a new area like Docklia, it's paramount to gain the people's trust and begin to make improvements to not only security but to essential services like water, sewage and school rebuilding.

Surprisingly enough, this brief brush with an anti-Iraqi insurgent would prove to be a useful to Norrie, the team and

the Iraqi soldiers with them.

"The training doesn't stop, even when you go out in sector," said Staff Sgt. Buaka Tamu, Sierra Leon, West Africa, native and security chief with the team.

While many of the team's members acknowledge the suspicions that surround the Iraqi security, they also make it very clear how important trust is to each and every one of them.

"We're a family," Tamu said. "It's not the MiTT and the Iraqi Army; it's just 3-5-6. We're all together in this. We're doing what has to be done now so that our kids and grandkids don't have to be doing it all over again down the road."

"We trust these guys enough to fight alongside them," said Pfc. Josh Bartoli, a driver and Weirton, W.V., native with the team. "That should say enough."

Norrie and the team hope that they don't have to occupy a different area again. They had built up a reputation with the people of Haifa and in Hateen, and they hope to do the same for the people in the new area.

Two days after encountering the sniper, the team and its counterparts were back on the street accomplishing the mission the started out to fulfill.

They finally got to hand out all the backpacks and care packages to the kids on the streets.

"It's all about strengthening relationships with the people," Norrie said. "We all believe the future of this country belongs in their hands. They are the force to put an end to this violence. If not them, then who else?"

Artillery Soldiers Begin Work in Qadisiyh

By Sgt. Robert Yde
2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE UNION III, Iraq – Since arriving in Iraq, the Soldiers of 3rd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division have demonstrated their diversity by taking on missions that would not be considered your typical field artillery mission.

Until recently, the majority of the battalion's Soldiers have been responsible for providing VIP escorts for officials around Baghdad. Now the battalion is taking on a new mission and their own area-of-operations – an area of Baghdad known as Qadisiyh.

"We picked it up about two-and-a-half weeks ago officially," 1st Lt. Todd Martin, a platoon leader for Battery A, said of the new mission.

The Suffield, Conn. native said that right now he and his Soldiers are still going through the process of familiarizing themselves with the area.

"Right now we're just trying to map the ground basically. We're just figuring out where everything is – where schools are, where mosques are, and then also trying to find who the key personnel are – District Action Council officials, imams, sheiks – people who really influence what happens on the ground," he explained.

According to Martin, the change of mission comes at a good time and his Soldiers are excited about the new challenge.

"I think the Soldiers and NCOs (non-commissioned officers) and even the officers are all really excited about this change in mission," he said. "It's good too because



(Photo by Sgt. Robert Yde, 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

1st Lt. Todd Martin, a platoon leader with Battery A, 3rd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery, photographs an abandoned vehicle while Pfc. Bryan Castro pulls security during a patrol of Qadisiyh March 30.

we're almost at the half-way mark of our deployment and complacency is starting to take over and be our real key threat. So with this change of mission, everybody's got to reassess what they're doing out there and kind of relearn everything all over again. It's like it is brand-new again ... which is good."

"It's not exactly what I thought, but I'm always up for the challenge. It's pretty much like being an 11B (infantryman); I guess you could say," Pfc. Aaron Buckley, a humvee driver from Anchorage, Alaska said. "It's a good experience, and this is just additional training ... which is pretty nice."

Martin and his Soldiers went out for their second patrol of Qadisiyh March 30 with the intention of looking through the area

for threats and aspects that need to be cleaned up, as well as to spend a little time talking to the locals.

"We're really just trying to make an impact right away. With the trash and these abandoned vehicles, some of them are just burnt out or upside down and obviously no one's using them," Martin said.

As they drove through the neighborhood, Martin would have his driver stop his truck periodically and talk to the locals; the people appeared to be glad to see them and took some time to talk with them about problems in the area.

"Most of them seem pretty friendly," Kansas City, Mo. native, Pfc. Aaron Black said of the residents of Qadisiyh. "We've got

a good area that we cover and not a lot of violence or things like that. Smiles and waves are what we get most of the time."

The Soldiers said they look forward to the prospect of being able to interact with the people, which is something that their previous mission didn't give them much of an opportunity to do.

"Before we were mostly doing QRF (quick reaction force) and escorts, but now we're actually in the neighborhoods with the people and it's a lot more interesting" Black said.

One of the most noticeable aspects of the area during their patrol was the numerous roadblocks that the locals had made out of anything they could find and that were set up throughout the neighborhood.

"I think that's just the people trying to take control of their area and trying to keep the bad people out. The only way they can do that is by blocking the roads and hoping that the guys are going to choose the path of least resistance," Martin said. "The people we're helping us move the stuff out of the way and they weren't worried about us rolling through, but I think it's the insurgents and AIF (anti-Iraqi forces) they're trying to keep out of their neighborhood."

By setting up these roadblocks, Martin said that the people appear to be proactive about maintaining the security in their area and he is hoping that he and his Soldiers can develop a productive relationship with the locals.

"We're going try to find out what the people need with the biggest thing being essential services - sewer, water, electricity, trash pickup," Martin said. "We're just going to try to give them some of the things that we sometimes take for granted and try to improve their standard of living."

Cavalry Soldiers Sacrifice for Iraqi Capital's Security

By Spc. L.B. Edgar,
7th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

BAGHDAD – Perched in a crow's nest with a .50-caliber machinegun at an arm's length the Soldier scans the unforgiving streets of Baghdad for insurgents intent on wreaking carnage. But his mind always leads him to the most familiar place he knows - home.

For Pfc. Tyrell Mankaja, a security element member who spends the majority of his day and night seated with eyes peeled on his sector, this is just a typical day at Joint Security Station Mansour in the Jamia neighborhood of the Mansour district, where home seems all too far away.

Suddenly, the normal sounds of everyday life were shattered by an explosion, which shook the building. A vehicle-borne explosive device had detonated at an Iraqi Army checkpoint nearby. The attack illustrated the real threat, which lies dormant outside the Joint Security Station on many days, but awakes to attack coalition forces or Iraqi security forces at random.

Such is the threat Mankaja, a native of Beach Springs, Ariz., guards JSS Mansour against – an insurgency – an enemy within the people.

The JSS was stood up by Mankaja's unit, 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, more than two months ago, as part of Operation Fardh Al Qanoon.

Less than five minutes after the car bomb broke the calm of the otherwise uneventful day, the guiding hand behind the



(Photo by Spc. L.B. Edgar, 7th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

Pfc. Tyrell Mankaja, 22, a security element member of the Mortar Platoon of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, checks the streets of Jamia for enemy activities while guarding Joint Security Station Mansour in Baghdad March 27.

Baghdad Security Plan stopped by JSS Mansour to see the progress of Soldiers like Mankaja.

Gen. David H. Petraeus, commander of Multi-National Forces – Iraq, talked with Soldiers, who were instrumental in executing the plan, while touring the facility. He met with the leadership of the Iraqi Army soldiers, who live and work with U.S. troops on a day-to-day basis. He encouraged the commander of 2nd Bn., 3rd Inf., Regt., 10th Iraqi Army Div.

"It's your country. You've got to go out and take it back," he said to the Iraqi troops. "We need Iraqis to want this as

much as we do."

In order for ISF to take back their country from the insurgency, Soldiers like Mankaja, are serving as role models to their Iraqi counterparts.

"Since I've been here I've seen a lot of changes. Their tactics are better," the mortar man said.

However, despite the early success, Petraeus said the Baghdad Security Plan is far from complete.

"It's off to a solid start, but there is a long way to go and we only have about 40 percent of the additional forces on the ground so far," he said. "Our Soldiers partnered with Iraqi soldiers and police have made a difference in the neighborhoods in which they've become established. The idea is to, in fact, bring better security to the Iraqi people, so they can reopen their businesses (and) send their kids to school without fear."

To accomplish this objective, Soldiers like Mankaja, have had to sacrifice the relative comforts of large, fortified base complexes for the austere living conditions of Combat Outposts and JSSs like Mansour.

There are no hot showers, Post Exchanges or dining facilities for the Soldiers to enjoy. Though the creature comforts are in the rear and not every meal is a hot one, Soldiers like Mankaja, adapt to their environment and take pleasure in what few amenities they are afforded.

Letters from home help take the Soldiers away from their Spartan conditions, if only for a little while.

"That helps me out a lot," Mankaja said of receiving letters from home. "It's a morale builder. It feels good to just sit down and read a letter – see how everyone is back home."

'Blue Platoon' Forms Band of Brothers

By Spc. Ryan Stroud
3rd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

BAQUBAH, Iraq -- With the sun rising in the background, Soldiers gather around each other, get down on a knee and begin their prayer. A tradition for the Soldiers, the prayer is said by someone new before the group heads out on a convoy mission into Baqubah, Iraq.

They ask for safety and security so they can properly conduct their mission, and bring the U.S. Army one step closer to its goal -- provide a safe and secure nation for the people of Iraq.

As these Soldiers get ready to "roll out," they can't help but crack one last joke at their fellow Soldiers, breaking the tension from the possibility of dangers they might experience outside of the forward operating base.

This is also nothing new; it is just as much tradition as the prayer.

The group loads into their humvees and drives out the gate of FOB Warhorse into the brightly gleaming sky, ready for whatever awaits them.

The Soldiers are close, and not as close as friends, rather as close as family. Mission after mission, these Soldiers have experienced everything from successful patrols to heart-breaking tragedies.

But all this brought them closer together, solidifying them as a real band of brothers.

"Blue Platoon," a fierce group of Soldiers from Company D, 1-12 Combined Arms Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, are no strangers to action, violence and improvised explosive devices; but they say none of those things will break their spirits. They get up, dust themselves off and get ready for the next showdown.

"We've been through a lot and seen a lot," said Spc. Mark Henry, a member of Blue Platoon and a native of Cleveland. "But anything you can think of, we're willing and able to take that mission on."

It's this attitude which helped mold this unit into the brutal machine they are outside the wire. But back inside, these Soldiers have nothing but love and amity for each other and their leaders.

"I think we have become closer here [in Iraq] as a platoon... after losing some of our best friends out here, that brought us closer," said Sgt. Justin Mayes, a soft spoken but efficient leader for Blue Platoon.

"As each day and mission goes by, I think our love and respect as a family gets bigger," said the Lumberton, NC native. "We each know the guy beside us will always back us when it's needed."

While in Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom 06-08, these Soldiers work hand-in-hand with the Iraqi army to help provide a sustained government and security force to serve the citizens of Iraq.

"We are trying to help the Iraqi army sustain their country right now, so we can go home and sustain our own country," said Pfc. Charles Brooks, a member of the Blue Platoon and a native of Chicago. "This is their country so this is their job, but they need our help and guidance right now and we're doing our best to help out."

"We hope that us being here keeps [the people of Iraq] in a peaceful state of mind," said Henry. "We provide security for the Iraqi people while their army is being trained. The overall goal is for [the Iraqi army] to completely take over responsibility to where they don't need our help anymore and we can go home."

"Of course, I want to go home, but I fully understand why we're here," he continued. "The IA and the people of Iraq need our help. When we roll through cities and people come out [of their homes] and are clapping because our presence is there, that means something."

This positive response is what these Soldiers are hoping for every time they leave the wire, though they know it's not always likely.

Either way, these Soldiers, each knowing the other's job,



(Photo by Spc. Ryan Stroud, 3rd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

"Blue Platoon," Company D, 1-12 Combined Arms Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division's attitude of "all business, no play" is in effect while they patrol a major street in a local market of Khalis, Iraq, March 30. The night prior, the market was hit by three vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices, prompting Blue Platoon to visit the area the next day.

are ready and prepared for whatever challenges face them while patrolling the streets in Baqubah.

"What we do everyday is go outside the wire," said Mayes. "You can be a driver one day, run the gun the next. We switch it up and learn the other guy's jobs. That's what makes us a good team."

"We do it all. Everybody has to know everyone's job... we're all able to step-up and take charge," he continued.

From conducting patrols to raiding houses or providing security, the team has been through it all and they do it together.

Not every mission has gone the way the Soldiers had planned, but things like IEDs have yet to stop these Soldiers from finishing their mission at hand.

"We've had some bad days out there, but we're hanging in there and trying to stay strong and finish this deployment out," Mayes said.

After going through combat experiences together, Brooks said they have formed a special bond.

"It definitely makes you closer as a team; you put your trust in the people around you to do their jobs," he said.

While these Soldiers might have an "all business, no play" attitude outside the wire, the concept changes once children are involved.

With the team's convoy moving down a busy street in Khalis, Iraq, the gunners of the humvees throw candy to the children and wave to everyone on the street.

"The children are friendly; most of them are really nice," said Brooks. "They like us. We hand out everything from candy to soccer balls."

And the families of the Soldiers back home are getting involved with reaching out to the children, too. They pack-up and mail off everything from toys to school supplies for the Soldiers to hand out.

"Family members do send us things to hand out to the children," said Henry. "My girl back at home just sent me some school supplies to give out."

"Most of the supplies we hand out on missions come from home," said Mayes. "That really is a big help."

After a long day of patrols or fighting, the Soldiers, who work long hours in support of their missions, return back to

the FOB, prepare for the next mission and take time for some much needed rest and relaxation.

"When we get back from a mission, we are just so tired and beat," said Mayes. "But we have to be ready for the next mission. We have to do maintenance [on our vehicles and weapons] whenever we can find the time. But if we get time, we'll relax, watch movies and get on the internet."

"I try to jump into the showers as quickly as possible," Brooks said. "I also try to relax and watch movies. You have to clear your head and get ready for the next day and the next mission. That's really important."

As these Soldiers prepare for the next day, looks of relief, exhaustion and contentment fill their eyes. They have made it through another day and are ready for the next.

And there is not a complaint from the group about having to go out again the next day for another mission. They will be heading out together, with their platoon, with their brothers.

"I trust the guys that I work with," said Brooks. "I can trust that they know what their doing, so we're going to be ok."

"I love working with these guys," he said. "After the stuff we've gone through out here, you become closer as a family. Being here has been a bonding experience."

"It's great because we're so close now; it's more of a family than a platoon," said Henry. "Everybody knows everyone's wife's names, their kid's names -- this really is a family."

And tomorrow, as the sun rises, the band of brothers will gather again, take a knee and pray. They pray for the day ahead, remembering their fallen comrades. They do this not because they have to, but because they choose to.

"It's been hard at times," said a very solemn Henry. "Everybody in the platoon thinks about them every single day. We talk about them constantly."

"We pray every day before we go out, every mission," said Mayes. "It's something that helps us and brings us even closer together. It's a good thing."

"We try to keep going, move on... these guys would want us to," Brooks said in solace. "Those guys were vital members of our team and they are going to be terribly missed."

Cav Holds Free Health Clinic

By 1st Lt. Nicholas P. Paolini
2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment

BAGHDAD—Iraqi Army and Multi-National Division-Baghdad Soldiers put smiles on kid's faces during a health clinic operation on March 25. The clinic treated over 200 Iraqis from all over southern Ghazaliya, a neighborhood in northwestern Baghdad.

While the Iraqi Army provided security, 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment, medics screened the Iraqis to determine their health needs. If care was required, the battalion's physician's assistant, 1st Lt. Luis Lozada, examined the patients. The brigade dentist, Capt. Matthew Phillips, was also present and serviced any dental requirements.

Since the make-shift clinic was at a school, the Soldiers took the opportunity to help the school kids out by donating school supplies. Teamed up with the Iraqi Army, the Soldiers gave out pens, pencils, paper, backpacks, soccer balls, newspapers, and various other items.

Company D came well stocked with boxes of medical supplies to provide care for the Iraqi people. The boxes consisted of ibuprofen, bandages and other



(Photo by Spc. Christopher Lopez, 2nd Bn, 12th Cav. Regt.)

Capt. Matthew Phillips inspects an Iraqi boy for cavities during the health clinic operation in southern Ghazaliya.

medical supplies. The company also treated Iraqis with a variety of health problems, varying from eye and skin issues to ear infections. The Soldiers even gave out prescription medications for Iraqis with diabetes and hypertension.

Forces Help Victims of West Baghdad Fire

By Capt. David Levasseur
2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div. PAO

BAGHDAD—Iraqi and U.S. Army forces teamed up to provide relief for victims of a fire in the western Baghdad neighborhood of Kadamiyah on March 27. Tuesday was the second of two days set aside for the residents of the neighborhood to file claims for losses that occurred during a fire around the middle of the March.

The cause of the March 21 fire is still unknown. The unit that patrols the area, the 1st Battalion, 325th



(Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Abdullah Clark, 1st Bn., 325th Abn. Inf. Regt.)

Local residents line up to fill out paperwork to file a claim for losses that occurred during a fire on March 21, in the Kadamiyah neighborhood of the nation's capital.

Airborne Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, has energized the relief effort.

On March 24 and March 27, US representatives from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, set up a claims processing center at the Kadamiyah Government Building. Normally claims are only accepted at a small operating base near the Baghdad International Airport, but the brigade's Judge Advocate General decided to go to the neighborhood in order to reach a greater number of people.

Shortly after 10:00 AM the doors were opened and people who had gotten the word about the event began trickling in. Two loudspeaker teams from the 2nd BCT began moving throughout the neighborhood broadcasting an announcement about the claims in Arabic.

Iraqi and US Soldiers provided security for the event ensuring the crowds that eventually gathered stayed safe and under control. Specially trained Iraqi nationals pre-screened claimants disqualifying many who did not have valid claims and ensuring timely service for the residents affected by the fire.

In two days 81 claims for over \$197,000 were settled.

"We have yet to receive any negative comments," says Capt. Jimmy Peay, one of the architects for the event. "We've had several (Iraqis) express their appreciation for the Army's efforts in Baghdad."



(Photo by Capt. Warrick Craig, Headquarters Battery, 1st Bn. 7th FA Regt.)

Power for the People

Soldiers from Charlie Battery, 1st Battalion 7th Field Artillery, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, provided eight generators to residents in western Baghdad mid-March. This allowed 150 residents to be able to use amenities such as a refrigerators, small air-conditioner units in the hot summer months.



(Photo by 1st Lt. Maya Lowell, 9th Engineer Battalion)

Spc. Scot Bluett, 9th Engineer Battalion, keeps vigilant watch over a construction site in western Baghdad

Troops Help Repair, Secure Roadways

1st Lt. Jason Conley
9th Engineer Battalion, 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div.

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – While the American presence continues to increase throughout Baghdad neighborhoods, one unit has taken on the added responsibility of repairing and securing part of Baghdad's road system.

Capt. Matthew Davis and his Soldiers from Headquarters Company, 9th Engineer Battalion, spend their days conducting the mission – tasks like repairing the task force's fleet of vehicles, or providing fuel and logistical support at various locations around Baghdad.

The "Headhunter" Company sets itself apart from other headquarters companies because of its involvement in the construction of Iraqi Army checkpoints.

Upon completion of its routine tasks, the company transitions from a daytime support element to a nighttime combat workforce, escorting flatbed trucks, cranes, and combat security vehicles through the dangerous streets of western Baghdad to American and Iraqi Joint Security Stations.

These sites are occupied by coalition forces along with Iraqi Army or Police, serve as control centers for all operations in the area, and provide a constant security presence in the neighborhoods.

At these sites, Headhunter troops emplace concrete towers and repair damaged roads.

When the company is not involved in fortifying a military site, they are filling road craters with concrete in an effort to keep improvised explosive devices off the city streets. The Soldiers of the Headhunter Company have repaired more than 15 craters on four primary roads, emplaced nine towers and more than 300 concrete walls.

This helps create safe passage for Iraqi civilians, government officials and Coalition Forces.

"The missions are difficult and a lot of planning is required, but the increased mobility and safety is worth it," said 1st Lt. Maya Lowell.

For the past two weeks, Lowell's platoon has been conducting quick-response crater repair missions, in addition to their usual nightly tower emplacements.

The Headhunters are given multiple missions throughout the day and night.

Mechanics and radio technicians drop their tools and communication equipment to man heavy-caliber weapons and protect ground troops from insurgent rocket-propelled grenade and small arms fire attacks as concrete is mixed, poured, and dried.

"To accomplish these crater missions it requires a good portion of the company's Soldiers," Davis said. "The effects are long days followed by long nights, but the Soldiers are motivated, knowing that their efforts are making a direct impact on the safety of coalition troops throughout western Baghdad."

Iraqi Police Graduates Key to the Future

By Pfc. Nathaniel Smith
4th BCT, 1st Inf. Div. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD – Recruits of the 3rd Battalion, 6th Brigade, 2nd Division Iraqi National Police graduated from training at Forward Operating Base Falcon March 28, the first group of “shurta,” Arabic for police, to come onto a U.S. forward operating base and receive complete, 24-hour-a-day training by a National Police Training Team.

Capt. Scott Hubbard, the operations officer of 3-6 NPTT from Vassar, Mich., said the initial focus of the team was not to train.

“Immediately when we took this mission on, we noticed biggest problem was the (Iraqi National Police) were not trained,” Hubbard said. “Training is not what we thought we would do, but we had to put a huge band-aid on the situation so they would not endanger themselves or the coalition forces they are working with.

“Our job is to teach them to teach themselves.”

Hubbard said that after noticing the initial deficiencies, the team came up with a two-week training program that would empower the police to perform their primary mission of protecting the neighborhoods.

The training program includes weapons marksmanship, drill and ceremony, physical training and ethics classes. Once the recruits execute those tasks to standard they move on to team exercises such as precision room-clearing and conducting raids.

The trainers, who prepared for their deployment at Fort Riley, Kan., all have some form experience training U.S. Soldiers, from reserve drill sergeants to instructors in advanced individual training. Likewise, many of the recruits have prior experience in the Iraqi Army.

Abd Al-Ameer Kadum, a graduate from the class who also served in the Iraqi Army since the Iran-Iraq War, said he appreciated the training.

“During this time that we spent here on this (base), we got good training,” the Baghdad native said. “They care about us a lot. We want to say thanks for our American



(Photo by Pfc. Nathaniel Smith, 4th BCT, 1st Inf. Div. Public Affairs)

Staff Sgt. Andrew Palmer, a trainer with the 3rd Battalion, 6th Brigade National Police Training Team, makes adjustments to an Iraqi recruit's prone firing position during pre-marksmanship instruction in March 24.

brothers.”

Hubbard said instructing the recruits was made easier due to the fact that they embraced a key element in training: discipline. Discipline is embraced by the Iraqi people, the operations officer said. This cultural attitude motivated the shurta to do their best in training.

“The men were excited and very proud to get formalized training like this,” he said.

One of the key points Hubbard said he wanted the new police officers to take away from their training cycle is how

to treat the Iraqi people.

“The way they treat them as policemen will decide whether (local residents) go against the Iraqi government or if they come on board,” he said. “These people are here to protect them and they need to understand that.”

Hubbard said police staying involved with their local community is vital to the success of their mission.

“They need to embrace their community, and start doing the right thing from this day forward,” he said. “I believe that they’re ready to do that. They understand this is the key to victory.”

Attack Company Moves into Baghdad

By Pfc. Nathaniel Smith
4th BCT, 1st Inf. Div. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD – Company A, 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, made its push into Baghdad March 16, along with the rest of the Black Lions and established its own combat outpost in a southern section of the city.

Leading from the front is nothing new for the Black Lions as the unit led the Big Red One into Cantigny, France, during World War



(Photo by Pfc. Nathaniel Smith 4th BCT, 1st Inf. Div.)

Soldiers unload equipment in front of Company A, 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment's combat outpost in southern Baghdad March 17.

I, and Cpl. Jon Dorsey, the radio telephone operator for Company from Strong's Prairie, Wis., said his job is meaningful to him.

“We’re going out, doing something,” he said. “We’re going to the (neighborhoods) and doing what we need to get the job done.”

With no security incidents on the convoy to the outpost or in the first few days, the company was able to set up force protection measures, sleeping areas, and chow points, essentials for any combat operation.

The area around the facility is predominantly Sunni, meaning without sectarian differences, it is relatively peaceful compared to other areas.

The outpost, located in an abandoned sports club in northwestern Rashid District, is adjacent to Iraqi National Police stations on two sides.

When the unit showed up, there was no running water, no stable electricity, and pigeons were living inside the gymnasium.

The unit plans to upgrade the outpost to include internet connectivity, establishing consistent electricity, and hot showers, in addition to cleaning and maintaining the facility.

Cpl. Lee Taylor, a mortar section sergeant with Attack Co. from Laverne, Okla., said he wouldn't be anywhere but at his unit's outpost.

“It feels good to be here,” he said. “It feels like we’re doing something and helping somebody.”



(Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Robert Timmons, 4th BCT, 1st Inf. Div. Public Affairs)

Combat Patched

Spc. Benjamin Washburn, a broadcast journalist with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, has his combat patch put on his uniform by Maj. Keven Kercher, the brigade judge advocate, during a ceremony March 30 at Forward Operating Base Falcon. Washburn is from Wilmington, N.C., while Kercher hails from West Fargo, N.D. During the ceremony, troops wore their Big Red One combat patches for the first time. Combat patches are a traditional symbol for Soldiers who have been in a combat zone for more than 30 days.

National Police Deliver Supplies, Hope to Children

By Maj. Kirk Luedeke
4th BCT, 1st Inf. Div. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD – Lt. Col. Ahmed, commander of the 3rd Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 1st National Police Division handed out supplies to a pair of elementary schools in Southwest Rashid during a joint operation with Company A, 1st Battalion, 77th Armor Regiment, April 4.

The mission was the first of its kind in the area by the NP battalion and its U.S. counterpart. 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division out of Schweinfurt, Germany. The police commander not only took the opportunity to deliver supplies to the Arbid and Ibn Yakhdan schools, but made an assessment of the facilities and the surrounding communities as well.

“This is a good beginning, but I want you to know that we will make the area safe for the children. We want to help you to clean up the trash in this neighborhood and make the people proud to live here,” he told Ms. Noor, the headmistress of the Arbid school in Southwest Rashid.

As he spoke, members of his battalion, wearing crisp new uniforms, and displaying a professional demeanor, carried boxes of supplies into the building. A new television set, water dispenser, computer and monitor, power supply and office furniture were brought in, all of which represented progress and hope for the children who will be able to make use of these implements to enhance their education.

“Thank you for helping to care for the



(Photo by Maj. Kirk Luedeke, 4IBCT, 1st Inf. Div. Public Affairs)

Students at the Ibn Yakhdan elementary school in southern Baghdad greet Lt. Col. Ahmed, 3rd Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 1st National Police Division commander during his visit to the institution April 4.

children,” Noor said to the police commander during their meeting. “They are your key to safety for the future of Iraq.”

The battalion commander carried a notebook with him, asking what other things the schools needed for future deliveries, conducting a joint inventory with each headmistress to account for the supplies and touring the schools and meeting some of the children there.

He walked into one classroom of young girls and was greeted with a chorus of cheers, as the young ladies serenaded the police

commander with a traditional Iraqi greeting of respect. He returned the gesture by asking the students to honor their families and teachers, and to work diligently in their lessons.

Maj. Joe Pierce, the commander’s National Police adviser, said that the operation was a resounding success, and an indicator of better days ahead as the new NP unit begins operating in the area.

“He assured the administrators that in addition to securing the schools, he was concerned about securing the surrounding

areas,” the native of Nashua, N.H. said. “This was a great chance to get to know the population.”

1st Lt. David Evetts, the company fire support officer from San Antonio, Texas, said, “It shows that we have good partnership- the National Police, coalition forces and NPTT teams -- we all work together.”

For other U.S. Soldiers who participated, the successful operation meant a great deal more than just dropping off supplies.

“I think just getting school supplies to the kids shows them that we’re trying to help their education,” said Staff. Sgt. Jeremy S. Mutart, a native of Ketchikan, Alaska and a squad leader with 1st platoon, Company C, 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment, whose unit is attached to Company A. “It also shows the American people that we’re not just trying to combat the terrorists here, but we’re trying to help rebuild Iraq from little kids, all the way up to the top.”

As the Iraqi and U.S. troops drove away from the schools, children waved from the windows, reminding everyone of the where real impact of the day’s activities lay.

“It makes me realize that I’m grateful for what I have and that I can provide for my own family,” said Staff Sgt. Allan Russell of Layton, Utah, another squad leader from 1st platoon, Company C. “At the same time I can see the poverty in other parts of the world, and it’s kind of hard for me as a father to see that the children here don’t have the basic things that we do in America. It makes you grateful for what we have, and that we can leave here today knowing that we made a positive difference for these kids.”

General Goes Shopping, Sees Progress on Market Visit

By Maj. Kirk Luedeke
4th BCT, 1st Inf. Div. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD – Gen. David Petraeus, the top U.S. military commander in Iraq, visited the Dora Market March 31 and witnessed the significant improvements there since December.

“Chai for everyone,” Petraeus exclaimed with a smile as he placed enough money on the counter at a small teashop to buy tea for all who accompanied him on the trip and then some.

Later he sipped tea with an Iraqi Army battalion commander and Col. Ricky D. Gibbs, commander of the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, whose unit is responsible for securing the Dora Market area. They discussed the visible progress in what was, just four months ago, a dangerous cluster of ramshackle buildings full of roaming death squads and criminals.

“This is still not pretty, but it has made substantial strides,” Petraeus said, noting that many of the dilapidated storefronts and houses in and around the market still show signs of the violence that resulted in the once-vibrant economic hub of some 700 stores and kiosks shrinking to just three on Dec. 23rd.

“There will be challenges here. This is an area that Al-Qaeda continues to go after because it does represent success for the Sunni Arabs, and they (Al-Qaeda) don’t want to see cooperation with the Iraqi Government and Iraqi Security Forces.”

The market now features 141 stores and stands open for business, with room for many more as the situation there improves.

When asked what it meant to have the Multi-National



(Photo by Maj. Kirk Luedeke, 4th BCT, 1st Inf. Div. Public Affairs)

Gen. David Petraeus, MNF-I commander, conducts a tour of the Dora Market in Baghdad March 31.

Forces - Iraq commander’s presence in Dora Market, Lt. Col. Najm Abdul Wahed Motleq replied: “I’m very honored to have the General here today to come and observe the situation on the ground here at the market. This market was dead in the past and brought back to life with our presence here and with Coalition Forces securing this market.”

Lt. Col. Najm’s 3rd Battalion, 1st Brigade, 3rd Iraqi Army Division has received high marks from its U.S. counterparts for its professionalism and willingness to take on the responsibility of securing the market.

“They’ve done a great job and have taken ownership for the market,” said Capt. Ben Jones, who’s Alpha Company,

2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment shares responsibility for security with their Iraqi Army counterparts. The Fort Carson, Colo.-based unit is attached to the 4th Brigade.

Jones, a native of Meridian, Miss., and his rifle company have set up shop in the market, establishing a combat outpost that his unit, nicknamed the Gators, affectionately calls ‘the Swamp.’

“People are coming back,” he said. “You talk to the people here, and a lot of them send their women to the market because they’re afraid to go out.”

Jones described a dynamic that he and his Soldiers, along with the troops of the Iraqi Army, are working diligently to change. By occupying the first such combat outpost of several for his battalion, the Alpha Gators hope that their daily presence and professionalism will lead to trust between them and Dora’s population.

Gibbs said the Dora Market is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the plan to make inroads of progress in Southern Baghdad.

“We have over 50 projects across the Rashid District with many more on the way,” the Harker Heights, Texas native said. “One of those integral to the Dora Market’s revitalization is a fence that will keep the criminals and violent elements out, while allowing the law-abiding merchants and citizens to conduct their business without interference.”

As Petraeus continued his tour, he stopped at a kiosk and purchased a tube of toothpaste.

“Five dollars for toothpaste?” One bystander asked incredulously.

“Anything to help the economy,” Petraeus replied as he handed the cash to the proprietor and then moved on, toothpaste in hand.



An Iraqi boy tugs on Sgt. Pietrzyk Bjoerm's stethoscope as the healthcare specialist with the 4th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division Military Transition Team, conducts a medical screening of the child during a medical operation in the Iraqi capital's Ghazaliyah neighborhood March 25.



Pfc. Joshua Ruth, an infantryman with Company C, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division gets a little help from his Iraqi counterpart in cutting through a wall during operation "Arrowhead Strike 9" March 23. Green to Green.

Not Just About Getting the Bad Guys: Iraqi, U.S. Forces Hit City With

By Spc. Jeffrey Ledesma
1st Cavalry Division Public Affairs

BAGHDAD – It's a place where bullet-holes spider web across kitchen windows and heaps of garbage blanket every street corner. Here, the sporadic sound of shooting doesn't faze its inhabitants because the clatter of gunfire is as common as the numbing noise of horns during rush hour traffic.

Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers are placing an emphasis on humanitarian efforts in conjunction with one of their main clearance operations, "Arrowhead Strike 9," in the Iraqi capital's Ghazaliyah neighborhood, a place known for its history of violence.

"We know that the (counterinsurgency) effort requires that we secure the population and build faith in host Nation's capabilities to provide services and a quality of life that will deny the insurgents sanctuary," said Col. J.B. Burton, Commander, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, from Schweinfurt, Germany.

According to Iraqi Army Col. Ghassan, the commander of the 5th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, 70 to 75 percent of the people are relaxed about what the Iraqi and coalition forces are doing here.

In joint meetings throughout the operation, the combined group agreed that providing services to the community should be hand in hand with major clearing operations such as this one.

"Big-scale operations on cleaning the area are a very important mission to help improve the populace's image of the Iraqi Army," added the commander. In order to improve rela-

tions with the local populace, the coalition forces are not only continuing to secure the area during operation "Arrowhead Strike 9", but contracting local contractors for the appearance of the war-torn city.

In addition to sweeping up debris, the coalition forces were four sewage disposal teams.

"The linking of medical and humanitarian operations with military operations. Combining these efforts with the Iraqi security and coalition forces access to the resources which are available to the citizens of our area of operations."

In a neighborhood where the coalition forces provide services that a medical operation can't provide, the 1st Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, was successful by the amount of locals who showed up for the medical operation March 25.

"It was very effective and it helps to make people feel safer about the coalition forces with some basic essential services," said Pfc. Smiley, the commander of the 3rd Stryker Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division.

"I think it shows that the coalition forces are not trying to destroy the city, but that we are trying to do some good," said Pfc. Smiley, the commander of the 301st Physiological Company, 1st Cavalry Division.

Luckily for the children



Pfc. Joshua Ruth, an infantryman with Company C, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, and native of Elizabethtown, Ky., takes the time to talk to a local Iraqi boy during the joint security effort coined operation "Arrowhead Strike 9" in Baghdad's Ghazaliyah neighborhood March 23.



(Photos by Jeffrey Ledesma, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

...ion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry
...g off a lock at an abandoned school in Baghdad's Ghazaliyah neighborhood
...old program.



Spc. Juan Pacheco, an infantryman with Company D, 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, and native of Panoma, Calif., stands ready to catch an Iraqi boy who climbed up a barrier during a medical operation in the Iraqi capital's Ghazaliyah neighborhood March 25. Pacheco has been in the Army for about three years.

h Security, Service Combination

...e, Iraqi and coalition forces are not
...e city with operation "Arrowhead
...cal sanitation crews to improve the
...streets that weave throughout the

...up the loose trash and debris, there
...ams in the area.

...operations, school operations, and
...tions to the effort is simple.
...n clearing operations demonstrates
...alition forces in partnership have
...h create a higher quality of life for
...eration," Burton said.

...re healthcare is nonexistent, basic
...tion ran by the 2nd Battalion, 12th
...ry Division, were proven success-
...who filed into lines to obtain treat-

...and a good way to reach out and
...their community and provide them
...services," said Lt. Col. Avanas
...the 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry
...ade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry

...were not just robots out here to
...care and while we're here we're
...aid Pfc. James Workman with the
...y attached to 2-12 Cav.

...n of the neighborhood it wasn't all

thermometers and stethoscopes.

After receiving treatment, children walked down the school's main hallway and out the door where they were greeted by Iraqi Army soldiers who handed out soccer balls, stuffed animals, backpacks, color pencils and other school supplies.

For some soldiers, the most rewarding part of operations like this is the chance to let the kids know that there's some hope and troops are here to do good things and help make this country better.

"We're not just here to take care of the bad guys, we're here to help them as well," said Capt. Jeff Wright, the fire support officer of the 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, and native of Arizona City, Ariz.

"Just seeing how happy the kids get with something as simple as a soccer ball or a box of crayons, through their eyes you realize how much we take things for granted back home," said Workman, native of San Diego, Calif.

Spc. Juan Pacheco, an infantryman with Company D, 2-12 Cav, said "When you look at the kids' expressions you cannot help but feel that all the (sacrifice) is for something. That it all has a purpose."

In dedication to the welfare of the Iraqi people, the battle space owner is also working on a couple of sewage pump repair projects.

And there is one large project, the auto-sewage bypass station, which the corps of engineers is also working.

"I think a large effect is going to take some time, but I think people are starting to see the smaller effects," Smiley said.



Spc. Brice Sandefur, an infantryman with Company C, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, and native of Dallas, stops to smell a rose after searching a house located in the Iraqi capital's Ghazaliyah neighborhood during operation "Arrowhead Strike 9" March 23.

Air Cavalry Troops Discuss Deployment, Morale Issues

By Sgt. 1st Class Rick Emert
1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

TAJI, Iraq – Soldiers don't expect life in a combat zone to be easy.

But when issues arise that could affect morale – and ultimately, the mission – commanders have tools at their disposal to get those issues out in the open and resolve them.

The 1st Air Cavalry Brigade Commander Col. Dan Shanahan used just such a tool by holding a brigade sensing session March 25.

Groups of Soldiers separated by rank discussed issues that were weighing heavy on their minds, and the brigade's equal opportunity advisor, Sgt. 1st Class Terry Huntley, selected the top five from each group that he recommended the commander address, Huntley said.

"One of the big things that came out of the junior enlisted group was questioning why other brigades [on Camp Taji] are allowed to wear [physical training] uniforms at the dining facility and [Morale, Welfare and Recreation]," Huntley said. "The commander told them there is a reason why they can't wear the PT uniform in those places, mainly because they may go in with sweaty, nasty uniforms on after doing PT, but he said he would review the brigade policy."

Other issues included mandatory wear of ballistic eye protection, especially while doing PT, and married Soldier couples sharing a room in the living areas. Soldiers argued that the glasses fog up and create more of a hazard while they run, and they said it wasn't fair for married Soldier couples to be able to share a room when single Soldiers are not allowed to have members of the opposite sex in their rooms at any time, Huntley said.

The Equal Opportunity Office con-

ducts the sessions quarterly during the deployment, he said.

Usually, brigade level sensing sessions are held when a new command sergeant major joins the unit or if a problem arises, but Shanahan directed that the brigade hold them every three months during the deployment, Huntley said.

"I would say they have been real effective," Huntley said. "For example, after the last sensing session, the only issue that was readdressed at this one was the General Order No. 1 question about married Soldier couples sharing a room. All other issues have since been resolved."

The sensing session began with all of the participants sitting through some sort of training together; the training at this session was on sexual assault, Huntley said.

After the training and a brief from the brigade commander, the Soldiers broke down into their respective peer groups for their discussions.

Because they were among their peers, the discussion was open and candid, Huntley said.

"I've not had a problem with Soldiers feeling they couldn't speak freely," Huntley said. "Because of the demographic breakdown for the ranks, the Soldiers in any one group are rarely even from the same [company-sized] unit. Everything is anonymous when the issues are briefed to the colonel, we don't use any of the Soldiers' names."

While the concept of the sensing session may seem a little too warm and fuzzy for troops in combat, Huntley said their success can't be argued.

"This group of junior enlisted, which had the largest numbers of all the groups, rated their morale at three-point-five on a scale of one to five," Huntley said. "That's a high number for a combat zone. They're saying their morale is good."



(Photo by Spc. Nathan Hoskins, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Soldiers from 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, get a briefing before discussing issues during a sensing session March 25 at Taji, Iraq. The 1st ACB holds quarterly sensing sessions for Soldiers of all ranks to discuss issues that may affect their morale while deployed to Iraq.



(Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Rick Emert, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Lock and Load

Blanco, Texas, native Spc. Brendan Haas, an armament specialist for Company D, 4th Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, makes sure the 30mm chain gun on a AH-64D Apache Attack Helicopter is clear before loading more ammunition. If the weapon isn't cleared before reloading, "bad things could happen," Haas said.



(Photo by Spc. Nathan Hoskins, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Keep It Clean, Keep It Flying

Milwaukee native Spc. Eric Swinford, an AH-64D Apache attack helicopter crew chief for Company B, 615th Aviation Support Battalion, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, sits in the tail of an Apache March 29 while he cleans out the insides with a pressurized air hose after helping finish a 500-hour maintenance overhaul at Camp Taji, Iraq. Just a couple days prior, the entire helicopter was gutted from the inside out so that all the parts could be inspected.

Educating the Masses One Soldier at a Time

By Spc. Nathan Hoskins
1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Many young men and women join the military for the educational benefits, but when they get deployed they drop a lot of the classes and forget about them for an entire year.

This is no excuse for Baton Rouge, La., native 1st Sgt. Steven Franklin, the top noncommissioned officer for Company E, 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division.

Franklin, an avid supporter of the Army's free online educational programs, believes not enough Soldiers take advantage of these opportunities, he said.

"In many cases most Soldiers join the military to go to school. Sometimes you might need that extra push from someone else just to get started," said Franklin.

And that push is exactly what Franklin is giving his Soldiers and others in an educational awareness program. Not only does he inform Soldiers of their options, he gets them through the sometimes confusing start-up and registration processes, he said.

For Anderson, S.C., native Spc. Alisha Bradley, a petroleum supply specialist for Company E, 3rd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, his guidance got her started on a path leading to a career in criminal justice.

"If there is someone there to walk you through [the registration process], you end up getting it done quicker and getting right into the classes," she said.

Another student Soldier, Flint, Mich., native Pfc.

Michael Scott, a vehicle mechanic for Co. E, 1-227th, is continuing his education that he started before he joined the military, thanks to Franklin's educational initiative.

"Anytime I come in [Franklin is] there to help. I stayed in his office until 8:30 p.m. one night," he said.

Franklin, with the help of his command, is determined to give every Soldier that he comes in contact with a chance to hear about their education options while in the Army and while being deployed.

"I know it's kind of [financially difficult] for some people to go to school ... here we have an opportunity to go to school for free. Personally I don't think enough Soldiers are taking advantage of it and I'm going to spread the word [until] I can't spread it anymore," said Franklin.

For the Soldiers who are accepting help from Franklin, their futures seem a little brighter.

"You want to be able to provide for your family even when you get out of the Army. I'm trying to look ahead to the future," said Bradley.

Franklin believes that there is no excuse to leave the Army and not utilize the educational benefits.

"The ultimate goal of the program is to make sure you had that chance to get an education. Spending 10, 12 or 15 years in or retiring without an education when you were afforded [one] is just ... wrong," he said.

Bradley is pushing through her courses even with her full, 12-hour work day. She says it is all about setting priorities and time management.

"I think it's important just to make a schedule. Just ... to space out your time and ... do whatever you have to do," she

said.

The commander of Co. E, 1-227th, Capt. Michael Martin of Killeen, Texas, agrees with making a schedule. There is a fine balance between one's professional life and personal life, he said.

"Soldiers continue to work regular duty hours with no special treatment for those attending college. Additionally, the Soldiers learn time management skills by balancing their studies around work schedules. We are helping to develop tomorrow's leaders while proving to Soldiers that the military has many wonderful benefits if only they are willing to take advantage of these great programs," he said.

Martin believes that the philosophy of 1st Air Cavalry Brigade's commander, Traverse City, Mich., native Col. Dan Shanahan, is relevant in the education process while deployed.

"In keeping with Col. Shanahan's command philosophy of ABC [Attitude, Balance and Combat Readiness] this program emphasizes the balance between work and the personal lives of our Soldiers. We have begun to strengthen the inner drive of our Soldiers to perform at their maximum potential in all their endeavors," said Martin.

Although Franklin has only been in country for about six months, he has already assisted about 24 Soldiers in getting them started with their educational goals – even sacrificing his personal time to do so, he said.

"I don't get anything out of this. What keeps me going and motivated is just being able to help Soldiers. They shouldn't let a deployment stop them from pursuing an education," said Franklin.

Parachute Riggers Step into New Roles

By Sgt. Marcus Butler
4th BCT (ABN), 25th Inf. Div. Public Affairs

KALSU, Iraq – From the parachute shack in the artic of Alaska, to the temperate climate of Iraq, Parachute Riggers trade their parachute packing techniques for skills well outside of their specialty.

Transitioning from packing parachutes for airborne operations, the Riggers from 725th Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division been taking on responsibilities ranging from base defense, base beautification, flying unmanned aerial vehicles, tracking the battlefield, to the quick reaction force for Forward Operating Base Kalsu.

Deploying to Iraq with no missions involving their military occupational specialties, the Riggers had to accept the new missions that were bestowed upon – missions that none of them knew what to expect.

Satisfying the needs of the brigade's mission in Iraq, the Riggers spread like the wind and landed in various positions, and adapted to the environment.

"Even though none of these positions were placed in our job field, we are handling the hand that was dealt to us and accomplishing the mission," said Warrant Officer Robert Zimmerman, deputy forward operating base mayor and Albany, Ga. native. "This experience has opened my eyes and broadened my professional skills."

"As deputy mayor, I am in charge of overall land management for the FOB, force protection, housing and providing badges for the local national, civilians and department of defense personnel for the base," said Zimmerman.

The Riggers also have to leave the FOB to help in the security of the local area surrounding the base as part of the quick reaction force.

"I love this job," said Staff Sgt. James Gouviea, a team leader for the base QRF team and a Hillsboro, N.H. native. "It is not bad at all doing what we are doing now. It gets us involved in the mission out here and gives us a sense of purpose," said Gouviea. "I get to gather intelligence, discourage anti-Iraqi and anti-coalition forces, which makes the base a little safer for my fellow paratroopers and local nationals working within its walls."

Steadily adding to their resume here in Iraq, the Riggers are also involved with manning the gates of the base.

Working rotating shifts, the Riggers take up their posi-



(U.S. Army Photo)

Paratroopers of 725th Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division conducts a security foot patrol around the surrounding areas of Forward Operating Base Kalsu, Iraq. These Paratroopers are all parachute riggers who have fell into jobs that do not relate to their original job.

tions in full combat uniform to include helmet and body armor from the moment they come on shift to the time that they are relieved.

"This was a real test for us," said Spc. Jonathan Dallefeld a native of Bushnell, Ill. "I love it because it shows how well we have handled the transition from one position to another."

Encompassing almost every aspect of security and upkeep for the base was not enough for these paratroopers; they had to have that one more thing to give them that 110 percent push.

That push came from the "handy man" of the group, Sgt. Alan Everett.

"Sgt. Everett is one of the easiest people to work with

that I have ever encountered" said Zimmerman. "He is the go to man for us."

Everett, a native of Granby, Mo., by using his carpentry skills, has in one way or another has been involved in every major building project on the base.

All of these paratroopers have adapted to the dramatic changes set before them.

"The paratroopers have clearly maintained and at times surpassed the standard set for them," said Sgt. 1st Class Alan Schweinhagen, Archbold, Ohio native and platoon sergeant for the Riggers.

"I was not worried at all about how we would perform with these new tasks. I just wanted to see how far above the standard we would excel," he added.

Courthouse Reopens After Renovation in Musayyib Qada

By 1st Lt. Tyler Mitchell
1st Battalion, 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment

MUSAYYIB, Iraq – A second courthouse in the Musayyib Qada re-opened for use in Seddah, Iraq March 27.

A joint effort between Iraqis, civil affairs team Soldiers, and paratroopers of the 1st Battalion, 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division re-opened the renovated Seddah courthouse south of Baghdad.

The re-opening ceremony recognized the completion of the renovation and expansion of the courthouse building which included the addition of new furniture, computers, storage cabinets and bathrooms.

Guests at the re-opening included the Seddah mayor, Ali Nemma Azeez; head judge Mudhir Bader, Iraqi Police chief Cpt. Mohammed Moray, court house employees and city residents.

"The opening of the courthouse today is one more step in

advancing the law in Iraq. A solid physical structure helps to provide legitimacy to the courts in the eyes of the people," said Maj. Rich DiMeglio, the command judge advocate for 4th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division and native of Plateteville, Wis.

DiMeglio gave the head judge a law text book in remembrance of the renovation of the courthouse.

"This book symbolizes the written law, which America has an abiding and deep respect for," he said. "The law provides organization to the government and a gives a measure of consistency and certainty to the people."

DiMeglio said the re-opening of the courthouse in Seddah is a commitment by the people and government of Iraq to the advancing of the rule of law in Babil province.

In addition to the courthouse, a new town hall and trash clean-up projects are planned and ready to begin.

This was the second court house re-opening in the region in less than two weeks. The courthouse in Musayyib, Iraq re-opened March 13.



(Photo by Maj. Rick Williams, 4th BCT (A), 25th Inf. Div.)

Guests at the re-opening of the renovated Seddah courthouse, south of Baghdad, enjoy an Iraqi meal following the ceremony March 27.

Police Working Toward a Secure Iraq

By Sgt. Marcus Butler
4th BCT (ABN), 25th Inf. Div. Public Affairs

ISKANDARIYAH, Iraq – The future security of Iraq starts at the ground level with the Iraqi security forces. In order to prepare the Iraqi's for this responsibly, Soldiers in transition teams have been working around the clock all over Iraq. Soldiers of the 127th Military Police Company are ready for this challenge.

Based out of Forward Operating Base Kalsu, the headquarters for the 127th MP have platoons throughout the battle space for the 4th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division.

One platoon in particular, 3rd Platoon "Wolf Pack" is operating in Iskandariyah, Iraq home to the 1st Battalion, 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment, 4th BCT (Airborne), 25th Inf. Div. The Wolf Pack arrived at FOB Iskan approximately four months ago fully knowing their mission.

"Our mission as a police transition team is to make sure the (Iraqi police) are fully trained and qualified to take on the mission of securing their country and keeping the citizens safe," said Staff Sgt. Johnny Colon, squad leader and Guayama, Puerto Rico native.

This mission is of the highest priority to not only to the IPs that are training but also for the civilians they are training to protect.

"In our area of operation, the important thing is that more of the local population is beginning to trust the IPs," said 1st Lt. Nathan Diaz, platoon leader for the Wolf Pack. "The people are happy to see the IPs going through their villages and towns patrolling the area as well as a large increase of information being given to the IPs to help combat the insurgents in the local areas."

"In the short time that we have been here, the human intelligence has grown dramatically," said Diaz. "We are getting more and more tips on events that could harm Iraqi security forces and coalition forces in the local neighborhoods."

The relationship between the police and the civilians is

the not the only one that matters. Soldiers of Wolf Pack worked daily with the IPs of the local area helping them to become more proficient in their job and building bonds in the process.

These bonds formed will lead to lasting impressions for both the IPs and Soldiers as well.

"Moving from unit to unit, you have to start from scratch building trust with the people that you are working with. We have different personnel that work with the leadership of the IPs to help in specific area," said Sgt. 1st Class Michael King, platoon sergeant for the Wolf Pack. "Whether that area involves investigations, accountability of weapons, or training; we have built a strong relationship with all of the stations that fall with in our AO."

Progression of the IPs is sometimes compared to the police forces in United States but that is inequitable.

"One of the things when looking at progress of the IPs is you can not look at them as law enforcement in the United States for the simple fact the threat in Iraq is much greater," said King. "That causes unique challenge for the IPs. I have noticed an increase in professionalism as well as proactive efforts."

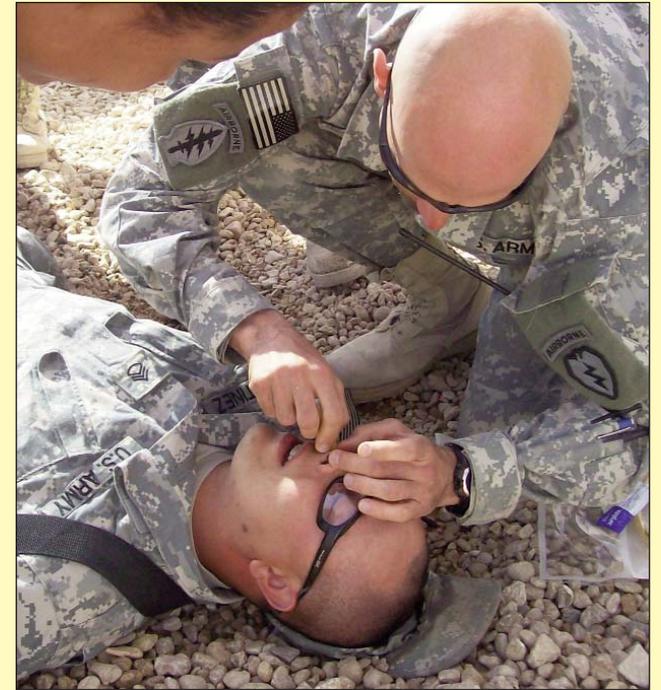
These Soldiers will not only grow from the experience of working with IPs but also working with the Paratroopers of 1st Battalion, 501st PIR.

"It has been a very unique experience for me working with paratroopers for the first time. I have made life long bonds with many of them and I know that I can count on them no matter what," said Colon.

"The paratroopers of 1-501st PIR welcomed us in with open arms. Whenever we needed something to happen there was never any issues with getting it done," said King.

After the end of the tour, the Soldiers of Wolf Pack MPs and the IPs they worked with will be better for the experience.

"Our Soldiers will take with them a lasting positive impression on what they have learned during their time here and I know our IP counterparts will feel the same," said Diaz.



(U.S. Army photo)

Paratroopers from 725th Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division practice lifesaving skills using the "nose tube" to obtain a clear airway during medical training on Forward Operating Base Kalsu, Iraq.

Troops Refresh Medical Skills

By Spc. Juliana Morrison
425th Brigade Special Troops Battalion

FORWARD OPERATING BASE KALSU, Iraq — When going on a mission, Soldiers count on one another for protection and they take comfort in the fact that their comrades can help in any situation, even when they are injured. This kind of security comes with trust and preparation.

Paratroopers with Company B, 425th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 4th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division brushed up on their lifesaving skills with a combat lifesaver refresher course.

The class was given by BSTB medic Sgt. Desire Sanchez, originally from Jacksonville, Fla.

"CLS is usually given by the first responders to an accident," said Sanchez. "It is important to keep Soldiers up to speed and to make sure that their medical skills stay current, especially when in a combat zone."

The training for the paratroopers focused on various lifesaving skills. These skills include establishing an airway via nasal pharyngeal airway (NPA), administering fluids through intravenous (IV), and needle chest decompression, which relieves air pressure inside the chest. Soldiers also worked with improvised tourniquets and field dressings.

With the supervision from medics from 725th BSB, paratroopers were able to get a real feel for what it is like to give and receive first aid.

"The class is definitely a good thing. Practicing on an actual human being allows you to see their reaction and movements, you can get an idea what it's like to do it for real," said Pfc. Joseph Davenport a native of Standish, Maine.

The course is given every six months to ensure paratroopers will be ready for combat injuries. For Staff Sgt. Michael Martinez from Denver, Colo., the refresher course gives paratroopers rare opportunities.

"This refresher course is good because it allows us to sustain skills we don't use everyday," said Martinez.



(Photo by Sgt. Marcus Butler, 4th BCT, 25th Inf. Div. Public Affairs)

Sgt. Christopher Benjamin, 3rd Platoon, 127th Military Police Company watches as Iraqi Policemen handle the flow of traffic at a checkpoint south of Baghdad March 22. Benjamin, a native of Tampa, Fla. is visiting the checkpoint as part of his platoon's mission as a police transition team.

Repaired Truck Symbol of Life, Courage

By Spc. Chris McCann
2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI) Public Affairs

CAMP STRIKER, Iraq — The truck has clearly been in Iraq for awhile. The hood is a dusty green against the sand-colored cab and trailer attachment, and the undercarriage shows some hard miles. But the engine purrs like a kitten, and the two Soldiers standing under its massive grille wear broad smiles and Army Commendation Medals.

The truck, a heavy equipment transport truck or HETT, is used by Soldiers of the 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) to recover vehicles in combat areas, usually after they are damaged by improvised explosive devices. But on Jan. 31, this particular truck hit an IED. Shrapnel fragments damaged the engine, the fuel tanks and

the transmission — along with almost everything else that made the truck run — and also tore through a Soldier's arm.

Spc. David Shulda, a native of Crestville, Ill., and a mechanic with the 2nd BSTB, was sitting in the passenger's seat when the IED exploded under the truck. He was bleeding heavily from his arm, and as soon as driver Spc. Shawn Meinholz brought the vehicle to a stop, fellow mechanic Spc. Steven Bodruk began treating Shulda, putting a tourniquet on his arm.

"I barely kept the truck out of a canal," Meinholz, a native of Manchester, N.H., said. "I lost control of the steering and the brakes."

A recovery team from Forward Operating Base Yusufiyah came out to bring the Soldiers to safety; Shulda was taken to a hospital immediately. The truck was totaled, the Soldiers said.

"At that point, we thought it was too damaged to fix,"

said Meinholz. "In fact, it was totaled. But we opted to fix it."

For their engagement by hostile forces, Bodruk and Meinholz were awarded Combat Action Badges. The Army Commendation Medals were presented for the fact that the Soldiers saved a comrade's life and then brought the truck back to fully-mission-capable status.

"They're the hardest working guys we have," said motor pool administrative specialist Sgt. Lucian Ledbetter, a native of Conway, Ark. "I knew they would get it done."

Ledbetter himself had a hand in the repairs, ordering more than 100 pieces and parts that the mechanics needed, including the new engine, winches and fuel tanks.

"It's simply outstanding, what they did," said Capt. Jason Anderson, a native of Crete, Ill., and the commander of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd BSTB. "It was way above their official skill level. They put hundreds of man-hours into this truck."

Some Soldiers thought that Bodruk and Meinholz wouldn't be able to restore the truck.

"People in other units said they couldn't do it," said Ledbetter. "They said the HETT should just be coded out and a new one requisitioned. But inside the unit, everyone had full confidence in these guys. Everyone messed with them about it, but no one ever really thought they couldn't get it done."

For Bodruk and Meinholz, it was never a question.

"The battalion wouldn't have any recovery assets if we didn't fix it," said Bodruk. "We do 75 percent of our missions with that truck."

But it wasn't just for the battalion's mission that they poured their efforts into the truck.

"Shulda would've wanted it done," Meinholz said. "If he were here, (the damage) wouldn't have stopped him."

Shulda, who was taken to Walter Reed Army Medical Center, does physical therapy as his arm is healing, and regularly e-mails his friends in the battalion, letting them know he's regaining strength in his hand and arm. But he doesn't yet know that the truck he was in that night is back on the road now.

"Even though this truck is together again, we still don't have a Shulda," Bodruk said. "And not just as a co-worker, but as a friend."

"They did it because they were the ones in that truck that night," Ledbetter said. "It's more than a truck, to them — it's a symbol of their survival."



(Photo by Spc. Chris McCann, 2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI) Public Affairs)

Spc. Shawn Meinholz (right), a native of Middleton, Wisc., and a welder with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry), and Spc. Steven Bodruk, a native of Manchester, N.H., and an air conditioning mechanic with the company, stand at attention in front of a Heavy Equipment Transport Truck after they were each awarded Combat Action Badges and Army Commendation Medals during a brief ceremony March 23.

Utica Radio Station Sends Soldiers a Taste of Home

By 2nd Lt. Laura Clark
210th BSB, 2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI)

CAMP STRIKER, Iraq — Soldiers deployed to various locations around the world may feel as if their hard work and dedication to fighting the War on Terrorism goes unnoticed by those back home.

Soldiers from the 210th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) were shown how much the U.S. citizens support them when they recently received a massive shipment of care packages. The support, which came in many small packages, came from the Big Frog 104 FM Radio Station out of Utica, N.Y.

Each box overflowed with items ranging from magazines to assorted personal hygiene items.

One of the Soldiers took time to comment about the boxes received from the radio station.

"It's cool, it boosts morale and it lets you

know people out there care about you," said Sgt. Albert Bartlett, a Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 210th BSB signal operations noncommissioned officer and native of Olive Branch, Ark.

"And it doesn't matter if it's not your birthday or Christmas, everyone likes opening boxes," he continued.

After unwrapping and marveling at the snacks and gifts sent, Soldiers then split all the items so that each company was able to return to their places of work and share the items with comrades.

"It's magnificent that people took time out of their busy schedules back home to send us things we need," said Pvt. Eboni Johnson, a Company B, 210th BSB supply clerk and native of Alexandria, La. "I thought that the boxes were a show of the amazing support from those at home."

"Each Soldier was excited and encouraged in some way by the acts of kindness evident in the care packages," he added.



(Photo by Sgt. Jeong Hinton, 210th BSB, 2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI))

Spc. James Brewington (center), a Signal Equipment Repairman assigned to Company B, 210th Brigade Support Battalion, and Spc. Abel Villalobos (right), a 210th BSB special electronics repairman sort through hundreds of boxes sent by listeners of Big Frog 104 Radio Station from Utica, N.Y.

U.S. Army Brings Fertilizer to Iraqi Farmers

By Spc. Chris McCann
2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI) Public Affairs

MUSTAFAR, Iraq — The village of Mustafar, Iraq teems with children and farmers hailing the trucks of U.S. Soldiers coming in March 25.

The Soldiers, with the 1st Squadron, 89th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry), brought two and a half truckloads of ammonium phosphate fertilizer from Camp Striker, Iraq, to the farmers a few miles away. Abdul Nebi Mahdi Hassam Al-Shemeri, the head of the newly-founded farmers' cooperative, and his son, Salam Abdul-Nebi, helped organize the distribution.

"I help, but my father does most of it," Salam said. "We live here and farm vegetables to sell — our family has been here for about 17 years."

Capt. Adam Sawyer, a native of Reading, Penn., and the commander of Troop C, 1-89, helped about 50 farmers build their own cooperative.

"They're recognized by the Iraqi government now," Sawyer said. "The co-op has tractors and equipment that they share. They expressed interest in getting some fertilizer, and so (Abdul-Nebi) is here to make sure that only the members of the co-op get it."

The chance to get out was fun for the



(Photo by Spc. Chris McCann, 2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI) Public Affairs)

Spc. Travis Bellew (center), a native of Arkansas City, Kan., and a medic with the 1st Squadron, 89th Cavalry Regiment, carries a bag of ammonium phosphate fertilizer with a local man at a distribution in the village of Mustafar, Iraq, March 25.

Soldiers as well.

"I feel like I'm actually doing something," said Sgt. Ethan Jones, a native of Boyertown, Penn., and a welder. "I'm not just back in the rear, doing nothing. I'm get-

ting out and seeing more of the scenery. And I think the Iraqis are very appreciative of what we're doing."

"We're tired but happy," said Abdul-Nebi. "We're very happy that you came to

serve us like this and bring so many supplies. Before, many people used to say that the Americans were no good, but now, seeing how much you help us — everyone is changing their minds."

Pfc. Victor Calhoun, a native of Macon, Ga., and a driver with Troop D, said he's been enlightened about Iraqi culture on these missions too.

"The more I do it, the more I enjoy it and understand that I'm actually part of helping them," Calhoun said. "It's good to see that we bring a variety of things they need. And today I saw the locals working together, instead of just asking for a handout. There were children involved, Iraqi Police — everyone was working together."

One of the Iraqi policemen, Samir Ali Kalaf Kenaani, joked with the local children and pulled security along Abu Ghalan road.

"I'm very happy to serve our people. We hope to serve more and more — the people here are very poor."

Samir joined the police force to help the country, he said.

"Well, I joined for the salary too, but mostly to help my country," Samir said, laughing. "It's dangerous sometimes, but it's dangerous in Iraq to be a civilian too. Mostly we just want to get the area to be safe. It will take time, but we'll get there."

Supply Support Soldiers Keep Missions Moving

By Staff Sgt. Angela McKinzie
2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI) Public Affairs

CAMP STRIKER, Iraq — In a yard, just minutes away from a tactical operations center, on Camp Striker, Iraq lies a secret — a secret that remains untold until it is visited.

Soldiers of the supply support activity, 210th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) work every day at the SSA yard to ensure the supply flow runs smoothly while in Iraq.

The Soldiers provide a variety of classes of supplies to include food, office, petroleum, barriers, repair parts and major end items.

Currently, the SSA provides service to about 150 customers and stocks 3,794 lines of separate parts supporting more units than just the 2nd BCT.

"I love to be able to support the customers here and out in sector," Sgt. LeMarkisha Hill, the SSA stock control non-commissioned officer in charge and native of New York, N.Y. "We make sure supplies are available so Soldiers can continue their missions."

Although the supply system may seem like a relatively easy job to the average person, the system is quite complex.

The SSA consists of several different stations that are manned by different Soldiers.

"It is hard to understand the SSA unless you have seen each part of it," explained 1st Lt. Jay Schulz, a native of Kenosha, Wisc., who serves as a 210th BSB general support platoon leader.

The hub of SSA is known as the stock control section. This section is responsible for keeping accountability of the shipping, requisitioning, issuing and inventorying reports of all items.

"Each day we perform three different types of transactions, one in the morning, noon and the evening," Hill said of the stock control section. "Often, customers can get items the



(Photo by Staff Sgt. Angela McKinzie, 2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI) Public Affairs)

Sgt. Jean Canneus, the supply support activity movement control NCOIC of the 210th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) and native of Boston, inventories tires at the SSA yard on Camp Striker, Iraq.

same day if we have them on hand. We do a walk through to see if we have the items the customer may be looking for."

The first of the SSA is the receiving station. Soldiers work nightlong to inventory incoming supplies and get the new items ready for the day-shift Soldiers.

"We have these Soldiers work at night to minimize the traffic at the SSA," Schulz explained.

After the items are ordered and received they are placed in their appropriate places.

One place that the supplies are placed is known as the storage section, which consists of 50 large, connexes metal shipping containers of repair parts, 14 connexes of petroleum, oil and lubrication supplies and 20 additional smaller connexes of other repair parts. The Soldiers in this section

work all day ensuring that each part is put in its proper location.

"You stay busy all day," said Spc. Joel Reyes, a native of New York, N.Y., who serves as an SSA supply clerk. "We are constantly receiving and pushing out parts."

And when supplies are broken or items, such as a vehicle that was too damaged to be fixed from an improvised explosive device, are no longer serviceable or there are simply excess items the SSA's turn-in section takes care of getting rid of.

When the supplies are ready to be given to the customer the issuing section takes the reins and works with the units to make sure the customers get their supplies.

"As soon as we get the parts we notify the customers right away," said Sgt. Luis Cribillero, the issuing section NCOIC and native of Queens, N.Y. "It is a demanding job and very long hours, but we will do anything to complete the mission."

Although many supplies come in small packages, there are others that require forklifts to move them. The movement control section, which contains the only forklifts in the 2nd BCT, is responsible for loading and downloading a variety of items.

"The pallets of water that you see near the trailers and the TOC are put there by Soldiers of the SSA's movement control section," Schulz said.

"We move anything from Hesco barriers to lumber for force protection," said Sgt. Jean Canneus, the SSA movement control NCOIC and native of Boston, Mass.

As complex as the SSA's operation may be the Soldiers, who are currently understaffed, continue to provide quality service to their customers.

"These Soldiers have performed way beyond my expectations," said Chief Warrant Officer Julio Hall, the 210th BSB supply systems technician and native of Grafton, N.H. "These are the most outstanding group of Soldiers I have worked with."

Catholic Chaplain Serves His 'Stagecoach' Soldiers

By Sgt. 1st Class Nicholas Conner
15th SB, Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – To the Soldiers of the 68th Combat Sustainment and Support Battalion, 15th Sustainment Brigade, Chaplain (Capt.) Leo Moras' trademark smile usually precedes a handshake or an update to the care package pile outside his office.

These are his Soldiers, he says. He trained and deployed with them; anything he can do for them, he will.

Be it providing the contents of care packages sent by stateside supporters or just talking briefly with Soldiers daily, Moras energetically looks out for his "Stagecoach" troops.

Service to others has been a constant for Moras, a Catholic priest from Bantwal, India. The oldest of six, few prospects were open to the son of a poor farmer after finishing high school. Entering the priesthood seemed a good fit for a young man determined to help others. It must have run in the family. Moras has two sisters who became catholic nuns.

"My father jokes that is a fifty-fifty contribution; three to the world and three to God," he laughs.

After gaining a reputation as an outspoken seminarian, a priest once confronted him, asking if he wanted to be a priest or a politician. Father Moras took the task of building Saint Thomas the Apostle church in Jaipur, India.

But the creation of a new school, parish, rectory and convent from scratch took its toll on the priest.

"I was a one-man band," said Moras. "With no one to help, I just got burned out, to the point of collapse."

Vacation time, a passport and friends in America provided Moras the opportunity to make a break for it.

Unbeknownst to family and friends, the Indian priest boarded a plane to Lubbock, Texas.

"No one knew," he laughed. "Not even my

great-uncle, the bishop [of the Indian diocese]."

Upon arriving in the Lone Star state, Fr. Moras became a commodity to the catholic community. With the current priest out of commission from hip surgery, Moras took over the parish of Saint John Newman.

A Texan bishop rewarded Moras' work by giving him his own parish in Snyder, Texas. Once again, he found himself at the head of both a church and a school.

"I was doing the same thing I was doing in India," said Moras. "I wanted to do something for others outside [of the catholic faith]. I was training people, but I wanted to serve people."

That strong desire for service lead Fr. Moras to the Army and the Chaplain Corps.

He secured permission, from both his bishop in India and in Texas, to trade his white clerical collar for the digital pattern of the Army combat uniform.

"Here I am," he grins. "I am serving Soldiers and am taking care of people all over the world."

Now on his second deployment to Iraq, Moras makes sure that his Soldiers are "fully-loaded" before departing the wire on missions.

He printed and distributed more than 12,000 prayer cards to troops and family members. In keeping with the unique sustainment and logistical missions of the 68th CSSB, Moras came up with the "Convoy Prayer."

"I've come to know the troops and I came to know their mission," he explained. "Constantly on the road, I know how dangerous it is; how they really rely on the mercy of God."

Moras now spends his days ministering to the Soldiers of the 68th CSSB, doing what he can to provide comfort and support. In return, he asks for only one thing.

"Now I know the power of prayer," he smiles. "I don't ask for big things, I just ask for one 'Hail Mary' from everyone I meet." For Moras, great things always start from humble beginnings.



(U.S. Army photo)

Chaplain (Capt.) Leo Moras stands during a Catholic Mass for the Soldiers of the 68th CSSB, 15th SB, on Seitz Annex. Ordained as a Catholic priest in India, Moras joined the Army to serve the needs of Soldiers, regardless of their faith.



(Photos by Sgt. 1st Class Nicholas Conner, 15th SB, PAO)

Chaplain (Maj. Gen.) David Hicks, Chief of Chaplains, talks with fellow MNC-I chaplains during a visit to Victory Chapel March 23. He outlined his view of the chaplaincy and its importance to the Soldiers and commanders in Iraq. Coalition forces unit ministry teams, representing multiple denominations and faiths, gathered together for a day of fellowship and sharing.

Top Chaplains Visit Baghdad

By Sgt. 1st Class Nicholas Conner
15th SB, Public Affairs

Victory Base Complex, Iraq – The Army's Chief of Chaplains spoke with ministry teams representing units around the Multi-National Corps-Iraq area during a conference on Camp Liberty March 23.

Chaplain (Maj. Gen.) David Hicks used the opportunity to



Latvian Forces 1st Lt. Raimonds Krasinskis (left) and Polish Army Lt. Col. Wladyslaw Jasica, both Catholic priests, listen to Chaplain (Col.) Phil Hill, Deputy Chief of Chaplains, during a conference March 23.

meet with chaplains from diverse denominational backgrounds and encourage them in their unique mission of ministry to the troops.

The purpose of the visit was to assist and encourage the men and women who serve in the chaplaincy, said Chaplain (Col.) Phil Hill, Deputy Chief of Chaplains. Challenges faced by chaplains can be severe.

Tasked with ensuring the spiritual well-being of their Soldiers, chaplains can also find themselves as counselors, mediators and world religion experts. They may also serve as advisors to a commander.

Chaplain (Capt.) Mark Beren, a Catholic priest with the Nebraska National Guard stationed in Balad, Iraq, explained that he often felt he was the only priest in Iraq at times. The meeting gave chaplains an opportunity to stay connected to one another.

"It gives me a broader view of the chaplaincy," said Beren. "I'm often so focused on the Soldier in front of me, the mission of the battalion and on my duties that I fail to see the bigger picture."

Chaplains are a lot like fire extinguishers, Hill joked. You have to take them out periodically and re-charge them, or else they'll be useless when you need them.

“Catching Snakes”

Paratroopers Make Progress Against Insurgents

By Sgt. Mike Pryor
2nd BCT, 82nd Abn. Div. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD – When the car bomb exploded it not only destroyed the house “Beast Company” was staking out, it also ripped open a water main, leaving the entire neighborhood flooded under two feet of water.

Standing inside the wreckage of the house, his soaking wet boots dripping onto the shattered glass littering the floor, 2nd Lt. Travis Pride, of Asheville, N.C., had a theory.

“This was a set-up,” Pride said.

Pride’s unit, Company A, 2nd Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment “Black Falcons,” had recently helped catch

the leader of a bomb-making cell in Adhamiyah. Since being taken into custody, the man was giving up information. That information led Pride’s platoon from Beast Company to this house, supposedly a warehouse for weapons and ammo. But now it looked like they had been sent into a trap.

In the morning, an explosive ordnance disposal team sent to investigate had found a car rigged with hundreds of pounds of explosives outside the house. They were forced to detonate it. The controlled explosion still managed to demolish the house and blow the water main. Now, as they picked through the floating wreckage, the paratroopers in Pride’s platoon all felt the blast had been meant for them.

It was the latest move in a deadly game

of chess the Black Falcons have been playing against criminals and terrorists in Adhamiyah since the battalion arrived in sector almost two months ago and taking up residence at Combat Outpost War Eagle.

“If we’re going to beat these guys, we’ve got to be thinking three steps ahead,” said Sgt. Eric Meinhardt, a squad leader with Bravo Battery from Summerville, S.C.

The Black Falcons arrived in Adhamiyah in early February as part of the first wave of “surge” forces sent to calm the escalating violence in Baghdad. The battalion is responsible for an economically and religiously diverse area of more than half a million people just east of the Tigris River.

The enemy situation ranges from sophisticated terrorist cells to small-time crooks, and everything in between. It’s a full time job keeping track of all the players, and with every stone the Black Falcons uncover, the web of connections grows bigger.

“We’ve been surprised by the depth of the network. It’s bigger and more complicated than we thought,” said Lt. Col. Al Shoffner, the Black Falcons’ commander.

But in the short time they’ve been on the ground, paratroopers from the battalion have pulled off a string of successful operations against terrorists and criminals in the area.

In the past month they caught two of their brigade’s top-priority targets, and played instrumental roles in the capture of several other high-level insurgents – including the man who set the trap for Travis’ platoon. Out of 17 suspects detained so far, 16 are going to be prosecuted by the Iraqis, said 1st Lt. Andrew Woodward, of Baltimore, the battalion’s assistant intelligence officer.

“That’s an obnoxiously good percent-

age,” Woodward said.

Ironically, the Black Falcons – comprised of three artillery batteries and an attached company of combat engineers – have succeeded despite having no formal training whatsoever for the Eliot Ness-style role they have been playing.

“We’re a bunch of lanyard pullers,” said Capt. Jonathan Harvey, Bravo Battery’s commander. “We’re not trained for this stuff. It’s a fact.”

But it’s a fact that makes the battalion’s performance even more impressive, he added.

“These are bad dudes, and we’re balling them up,” he said.

For Shoffner, the key to success is simple.

“There’s nothing magic about it. It’s just going out and talking to people,” he said.

Talking is something the Black Falcons are becoming experts at. The flow of patrols out of the battalion’s combat outpost never stops. Paratroopers hit the streets every day, putting miles on their humvees and wearing down the rubber on their boots as they engage the population.

Top American commanders in Iraq now say that what is required to win the fight here is a “persistent presence.” That’s what the people of Adhamiyah are getting.

“The only way to get through to people is to talk to them,” said Pride. “You can’t talk to a tank.”

The success of this diplomatic effort rests with people like 1st Lt. Josh Rowan, of College Station, Texas. Rowan, a platoon leader with Bravo Battery, spends the bulk of his days imploring, cajoling and bargaining with residents of Adhamiyah to cooperate with the security effort.

At a recent meeting with residents of Graya’at that took place in a squalid social club made out of bamboo shoots and cardboard, Rowan was trying to find the address of a suspected insurgent. About two dozen people were crowded into the tiny space, all taking at once.

“Stop!” he finally shouted. He had his interpreter explain that it would be better if one person spoke for the whole group.

The room quieted.

“Now, where does he live?” he asked.

There was a pause and then the room erupted with chatter again as everyone spoke at once. Rowan sighed.

Frustrating as they can be, such meetings have a purpose: building trust. In time, the paratroopers hope, they will build up enough trust that people will come to them whenever they have information.

“It’s that person who maybe doesn’t talk to you the first time you meet them, but you keep going back two and three and four times until they feel comfortable enough to give you information,” said Shoffner.

One advantage the Black Falcons have as they go about their mission is a strong partnership with Iraqi security forces in the area. Putting Iraqi forces in the lead is considered essential to the success of the overall



Spc. Wesley Van der Velde of Provincetown, Ill. (left) and Spc. Marcus Tiller of Daytona, Fla., paratroopers with A Co, 325th Special Troops Battalion, 2nd BCT, 82nd Airborne Division, search for a hidden weapons cache at a suspected insurgent’s house in Adhamiyah March 22.



(Photos by Sgt. Mike Pryor, 2ndBCT, 82nd Abn. Div. Public Affairs)

Pfc. Kody Anderson of Prairieville, La., and his platoon of artilleryman from Battery B, 2nd Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, patrol a neighborhood in Baghdad’s Adhamiyah district March 23.



(Photo by Sgt. Mike Pryor, 2nd BCT, 82nd Abn. Div. Public Affairs)

National Police Graduation Day

The hand-to-hand fighting instructor at the National Police Training Academy in Baghdad demonstrates some martial arts techniques at the graduation ceremony for more than 400 new police officers in Baghdad March 29. The graduates, who completed 60 days of rigorous training at the academy, will be sent out to different national police battalions throughout Baghdad to supplement Iraq's growing security forces.

Soldiers Make Progress Against Insurgents in Adhamiyah

Progress

From Page 23

security effort.

The 3rd Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division shares COP War Eagle with the Black Falcons, and Shoffner meets regularly with his Iraqi army counterpart, Lt. Col. Yahyaw Rasol Abdalh.

Those meetings usually take place at Yahyaw's office in a garden estate nicknamed "the hacienda," a short walk from the converted basketball court Shoffner uses as a command post. During one recent meeting, the two discussed plans to close off roads trafficked by insurgents. Yahyaw, a trim, precise man with an aristocratic bearing, whacked crisply at a map with a pointer to indicate where he wanted to put barricades. Shoffner sipped tea and listened intently.

Later, Shoffner offered him a gift of some U.S. lieutenant colonel's rank to wear.

Yahyaw looked amused. He seemed indifferent to the pomp and circumstance that often mark U.S. and Iraqi officers' relationships. Talk turned to future operations.

Yahyaw told Shoffner he wanted to go after ringleaders, not low-level criminals.

"I tell my officers, when you catch a snake you must grab it by the head, not the tail," he told Shoffner.

For the Black Falcons, the opportunity to "catch a snake" can come without warning, at any hour of the day. All it takes is one solid tip on the whereabouts of a suspect. These fleeting windows of opportunity — known as "time sensitive targets" — are the payoff for all the time the paratroopers spend pounding the pavement.

"We know who the bad guys are. Finding someone who can tell you where they are and how long they're going to be there, that's the challenge," said Woodward.

When the Black Falcons do find someone who has that information, the gears turn

rapidly. For paratroopers like Meinhardt, a time sensitive target means one thing: drop what you're doing and move.

"Things will be calm for a while and then all the sudden they just blow up, and it's 'Go, go, go!'" he said.

Then it's an energy drink-fueled race out to the motor pool, where the idling engines of the lined-up gun trucks rumble as paratroopers scrutinize maps and conduct final radio checks. If there's time, the chaplain says a prayer. If not, the paratroopers flip down their night vision goggles and move out into the night.

Pride was still convinced the car bomb at the cache house had been meant for his guys. Nevertheless, when a TST came down a few nights later, Beast Company got the mission.

The targets were the "Kiki brothers", a pair of teenage hit men wanted for the murder of an Iraqi police colonel.

Pride's platoon raced to the site where

they were said to be hiding, then dismounted and crept up to the house. When they were in position, Spc. Nicholas Hardebeck rammed his Humvee straight through the front gate. The paratroopers poured in over the crumpled wall and quickly cleared the house. Inside, they found the younger Kiki brother and a half dozen other military age males without ID.

"Take 'em all. We'll sort it out at the COP," said Sgt. 1st Class Joe Caraballo.

Caraballo was frustrated that they hadn't caught the elder Kiki brother.

Still, the mission had been a success. In addition to taking at least one known insurgent off the streets, information gained from the raid will be used to stir up the hornet's nest and go after other cells in the area, Pride said.

More importantly, the raid put the paratroopers back on the offensive. The next move in the chess game belongs to the Black Falcons.

First Team Soldiers, Volunteers Recognized

By Sgt. Cheryl Cox
1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

FORT HOOD, Texas – Soldiers and families of the 1st Cavalry Division recognized not only the volunteer efforts made by the spouses and children of First Team Soldiers, but also the sacrifices made by Soldiers who have returned home from Iraq due to injuries they had sustained during their time in combat during a Purple Heart and Volunteer Recognition Ceremony held March 27 at the Fort Hood Catering and Conference Center.

“It is an honor every day for a Soldier like me to stand in formation with American Soldiers; and especially among these heroes here,” said Brig. Gen. William F. Grimsley, the deputy commanding officer for 4th Infantry Division.

“The words of the gospel rein true here today as they always have,” said Grimsley as he began to read well known scripture. “Greater love has no man than he lay down his life for his fellow man. These words seem especially appropriate today as we honor these Soldier wounded in action and on a day so close to the Pass Over and Easter season.”

The Soldiers honored during the ceremony are friends, comrades and family. But they are also husbands and fathers, brothers and sons.

And the families these Soldiers left behind during their deployment are very well represented by those in attendance and deserve the deepest amount of gratitude and support the nation can give in return for their ultimate treasure... their loved ones, stated Grimsley.

It is from this group of families that more than 30 volunteers were recognized for their support of the Soldiers in Iraq.

The volunteers are spouses caring for their own families, children of deployed Soldiers, Gold Star spouses, members of the local community, girlfriends of Soldiers, and civilians and Soldiers serving in the rear



(Photos by Spc. William Grove, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Brig. Gen. William F. Grimsley, the 4th Infantry Division deputy commanding general, presented Sgt. Danny Delcastillo, of 2nd Brigade Combat Team, with a Purple Heart Medal for injuries he had sustained Feb. 5 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom during a Purple Heart ceremony held March 27 at the Fort Hood Catering and Conference Center at Fort Hood, Texas.

detachments.

“This month as we note great women in history, I’m reminded of the words of a very selfless woman and servant to others – Mother Theresa, who once said ‘We ourselves feel that what we are doing is just a drop in the ocean. But the ocean would be less because of that missing drop,’” said Wendy Fil, wife of Maj. Gen. Joseph F. Fil, 1st Cavalry Division commander when speaking of the supporters.

Before Grimsley concluded his portion of the ceremony, he ensured that the Soldiers and families knew just how much their sacrifices meant.

“No medals or amount of money can compensate these Soldiers or their families. So, it is up to the rest of us in formation to

ensure that the price they paid and their friends are paying for freedom is not squandered or surrendered.”

At the close of the ceremony, a message from Maj. Gen. Fil was played for all in attendance. In the message, Fil spoke directly to the Soldiers and then directly to the families letting them know just how much their sacrifices mean to the rest of the Soldiers currently deployed.

“I want to personally thank the recipients and their families for having sacrificed so greatly for this noble cause,” he said. “We will never forget your commitment and service to help protect our freedoms.”

And in conclusion, followed by “GARYOWEN,” Fil addressed the volunteers for their selfless service in supporting



Col. Larry Phelps (center), the 1st Cavalry Division rear detachment commander, and Wendy Fil (right), wife of Maj. Gen. Joseph F. Fil, presented Jennifer Prodehl, a 1st Brigade Combat Team spouse, was presented with a necklace and a Commander's Award for Excellence for the volunteer work that she had done to help the Soldiers and spouses of the 1st Brigade Combat Team, during a Volunteer of the Month ceremony held March 27 at the Fort Hood Catering and Conference Center at Fort Hood, Texas.

the Soldiers of the First Team.

“Your support on the highest standards and without fanfare is so very vital to all of us here and the eventual success of this mission,” he stated. “We are all so very thankful for all of the talents and time that you have devoted. You make a difference every day and you need to know that we appreciate all that you do for our team.”



(Photo by Sgt. Robert Strain, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Soldiers and family members from 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, participate in Easter merriment by making t-shirts for their deployed parents April 1 at the 1st Cavalry Division Museum on Fort Hood, Texas.

First Team Families Gather, Celebrate Easter Together

By Sgt. Robert Strain
1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

FORT HOOD, Texas – Dozens of children invaded the 1st Cavalry Division Museum April 1, hunting for candy-filled, colorful plastic eggs hidden among the tanks and vehicles used or captured by Soldiers of the First Team throughout its history.

Twelve-hundred eggs were filled and placed in the grass at the museum by the 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team’s Family Readiness Group as a way to bring the families together during the unit’s deployment, said Marion Gilbert, the FRG’s co-advisor.

With about 50 kids looking for eggs, it was only a matter of minutes before they had all been found and the children moved on to other activities.

Some of the other activities planned for the kids at

the FRG’s celebration included painting t-shirts they could send to their dad for Father’s Day and decorating cookies, said Sarah Sauer, the battalion’s FRG advisor.

The gathering was more than something to occupy time on a Sunday afternoon and finding eggs hidden among military equipment, Sauer said.

“It’s great for [the families] to know that there are other families that are just like they are,” said Capt. Ryan Corker, 1-8 Cav’s rear detachment battalion commander.

It’s also a good opportunity for the spouses and children to get out and make some friends, Corker said.

Corker also explained that holidays can be an emotional time for families, especially when one member is deployed, and that they aren’t alone. They can celebrate with their Army family.

The FRG for 1-8 Cavalry tries to get together every two or three months for a large battalion event while the company FRGs have a monthly meeting, Gilbert said.

Injured Soldier Still "Coach" at Heart

By Amanda Kim Stairrett
Killeen Daily Herald

HARKER HEIGHTS, Texas - Once a coach, always a coach.

Capt. John Gilliam sat in the stands of last night's Harker Heights High School lacrosse game at Union Grove Middle School. He wore a black polo shirt with the word "coach" stitched across the spot where his nametape would normally sit.

The final quarter of the game against Round Rock's Stony Point High School was intense, after trailing the entire game, Harker Heights came back to tie the game at 10. Though Gilliam's left leg was in bandages from just below his knee to his ankle, the former coach jumped to his feet or crouched low to the ground during each intense play, yelling directions to his former players.

Gilliam is a troop commander for 4th



Harker Heights and Round Rock lacrosse players play at Union Grove Middle School on March 23.

Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division. He is staying at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio after being injured in Iraq Feb. 3.

Gilliam and some of his Soldiers were searching for a sniper on Baghdad's infamous Haifa Street when an insurgent threw a hand grenade. The captain's radio operator threw himself on Gilliam when the grenade detonated. The radio took the brunt of the destruction and the operator was unharmed. However, Gilliam took shrapnel to his upper calf and it severed a main artery.

Four days later, he arrived in San Antonio and 10 surgeries later, he was able to watch his former team play in Harker Heights - the first time he has been back to the Fort Hood area since being injured. Gilliam's wife, Capt. Erin McGill, is also a 1st Cavalry Soldier, serving in the 2nd Brigade's 15th Brigade Support Battalion.

He started coaching the team in Fall 2005 when organizers heard he was a former player at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. He grew up playing the sport and started whipping the young team into shape.

When the captain first showed up, the players were terrified of him, said Jaci Ollivant, the mother of two players, Evan and Caleb. He worked them, she said, getting them in shape for a sport that requires a lot of stamina.

Coaching the players - many of whom had never played lacrosse - was much like leading young soldiers, Gilliam said. It is the same process of training them to do unfamiliar and difficult tasks, he added.

Gilliam looked around the stands last night and the crowd is a lot bigger than when he coached, he said with a smile.

Watching his team play on a windy



(Photos by Travis Bartoshek, Killeen Daily Herald)

Capt. John Gilliam, former coach of the Harker Heights lacrosse team, watches alongside Jaci Ollivant, and Hope Ollivant, 6, of Harker Heights, during the Harker Heights lacrosse game against Round Rock on Friday, March 23.

March evening beats the heck out of sitting in a hospital, he said. A few days after Gilliam arrived at the medical center, the players visited him during a game road trip to San Antonio, Ollivant said.

Lacrosse is a club sport at the school, meaning it isn't funded like more popular sports such as football. The team is held together by a set of dedicated parents, volunteers like Gilliam and a close-knit group of players - many of them Army kids. Of the nearly 30 players on the roster, 70 percent of them have parents who are serving or have served in the military, said Gregg Bennett, of the Harker Heights Lacrosse Association.

When the game ended with Harker Heights losing by two points, Gilliam limped

across the field to go visit with the players. First hearing of the injury was scary for Bennett, he said, as he stood in the emptying stands after the game. Bennett said he just had images of Gilliam running around the field with the players, and is thankful the injury wasn't so bad that he wouldn't be able to do that anymore.

Now, Gilliam's top priority is getting better so he can rejoin his "guys" in Iraq. He is hopeful that he can rejoin the troop in a month. It's extremely, extremely hard to be here knowing his guys are in Iraq without him, he said. But if there was one place he'd rather be, it would be out there, coaching those kids, he said, nodding his head toward the field.

Carson, Academy Take Blood Drive to the Top

By Douglas M. Rule
Fort Carson Public Affairs

FORT CARSON, Colo.—The combined U.S. Air Force Academy and Fort Carson Armed Service Blood Program blood drive set records for collection March 19-23.

The blood drive collected 3,367 units of blood. This broke the previous record for a blood drive collection, 2,800 units, which was held by the U.S. Military Academy at West Point for more than 20 years. The record for a single blood drive in Colorado, 2,400 units of blood, was also broken. Fort Carson has the distinction of now holding the record of a Department of Defense single-day collection with 868 units collected on March 23.

"It is amazing. I have never seen community support like this," said Carmen Dietrich-Williams, blood donor recruiter from Fort Bliss, Texas. Dietrich-Williams and George Munoz, also at Fort Bliss, coordinated the blood drive with the Academy and Fort Carson on behalf of ASBP.

ASBP sets up the logistics for the entire operation. One hundred and ten medical professionals from around the United States, from as far away as Fort Lewis, Wash., to Fort Bragg, N.C., were brought in to screen donors and collect blood. Some units brought in their own donor beds and other equipment. They set up at the U.S. Air Force Academy, staying there for three days, breaking down the equipment and transporting it to Fort Carson the night of March 21. Fort



(Photo by Douglas M. Rule; Fort Carson Public Affairs)

Tammy Montalvo consults with Frank Wake, both of Ft. Lewis, Washington, concerning Pfc. Erin McCoy, 4th Engineer Battalion, who is giving blood March 23, 2007, at Fort Carson's Special Events Center.

Carson Soldiers assisted in the set up and tear down. At both sites, volunteers assisted, providing food and beverages and acting as escorts from the donor stations to the break room.

Original plans for the blood drive included only the U.S. Air Force Academy, but Munoz thought about including Fort Carson. He spoke with Division West, First Army and Fort Carson Command Sgt. Maj. Terrance McWilliams.

"Sgt. Maj. McWilliams said he would love to have the drive on post and that 300 units would be a drop in the bucket," said Munoz.

Planning a blood drive takes many hours of work including teleconferences, setting up the facility and coordinating the volunteer workforce.

Master Sgt. Kristin Clark, Southwest Region Recruitment coordinator for the C.W. "Bill" Young Marrow Donor Program, set up an information and recruitment table to recruit potential bone marrow donors. She and her team signed up 1,470 new donors during the week.

On the first day of Fort Carson's share of the drive, KYZX "The Eagle" 103.9 FM radio station did a live remote. On the second day, The Eagle was joined by their sister station, KIL0 94.3 FM, and KATC "Cat Country" 95.1 FM. In addition to the live remotes encouraging the community to come out and give, Bruce Schoening, also known as "C.K.," from KATC rolled up his sleeve and donated. Rob Quirk, a news anchor from KOAA-TV Channels 5/30, who had also been publicizing the event, showed up to donate.

"It's the least I could do and it's an easy way to help. Folks around here really rally around our troops. This community is very generous," Quirk said.

Community members showed up in full force since many of the Fort Carson Soldiers are either deployed or have recently redeployed and were ineligible to donate as they haven't been back for a year. But Soldiers who could donate did. Even though the blood drive didn't officially start until 8 a.m., on March 23 Soldiers were already on beds donating at 7 a.m.



(Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Robert Timmons, 4th IBCT, 1st Inf. Div. Public Affairs)

Col. Ricky Gibbs, commander of the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, cuts the ribbon to officially open a new internet café at Forward Operating Base Falcon in Baghdad as Pfc. Mark Capo from Sgt. Robert Hussey from Mableton Ga., Spc. Derrick Rencher from Los Angeles, and Pfc. Mark Capo from Orlando, Fla., look on. The three Soldiers from Company C, Brigade Special Troops Battalion, were instrumental in renovating the facility for the grand opening.

New Internet Café Open for Business

By Pfc. Nathaniel Smith
4th IBCT, 1st Inf. Div. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD - Col. Ricky D. Gibbs, commander of the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, cut the ribbon to officially open a new internet cafe at Forward Operating Base Falcon April 1.

Three Soldiers from Company C, Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 4 IBCT, 1st Inf. Div., Sgt. Robert Hussey, of Mableton, Ga., Spc. Derrick Rencher, from Los Angeles and Orlando, Fla., native Pfc. Mark Capo were instrumental in the opening of the center.

They were the Soldiers who put their sweat and muscle behind renovating the facility.

When the 4th IBCT assumed responsibility for FOB Falcon, the café was left in a state disrepair.

To ready it for Dragon Brigade Soldier use, the three Soldiers cleared it out and painted it among other time consuming tasks.

Named after Sgt. Aubrey D. Bell, a Soldier who served in Baghdad with the 214th Military Police Company and killed in October 2003, the internet café contains new computers, and voice-over-Internet-protocol phones, which allow Soldiers to call back to the States cheaply.

"This is an important morale, welfare and recreation outlet for Soldiers doing great things in Iraq," said Gibbs, a Harker Heights, Texas native. "It helps them stay connected to the loved ones at home."

Spc. Shawn Hayden, a topographical analyst with Headquarters Company, 4th IBCT, from Fort Myers, Fla., said the location of the café, adjacent to the 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment and 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment headquarters, is good for Soldiers.

"I feel it's probably better that it's closer to the infantry," he said. "It would help them out since they live in tents."

"It's a way for us to have a little bit of home while we're here," he added



(Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Robert Timmons, 4th BCT, 1st Inf. Div. Public Affairs)

With a Good Book

Spc. Josh Albertson, 27, an engineer with the 952nd Engineer Company, attached to the 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, reads a book as he relaxes at the Amanche Combat Outpost in southwestern Baghdad, March 28. The Paris, Texas native's unit is at the COP to help fortify it.

French Kiss; Not Just a Sloppy Smooch

That's it! I have been enlightened. Thanks to the other half what I call the "Public Affairs Sisterhood," I have finally found a movie that I can quote a portion that relates to almost every aspect of my day.

Have a lot of work to do?
"I will triumph."

Someone being a grump around me? That's OK. They will just "fester, fester, fester... rot, rot, rot."

Feeling a little sick to my stomach?

"Stop the rocking! Stop the rocking!"

Now these words may not seem like much, but when attached to the quirky mannerisms of Meg Ryan, these phrases make you giggle as images pop into your mind.

To get to this silly bliss, you have to watch 20th Century Fox's *French Kiss*.

Meg Ryan's character, Kate, heartbroken over her straying fiancé, jumps on a plane (while she is deathly afraid of flying) and heads to Paris. This is where her Charlie (played by Timothy Hutton) is.

Now Kate is a little neurotic. OK... maybe a lot. So she is zoning into her flying mantra which includes a tune of her own concoction called "I hate Paris in the spring-time," and a little stone cottage.

The mantra, however, really wasn't working. She is, after all, going to be flying over an ocean. This is when Luc (no, not "Luke"), a chain-smoking, "hygiene deficient" Frenchman comes into her life.

Random Reviews

Sgt. Nicole Kojetin



Oh... he is also a thief smuggling a vine and a stolen necklace from Canada back to Paris.

Since Kate is so innocent looking, Luc, played by Kevin Kline with a bad French accent, decides she is the perfect victim to smuggle in his stolen goods. After getting her liquored up, he slips his vine

and necklace into her carry-on.

This one little act links them together for the rest of the movie. He is trying to retrieve the necklace, but in order to get it back he has to pretend to help her win back her Charlie from the "French goddess."

Of course, there are some obstacles such as Luc being chased by the police and Kate falling over the dessert table.

Now, honestly, this isn't the best movie for the quality of the acting or the probability of the events. But everything about this movie is fun, from the bad French accents to the rude concierge at the hotel. The best part is the witty way Kate reacts.

I am a fan of overreacting. As a very reserved person, I enjoy watching people whether in movies or in real life become slaves to their emotions and just let loose.

Of course, acting on impulse is never a good idea when you are carrying a weapon and bullets.

I recommend this one. So, sit back and relax and this is bound to make you laugh.

(Five out of five stars.)



(Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Robert Timmons, 4th BCT, 1st Inf. Div. Public Affairs)

Firing a "Frozen Rope"

Staff Sgt. Ryan Rezendes, quarterback for his flag football team, fires a frozen rope to his receiver during an 8-on-8 flag football tournament March 24 at Forward Operating Base Falcon, Iraq. Rezendes is the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team personal security detachment noncommissioned officer in charge.

Spring Champions Settled; Baseball Fever Arrives

Baseball proved to be the central theme of my environmental leave stopover in Killeen, as I assisted my oldest son in the completion of his third grade science project – "Why does a curveball curve?" – and got my 5-year-old prepared for his first "coach-pitch" baseball practice.

"Mom, how do you put this thing on?" he asked my wife while holding his brand new athletic supporter and protective cup, attempting to dress for his first team gathering.

"Ask your father," my wife replied.

Though neither one of my sons were born in Wisconsin, both are growing into Packer fans and will probably also adopt the Milwaukee Brewers. My youngest son, however, wound up on the "Pirates" this season.

What are you gonna do?

We're Number One

As expected, my Milwaukee Brewers jumped out into the lead of the National League Central Division, winning their opening day match-up with the Los Angeles Dodgers, 7-1.

They won behind a two-hit complete game victory by their staff ace, right-hander Ben Sheets, who is attempting to come back from a sub-par 2006 due to injuries. Only former all-star second baseman Jeff Kent was able to handle Sheets on opening day,

Trigger Pull

Master Sgt. Dave Larsen



nailing him for an early solo home run.

Sheets set down 22 straight Dodgers, at one point, striking out three and walking no one to put my Milwaukee Brewers in first place, at least for one day.

Yet, no one really pays attention to baseball standings until after the all-star break, and things don't really get interesting until September. So, while the Brewers staked their claim at their division lead in a mostly meaningless spring game, a men's national championship basketball program maintained their strangle hold on the NCAA tournament and the final jockeying for playoff position is underway in the National Basketball Association.

Later, Gator

Despite a 25-point effort by future NBA first round draft pick Greg Oden from Ohio State, the Florida Gators remained on top of the college basketball world by becoming the first men's basketball team to win back-to-

back NCAA championships since Duke did it in 1992. They did it with an all-NBA lottery front court for the hottest college coach. Billy Donovan, at the time of this writing, is being wooed by the Kentucky Wildcats to back-fill Tubby Smith, who bolted to Minnesota following several mediocre years at what is supposed to be an elite program.

Donovan, according to published reports, made \$1.7 million while winning his second title with the Gators. Though they are all juniors, no one expects his All-American front court to forego the NBA draft. Whether he stays in Gainesville, or jumps to greener (make that bluer) pastures, Donovan will get paid some serious Dinar next year.

My guess is that the opportunity to revive a legendary basketball program, and the money Kentucky will throw at him, will be too good to pass up. Plus, Donovan got his start under Rick Pitino as a Kentucky assistant. See you later, Gators!

The NBA's Best?

While I was in the U.S., Kobe Bryant scored 50-plus points in four straight games. The sports analysts at ESPN started comparing him to Michael Jordan and Wilt Chamberlain.

Bryant is an offensive marvel, and one of the best shooting guards of his time. Still, he can't win a championship alone. His sup-

porting cast isn't stellar and Kobe's game doesn't help others rise to the occasion.

Scoring 50 points is a big deal, but it's not that great if you put up 40 shots to do it. Bryant, like Denver's Allen Iverson, needs the ball in his hands. Neither one of these guys make their teams championship-caliber, though they both are scoring machines.

The Most Valuable Player award this season is a toss-up in my mind between reigning MVP Steve Nash of the Phoenix Suns and Dallas Maverick power forward Dirk Nowitzki. Nash is still winning big in the desert, while hitting better than 50 percent of his shots and leading the league (again) in assists. He'll get votes, but it's the Dallas big man who deserves top honors this season.

Nowitzki failed to deliver in last year's NBA finals against the Miami Heat, but he's got the Mavericks playing the best basketball in the league this year. He's a scorer, rebounder and clutch performer.

If I had a vote, Dirk gets mine.

Speak your mind

If you've got something you want to get off your chest (about the sporting world), shoot me an e-mail at david.j.larsen@mnd-b.army.mil and we'll include your comments in future columns.

Go, Brewers, go!