

TARMIYAH AWAKENS

4-9 Infantry's Operation Headhunter puts al-Qaida on the run in former terrorist stronghold Page 4



PATROLLING KHAN BANI SA'AD WITH 2-1 CAV PAGE 6

INSIDE

2-1 HELPS THE IRAQI ARMY TAKE THE LEAD PAGE 8

2-23 BEATS THE HEAT PAGE 10

1-38 HAMMERS DOWN INSURGENTS PAGE 12

AT THE TIP OF THE SPEAR WITH RECCE 4-9 PAGE 14

Col. Jon S. Lehr Raider 6

Raiders,

During a recent visit here, Lt. Gen. Odierno spoke to me about an alarming increase in non-battle related injuries and deaths that have occurred throughout Multi-National Corps – Iraq.

Since Aug. 1, MNC-I has lost 45 Soldiers, Marines and Airmen in 27 separate non-battle incidents that include suicide, drug and alcohol use, negligent discharges, vehicle accidents and illnesses. Four of these losses have been in our own brigade.

As I sit in each memorial service, I always wonder if there was some way we could have known how to defeat or mitigate the enemy's actions before it resulted in the death of one of our Soldiers. It is even harder to lose a Soldier when the enemy wasn't involved.

Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem. I can tell you that no problem – relationship, financial, emotional or other – can be solved with suicide. Yes, life can be hard, but it's better to have a hard life than a short one. I challenge every Soldier and junior NCO to have the personal courage to approach someone they suspect is contemplating suicide, confront them and assist them in finding help. There is no "personal business" here. Every Soldier is needed in this fight and if that means we have to get into our fellow Soldiers' business to protect them then that is exactly what we must do.

Illegal drug and alcohol use has also led to deaths of service members here in Iraq. Incidents of Soldiers operating vehicles or weapon systems while under the influence of drugs or alcohol have resulted in serious injuries and death. Every Soldier and leader should make it a personal crusade to squash any such behavior in their units. The use of drugs and alcohol puts us all at risk. When under the influence of these restricted items, a Soldier is incapable of performing his duties whether it's carrying his weapon to and from the dining facility or conducting a ground or air assault against an enemy position. Would any of us want to place our lives in the hands of a fellow Soldier who is using drugs or alcohol?

A death from a negligent discharge is by far the most unforgivable crime a member of the profession of arms could commit. If a Soldier cannot properly load, fire, perform immediate action, unload and clear a weapon system, then he or she should not operate it under ANY circumstances. This includes personal weapons, crew-served weapons, hand grenades, AT-4s, claymores and anything else we employ against the enemy for the purposes of killing him. I expect leaders to train Soldiers and enforce standards. It is unacceptable for a leader to assume a Soldier can safely operate any weapon system unless that leader has personally trained that Soldier to

the Army standard. A leader accepting less than perfect weapons handling procedures is just as unacceptable. Horseplay with a weapon can only end in tragedy. This business is tough enough with the enemy trying to kill us – we don't need our Soldiers or leaders doing the same through irresponsible behavior or complacency.

Vehicle accidents are preventable, period. It's up to the leader in charge of that vehicle to do so. Drivers training can be tedious, but it must be thorough and done to the Army standard. If we do not train a driver properly, how can we not expect an eventual accident? The driver must understand how to operate his or her vehicle in all situations – day, night, restricted terrain, in contact, in a convoy, in dusty conditions, etc. – before they leave the FOB and are placed in a dangerous situation that threatens the entire crew. Speed and the lack of a ground guide are two of the leading causes of tactical vehicle accidents on and off the FOB. Drivers, even the best trained ones, don't dictate speed or when a ground guide is needed; LEADERS DO! A leader provides the same amount of supervision and control for a vehicle that he or she would for any maneuvering force or weapon system under their command.

Illnesses have also claimed the lives of several service members in Iraq. It would be unrealistic to expect every medical condition to be as preventable as the other non-battle causes of deaths I've discussed. However, I will say that no one knows a Soldier better than his buddy or his sergeant. Soldiers become intimately attuned to each other when serving in combat. I guarantee that if you get the feeling a fellow Soldier is "a little off" he or she probably is. It could very well be the initial stages of an illness that if treated early enough will not become more serious. Leaders must also enforce good field sanitation practices in their living areas as well as in their outposts. Entire armies have been defeated by cholera, dysentery and other diseases caused by poor personal hygiene or living and working conditions that attract disease carrying vermin.

There are two themes that run through all of these – leader involvement and discipline. Leaders enforce standards and discipline, leaders provide for the welfare of their Soldiers, and leaders are held accountable when Soldiers die in preventable, non-battle incidents.

I would ask every Soldier and leader to take a hard look at your unit and your areas to identify those life-threatening incidents we can prevent. Continue to stay focused, take care of your buddy, and never miss an opportunity to kill the enemy!

Every one of you remains in my thoughts and prayers. Both Command Sgt. Maj. Troxell and I look forward to seeing you on the battlefield.

To the Objective!
Raider 6



Command Sgt. Maj. John W. Troxell Raider 7

Greetings fellow Dragoon Raiders!

This month I want to discuss something that is by far the most important thing we must pay attention to here in Iraq but is something that nobody wants to hear about and that is safety. In the month of September alone, of the 59 fatalities the coalition has suffered, 26 were from non-combat actions. We were not immune to this in the brigade as we have suffered three non-combat casualties ourselves in September.

One would think that non-combat casualties would occur at the beginning of a unit's deployment because of their organizational combat inexperience and being unfamiliar with the area and terrain they are operating in and the upswing in optempo. Well, we are six months into our deployment and these are the first non-combat casualties we have suffered. In fact all of the units who suffered non-combat casualties in September were from units who had at least 100 days in country already.

What are the reasons for this? Why do experienced units suffer these tragic losses? There are several reasons why, and though some of them may not be the direct reason, they are definitely contributing factors. One reason is that because a unit has been conducting combat operations for several months and Soldiers are more experienced leaders, they tend to let standards and discipline slip. Another reason is that complacency

is allowed to set in and Soldiers are not as alert or safety conscious as when they first arrived. Still another is that when some Soldiers have experienced an IED blast or a direct fire/RPG attack or any other type of attack, they take on the persona of being beyond reproach when it comes to being corrected on something potentially unsafe. And finally, another reason is that some leaders become apathetic and even though they see something that potentially could be unsafe, they choose not to correct it.

So how do we prevent undue injuries or death from occurring? First and foremost we have to look out for each other and ourselves. Leaders have to constantly be looking out for their subordinates. We must practice good risk management and risk mitigation everyday. Our missions have to be centered around good risk assessments. Secondly, leaders must ruthlessly enforce standards and discipline throughout our ranks. We must also make sure our subordinates understand what we expect of them and know that if they aren't doing business the way we expect them to, that we will hold them accountable for their actions or inactions. I will submit to anyone that I can tell how much a leader cares for and loves their Soldiers by the way their Soldiers look, act and perform to a disciplined standard.

The last thought I will add to preventing accidents is for us to slow down, not only when operating vehi-

cles but in everything we do. Combat makes a lot of us confident. Unchecked confidence can lead to overconfidence and aggression. Unchecked aggression can lead to recklessness and unchecked recklessness leads to dangerous stuff happening that can get people hurt or killed. We don't need that. The enemy is dangerous enough as it is, we don't need to add to that by doing things in an unsafe manner!

I have a saying that I have used every time I have deployed. It is that we must "save ourselves from ourselves long before we face the enemy." This means practicing good risk management and doing things safely each and every day.

I thank each and every one of you for your commitment and sacrifice. The most precious resource we have in our Army is the people. We have to safeguard that precious resource at all times. God bless you all and the brigade commander, and I will see you out on the battlefield!

To the Objective! Raider 7



4-2 SBCT Commander

Col. Jon S. Lehr

4-2 SBCT Command Sgt. Maj.
Command Sgt. Maj. John W. Troxell

4-2 SBCT Public Affairs Office

Maj. Mike Garcia.....Public Affairs Officer
Staff Sgt. Russell Bassett.....Public Affairs NCOIC/Editor
Spc. John Crosby.....Print Journalist
Pfc. Matthew Mikolas.....Broadcast Journalist

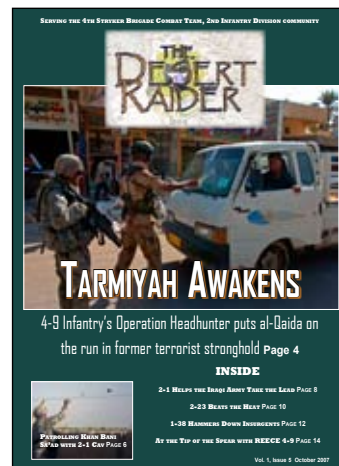
THE DESERT RAIDER, a command information magazine, is authorized for members of the U.S. Army and the 4-2 SBCT community. Contents of THE DESERT RAIDER are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense or Department of the Army. The editorial content of THE DESERT RAIDER is the responsibility of the 4-2 SBCT Public Affairs Office.

THE DESERT RAIDER is prepared monthly by the 4-2 SBCT Public Affairs Office, which includes Soldiers of the 115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment. Any story or photo submissions should be forwarded to the editor at russell.bassett@iraq.centcom.mil.



On the Cover: A Soldier from Troop A, 2-1 Cav., throws a fragmentation grenade over a wall to destroy a hidden hole that was possibly used to hide materials to make roadside bombs in Kahn Bani Sa'ad, Iraq, Aug. 29.

Photo by Spc. John Crosby



Tarmiyah opens its eyes to a new awakening

Joint Operation Headhunter puts al-Qaida on the run in former terrorist stronghold

By Spc. John Crosby
115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

The Iraqi word *sahwah* means to wake up from sleep or to have a psychological awakening, and a *sahwah* or awakening of minds is currently taking place in Tarmiyah, Iraq, where tribal leaders and local residents have made the decision to stand up and fight terrorism.

Earlier this month, Iraqi Army soldiers and Soldiers from 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division from Fort Lewis, Wash., began a joint effort to clear the city of al-Qaida.

Formerly a violent city and terrorist haven, Tarmiyah is now quickly becoming a place of peace and prosperity.

Tarmiyah was a stronghold for financing, planning, preparation and communications in support of al-Qaida.

Kidnapping, ransom, extortion and murder against Tarmiyah residents funded the insurgent operations, said Lt. Col. William Prior, 4-



Photo by Capt. Patrick Roddy

More than 500 citizens of Tarmiyah, Iraq, which is located approximately 25 miles north of Baghdad, stand in line for more than five hours Sept. 12 to volunteer for security forces in an effort to drive al-Qaida from the city. The effort has been dubbed an awakening. Iraqi Army soldiers and Soldiers from 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division cleared the city of al-Qaida days prior, allowing the citizens to safely volunteer to stand up for their city.

9 Infantry commander.

The local Iraqi Police force was disbanded after the insurgents threatened to kill policemen and their families.

“Al-Qaida was the strongest dominating authority in Tarmiyah for a long time,” said Iamad Said Jasim, head of the Tarmiyah tribal council, through an interpreter. “Even though they aren’t an authority, members of rival groups and organizations were executed. They killed indiscriminately with no real consideration or mercy for the elderly, women or children.”

Jasim said al-Qaida executed Iraqi citizens accused of spying for coalition forces and also those accused of apostasy, or turning away from their extremist religious beliefs. There are very few Shiites in Tarmiyah, still Al-Qaida – which is a Sunni organization – would pull men out of their cars, accuse them of being Shiite and execute them in the street.



Photo by Spc. John Crosby

Sgt. Kevin Navarrete, a team leader in 3rd Platoon, Company C, 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment entertains the neighborhood children with a chem light in the market of Tarmiyah, Iraq, Sept. 19. Just two weeks prior, the people of Tarmiyah would not talk to coalition forces for fear that al-Qaida would punish them for it.



Photo by Spc. John Crosby

Iraqi Army soldiers Abbas Mut'ab and Saddam Abd-Al-Rida Sultan of 4th Brigade, 2nd Iraqi Army Division, along with a Critical Infrastructure Security Contract Force volunteer, stand guard at a checkpoint in Tarmiyah, Iraq, Sept. 19. This location was previously used by al-Qaida just weeks prior as an execution point to kill men, women and children who did not adhere to their strict extremist rules.

Jasim himself lost two brothers to the insurgents and his home was twice hit by mortar rounds. Still he stands up proudly against the terrorist threat and has asked that his fellow Tarmiyah residents do the same.

The coalition forces' strategy to reclaim the city included the initial use of overwhelming combat power to kill or capture all ranks of terrorists who operated in and around the city, and to encourage Iraqi people to stand up and provide their own security.

This effort, dubbed Operation Headhunter, began Sept. 7. 4-9 Infantry along with the 4th Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division searched and cleared over 20 tactical objectives around the city within the first two days of the operation. The successful operation set the stage for the awakening to occur.

"4-9's entrance into Tarmiyah has gladdened the peoples' hearts," Jasim said. "We feel safer now that they are here."

Jasim and other tribal leaders of Tarmiyah held a *sahwah* awakening ceremony Sept. 12. They publicly recognized and denounced terrorist activity and called for volunteers to step forward to protect their families and homes. This vol-

unteer force, known as the Critical Infrastructure Security Contract Force, is now providing jobs, security and a sense of accomplishment to the people of Tarmiyah.

Volunteers are processed by coalition and Iraqi forces at a joint checkpoint on the east side of the city, an area used just weeks prior as an execution point by al-Qaida.

"We are not a people of terrorism, violence or hate," Jasim said. "The original families of Tarmiyah have always been against these horrible activities. We needed a security apparatus badly. The streets were very dangerous. We also needed jobs. Men couldn't even make enough money to buy bread to feed their families."

Prior said they expected maybe 50 volunteers, but the volunteer lines ran out the door and around the corner. Hundreds of men answered the awakening call. Many Tarmiyah residents stood in line for more than five hours, not leaving to eat, drink or relieve themselves for fear of losing their place in line. The doors were closed after 500 men were processed.

See **AWAKENING**, Page 18



From Laughter to Intensity

2-1 CAV adapts to an ever-changing battlefield in Khan Bani Sa'ad

Story and Photos by Spc. John Crosby
115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

The Iraqi children were full of smiles as they competed for the attention of the cavalry scout Soldiers of 1st Platoon, Troop A, 2nd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, Aug. 29 in Khan Bani Sa'ad, Iraq. Their laughter rang clear as they traded, passed and inspected the toys the Soldiers handed out to them during a patrol of the village.

The smiles and laughter would be

short lived, however, as the mission quickly intensified.

Arrow Troop, 2-1 Cav., of the 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division from Fort Lewis, Wash., has patrolled the streets of this city for more than a month now, living at Joint Combat Outpost Key West.

Key West was an old, abandoned Iraqi high school years ago, and turned into an outpost by the Iraqi Army. Recently Coalition forces moved in, and Arrow Troop has called it home for the last five weeks.

On this particular day, the mission of 1st Platoon was to walk house-to-house, passing out toys to the local children, building trust with the local populace, and trying to gain information on suspicious behavior in the area.

"We've had several problems in the past with enemy activity in this area," Sgt. 1st Class Leonardo Alaniz, 1st platoon sergeant, Arrow Troop. 2-1 Cav., said. "We got some intelligence from a woman who said she saw men walking in and out of an abandoned



A large blast rains down rock, dust and dirt during the controlled detonation of an improvised explosive device on a dirt road in Kahn Bani Sa'ad, Iraq, Aug. 29.

Insert: A Soldier from Troop A, 2nd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division from Fort Lewis, Wash., moves tactically up the stairwell of a house, searching for materials and personnel responsible for making roadside bombs in Kahn Bani Sa'ad, Iraq, Aug. 29.

factory, carrying burlap sacks near her home.”

Based on that information, the unit changed strategies. Ready for action, they moved tactically to the factory.

“We split into two teams to search the warehouse,” said Staff Sgt. Aaron Chipix, Bravo Team leader.

Some members of the two teams provided cover while other members of the teams moved swiftly in and out of the factory’s doors.

Two Stryker vehicles shadow the patrol, screening for the dismounted Soldiers as they moved tactically through old shacks, sheds and courtyards to the main complexes of the factory itself.

Everyone remained vigilant and ready to react to snipers, mortar attacks, improvised explosive devices, or anything else the enemy might throw at them. This is what these men trained for.

The teams found a sack full of a white clumpy powder inside the warehouse, believed to be homemade explosives. The bag was brought back to the JCOP for further analysis.

The teams completed their sweeps of the complex and set up defensive security positions.

Suddenly a loud explosion rattled the factory, raining rock, dust and dirt on everyone around.

The Soldiers sprang into action.

“Everybody head to the vehicles and spread out!” Alaniz yelled, not knowing whether the explosion was a mortar attack or a roadside bomb.

A 60-meter-tall plume of dust and smoke rose up from the ground.

The quick, deliberate violence of the explosion disappeared as quickly as it came, and the Soldiers on the ground wondered if, when and where the next explosion would come.

“We heard the explosions from the warehouse,” said Cpl. Kevin



Spc. Joseph Cruz of 1st Platoon, Troop A, 2nd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment opens the door for his team to raid a factory in Kahn Bani Sa’ad, Iraq, after learning of suspicious activity in the area Aug. 29.

Summerbell, Alpha team leader. “The building was shaking and dust fell from the ceiling. We gathered our squad up to leave and noticed that one of the Strykers was hit and that there was wounded. We immediately set up security positions.”

Gunners Spc. Michael Sparks and

about 10 minutes to get them out of the vehicle, treated and brought back to the aid station for them to get assessed further.”

Armstrong, Sparks and Tajiddin were evacuated by Stryker back to the JCOP’s aid station where they were assessed by Sgt. Santiago Gonzalez, Arrow Troop’s senior medic.

After giving them a neurological examination, Gonzalez concluded that all three were negative for concussions or brain trauma.

“Just some ringing in their ears was

all they complained of,” Gonzalez said. “The Stryker did its job and absorbed most of the blast.”

The three Soldiers were evacuated to Forward Operating Base Warhorse later that night.

Pressure wires — two wires that conduct a charge when crossed — were found under the vehicle, indicating a roadside bomb.

The quick, deliberate violence of the explosion disappeared as quickly as it came, and the Soldiers on the ground wondered if, when and where the next explosion would come.

Spc. Zayd Tajiddin, along with driver Spc. Curtis Armstrong were inside the Stryker at the time of the blast. Alaniz and Chipix assisted the injured Soldiers out of the disabled vehicle.

1st Platoon Medic Thor Romero assessed the injured, checking their eyes and ears and monitoring their breathing.

“We had to wait for another security element to arrive before we could evac them,” Romero said. “It only took

See KHAN BANI SA’AD, Page 19



Iraqi Army, Police take lead in village clearing operation

*Story and photos by Sgt. Patrick Lair
115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment*

A year since insurgents evicted them from their homes, more than 100 families are set to return to the neighborhood of Al-Askari, with funds supplied by the Iraqi federal government.

Thanks to a recent clearing operation in the embattled suburb of Khan Bani Sa'ad, about 10 miles north of Baghdad, insurgents and buried explosives have been removed from the streets, Iraqi security checkpoints established along the main roads and several thousand pounds of humanitarian aid have been delivered to local residents.

It was the first time Iraqi security forces planned, lead and executed their own mission in the area, with only logistical and secondary support from the U.S. Army's 2nd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division.

"The mission was a huge success," said Col. Karim Wahid Salman Al Ubaidi, Iraqi Army commander in Khan Bani Sa'ad. "Everything went according to plan, and we did not have any shortages of supplies."

The mission kicked off Sept. 6 as U.S. Army Soldiers laid down suppressive fire in the neighborhood, strafing the roads with Mark 19 automatic grenade launchers and M240B machine gun fire to detonate any unseen buried explosives. The Americans then positioned their Stryker vehicles around the neighborhood to provide blocking positions as Iraqi security forces entered the area on foot.

"The goal was to clear the entire area without one American setting foot inside," said Capt. Jason Rostenstrauch of 2nd Squadron. "We were helping Iraqi security forces clear a very bad part of town and return it to the people."

Around 150 Iraqi soldiers and 200 Iraqi policemen combed the village, searching for insurgents and weapons caches. While no insurgents were found, more than 50 buried IEDs were detonated by Iraqi explosive ordinance disposal teams and a cache of 37 mortars was found and destroyed.

After the neighborhood was deemed safe, Iraqi soldiers and policemen fenced off areas of the main roads, which will become security checkpoints.

"This is the first time in probably six months that anybody's been able to drive through here because of IEDs and sniper threats," said Sgt. 1st Class Jonathan Karns.



Iraqi Army soldiers hand out several thousand pounds of humanitarian aid to families living near the Al-Askari neighborhood of Khan Bani Sa'ad. During a recent operation, Iraqi army and police cleared the neighborhood of al-Qaida in Iraq, removed more than 37 buried IEDs and established security checkpoints, while U.S. Army Soldiers from 2nd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division provided blocking positions and logistical support.



Iraqi Army soldiers march down a main route to Al-Askari, a neighborhood of Khan Bani Sa'ad. Over the course of several days, Iraqi security forces with the help of U.S. Army Soldiers from 2nd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment reclaimed Al-Askari from al-Qaida in Iraq.





Iraqi soldiers place concertina wire in front of one of many checkpoints established along Route Vanessa in Al-Askari, a neighborhood of Khan Bani Sa'ad. Iraqi security forces recently took the lead in clearing insurgents from the neighborhood which was used by terrorists over the last year to stage attacks on Khan Bani Sa'ad. The new checkpoints are meant to prevent insurgents from returning to scatter buried IEDs throughout the neighborhood and roads.

Since insurgents took over the neighborhood around one year ago, they used it to launch attacks on the marketplace and surrounding neighborhoods of Khan Bani Sa'ad.

According to Al Ubaidi, insurgents cut holes in the walls between homes so they could move quickly between houses without being seen, taking sniper shots into a nearby marketplace and traffic circle.

They attacked the 1st Battalion army station, located on the edge of Al-Askari, more than 20 times in attempts to drive security forces away from their stronghold, he said.

During one instance, the insurgents had Iraqi soldiers trapped on the second floor of the station and were attempting to wire the ground floor with explosives. Two soldiers scaled a drainage pipe down to the ground, he said, reentering the premises and thwarting the attack.

During another attack, insurgents blew one wall off the station with rocket fire. The wall was rebuilt by Iraqi soldiers, who refused to abandon their post.

"The courage of these soldiers was a great factor in protecting this site," Al Ubaidi said.

The neighborhood is important to the terrorists because it acts as a crossroads between Sunni populations to the north and Shia populations to the south, said a U.S. Army military

intelligence analyst, who cannot make public his name.

The Sunni neighborhood to the north, Al-Rasool, had long been a stronghold of the terrorists, he said, and they wanted to control Al-Askari to create a buffer between themselves and security forces.

After the neighborhood was cleared, Iraqi soldiers handed out cases of bottled water, sacks of flour, children's backpacks, cooking oil and other items to hundreds of local residents.

The day after the food drop, American Soldiers were shocked to see children running the streets of Al-Askari, playing soccer.

"That really threw me for a loop," Karns said. "For the longest time, that area was a no man's land. You didn't see a soul down there."

The Iraqi federal government is now paying families anywhere from 4 million to 10 million Dinars, or \$4,000 to \$10,000, to assist them with resettling the area.

"Our plan is to bring back the families of Al-Askari, both Sunni and Shia, to live in harmony and peace," Al-Ubaidi said. "Our short-term goal is to assist the families with food rations and assist the municipal government in cleaning the streets and reinstating water and electrical services."

Saber Hammer II starts with a bang

Heat, firefights don't stop 2-23 Infantry Regt.

Story and photo by Pfc. Kirby Rider
115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Grueling heat and heavy loads haven't stopped Soldiers of 2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, while battling al-Qaida in Iraq operatives in the town of Muqdadiya, Iraq, during Operation Saber Hammer II.

Operation Saber Hammer II, part of Operation Lightning Hammer II, is intended to defeat AQI in Muqdadiya and destroy weapon and improvised explosive device caches. Operation Lightning Hammer II is focused on defeating AQI across the northern part of Iraq.

Operation Saber Hammer II kicked off on Sept. 15 and is expected to continue until later in the month. Saber Hammer II consists of multiple phases, where different parts of the region will be cleared by coalition forces. The first phase consisted of air and ground assaults into various parts of Muqdadiya with the intent of blocking AQI in the city.

During the first phase of Saber Hammer II, many IEDs and weapon caches were found and 16 IEDs were detonated by explosive ordnance disposal technicians prior to convoys traveling down the roads.

"Before the operation kicked off, we would find four or five IEDs along a route. Now that the operation is in effect we rarely even see one IED," said Sgt. Maximilan Spechtold, EOD technician for 725th Explosive Ordnance Disposal

Company from Fort Drum, N.Y.

The high temperatures have not been helping troops clearing houses. Daytime temperatures reach well into the 100s and the nights offer little relief from the extreme heat. The body armor Soldiers wear, weighing more than 60 pounds, blocks body heat from escaping and makes the threat of dehydration higher.

"The number of heat casualties greatly increases while out on multiple day missions. Carrying around all of the gear and very little down time makes it a must that Soldiers hydrate," said Spc. Greg McDonnell, a medic with Company A, 2-23 Infantry.

During the first days of the operation, numerous units were engaged by snipers and direct fire while clearing houses.

Snipers are very common in the region and are a consistent threat.

Situational awareness is critical when clearing houses, the probability of snipers waiting for troops to make a mistake is high, said 1st Sgt. Ciaran Allison of Company A, 2-23 Infantry.

The Iraqi army has been working with coalition forces to help clear and provide humanitarian assistance after the mission is over.

Iraqi army soldiers have been out on most operations to get first hand experience on what coalition forces have taught them.

Phases two and three cleared out the remaining parts of the northern river valley, including the "Bread Basket" and "Sherwood Forest" on the outskirts of Muqdadiya. Both were known locations of AQI camps.

After the operation was finished, humanitarian assistance missions began and ranged from food and water drops to medical and dental work.



Spc. Greg McDonnell and Spc. Ronald Sanders of 2nd Battalion, 23 Infantry Regiment, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division set up a 60mm mortar tube during clearing operations in Muqdadiya, Iraq, Sept. 18. The operation is part of an ongoing effort to remove al-Qaida from the province.

Viking Smack Down

From left: Sgt. Joseph Bautista, team leader with 2nd Platoon, Battery B, 2nd Battalion, 12th Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division from Fort Lewis, Wash.; Iraqi Army Staff Sgt. Walead Waheid Hassan and another soldier from the Iraqi 5th Special Troops Company prepare to raid the home of an anti-coalition Shiite militia death squad member Sept. 25 in Tha'Alba, Iraq.



Sgt. Kims Chon (right), 2-12 FA team leader, and another 2-12 Soldier guard the entrance to a farm building during Operation Viking Clampdown III Sept. 15 in Qudas, Iraq.

Photos by Staff Sgt. Russell Bassett

THE GRIPE

Winning the war against the insurgents but losing the war against the ants

By Staff Sgt. Russell Bassett
115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

By all accounts, we are winning the war in our area of operations. Each day more bad guys are captured or killed, and each day more and more Iraqis provide for their own security. Attacks against coalition forces have also dramatically decreased in the time since 4-2 SBCT took over.

I can't say for certain what's happening outside the Raider AO, but here we appear to have al-Qaida in Iraq and the anti-coalition Shiite militias on the run.

If only I was as successfully at winning the war that currently rages in the office – the war against the ants.

The little insurgents march freely around the room, disrupting supply routes (eating my food), terrorizing the locals (the geckos), and destabilizing the infrastructure (my sanity).

I've tried several different counter insurgency tactics to stop the tiny terrorists. I've tried deliberate attacks (stomp-

ing on them when they walk across the floor), cutting them off from their resupply (sealing away my food), and I've even emplaced SKTs to kill or capture them (ant traps).

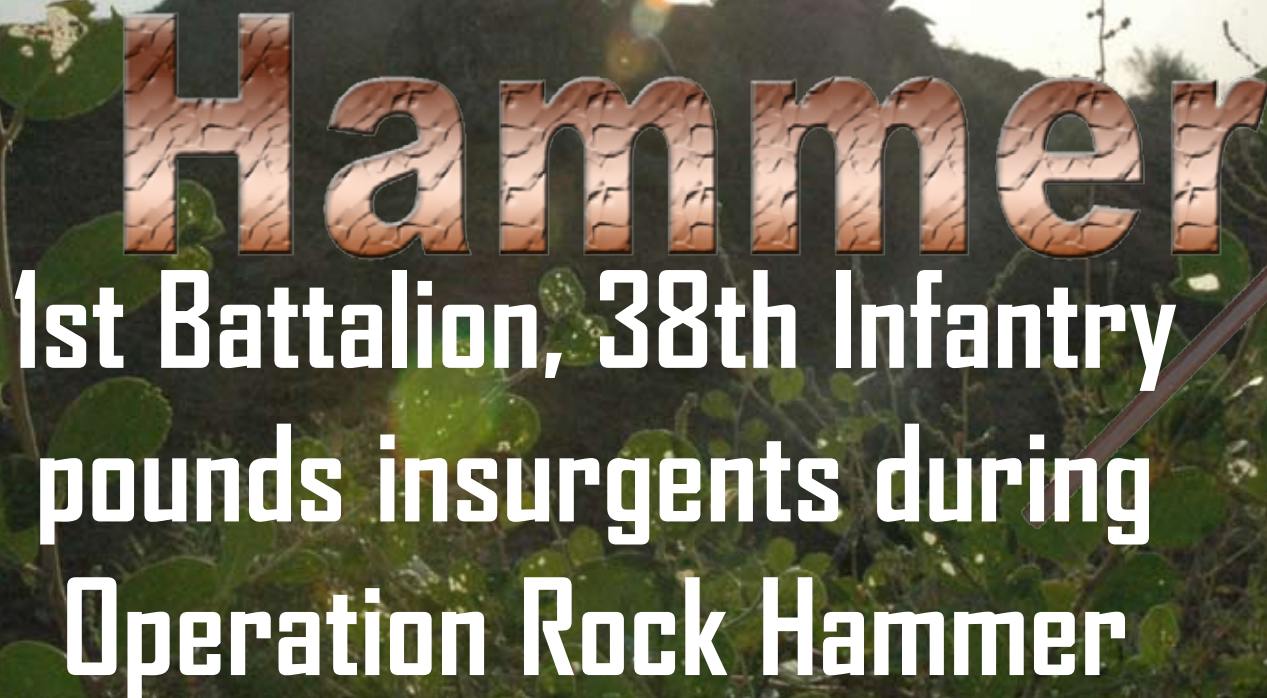
But nothing seems to work. The other day I opened up a filing cabinet drawer only to have dozens of large ants come marching out as if they owned the place, and twice I've gotten mail packages that contained hundreds of tiny little ants.

Even as I write this, a little insurgent marches across the office floor. I swear it looked up at me as if to say, "You ain't got what it takes. Better surrender now, because we can't be stopped."

To which I replied, "Surrender? Do I look French? How do you like the heel of my boot, b---ch."

The ants may have won the early battles, but just like the perseverance of my fellow Raiders has paid off in the war against Iraqi insurgents, so to will I persevere in the war against the ants.



A photograph showing the silhouettes of several soldiers in a field of viewfinder, holding rifles and aiming. The scene is backlit by a bright light, possibly the sun, creating a lens flare effect. The soldiers are positioned on a ridge or elevated position, looking towards the viewer.

Hammer

1st Battalion, 38th Infantry pounds insurgents during Operation Rock Hammer

A U.S. Army fire team from 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division provides security for coalition forces during Operation Rock Hammer Sept. 8, south of Baqubah, Iraq.

Spc. Mark Pascual launches a 60 mm mortar under the supervision of Sgt. Matthew Gosselin during Operation Rock Hammer Sept. 8, south of Baqubah, Iraq. Both Soldiers are assigned to the 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, from Fort Lewis, Wash. Rock Hammer, conducted in farmland and palm groves on the Diyala River, resulted in the discovery of 11 al-Qaida in Iraq weapons caches.





DOWN

*Photos by 1st Lt. Richard Ybarra
115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment*

Top: A Soldier assigned to 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment, fires an AT-4 at a structure containing bomb-making materials Sept. 8, south of Baqubah, Iraq, during Operation Rock Hammer.

Right: U.S. and Iraqi Soldiers work together through the heat and humidity of the palm groves to accomplish their objectives during Operation Rock Hammer, Sept. 8, south of Baqubah, Iraq.

Below: A Stryker Mobile Gun System, designated "Smash" by the Soldiers of 1-38 Inf., pounds insurgent positions with its 105mm main gun during Operation Rock Hammer Sept. 8 south of Baqubah, Iraq.



Tip of the Spear

RECCE 4-9 rolls up the bad guys on a daily basis

*Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Russell Bassett
115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment*

Many U.S. Soldiers serving in Iraq never get the opportunity to kill or capture the enemy, but getting bad guys off the streets of Iraq is an almost daily affair for the Soldiers of RECCE 4-9.

If the war in Iraq was a team sport, then the Soldiers of Recon Platoon, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment – or RECCE 4-9 for short – would be the varsity squad. 4-9 Inf. is a battalion of the 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division from Fort Lewis, Wash, which was sent to Iraq as part of the troop surge in April. If the surge is the spear, then RECCE 4-9 is its tip.

On Sept. 19, just like they do every night of the week, RECCE 4-9 began getting ready for their mission around 8:30 p.m.

The RECCE 4-9 troops, who are a combination of scout and mortar Soldiers, make final checks of their equipment, ensuring night vision goggles and weapons are in fine working order.

The platoon sergeant, Sgt. 1st Class Winfree Steele, and squad leaders, Staff Sgt. Eric Cotton and Sgt. Justin Jordan, walk to the battalion tactical operation center where they pour over intelligence information on that night's objectives.

They have two targets. One is a Sunni insurgency facilitator based out of the Abayachi area. According to the intelligence report, the suspect is responsible for acquiring, storing and distributing mortars, rockets and improvised explosive devices to anti-coalition forces. The other is suspected to be the second-in-command of an al-Qaida cell operating in Abayachi and Shayikh Jamil village.

Their targets are the real bad guys. The worst of the worst. The people RECCE 4-9 capture are the ones striving to stop Iraq's fledgling democracy through attacks on coalition forces and Iraqi citizens.

After confirming the whereabouts of the targets, the sergeants return to the rest of the platoon and brief them on how they will assault the enemy. The platoon then climbs aboard awaiting helicopters. They raid the first position and detain three men, one of which was later confirmed to be the target.

They bring the detainees back to base and then go after



A Soldier of Recon Platoon, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment walks a suspected al-Qaida member to an awaiting helicopter to be brought back for questioning Sept. 20 in Iraq. Every night of the week, RECCE 4-9 conducts missions to capture insurgents in Iraq, and they have gotten very good at it. Since Sept. 1, RECCE 4-9 has captured three of the top four high value targets in the area of operations of the 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division.

the next target, detaining one individual in that raid.

More bad guys off the streets. Another day's work for RECCE 4-9.

"Our recon platoon is a specially trained and organized group of Soldiers that helps us to always be able to remain on the offensive in our area; to always have an offensive option on short notice so that we can take the fight to enemy at any time," explained Lt. Col. William Prior, 4-9 commander. "We have carved out a niche for the recon platoon. They are a time-sensitive-target platoon that focuses on going after high value targets that we determine."

RECCE 4-9 uses the Lighting Strike package, air assets provided by 25th Infantry Division's Lift Aviation Battalion, otherwise known as Taskforce Diamond. When they go after a target, Taskforce Diamond typically gets them to the objective via Blackhawk helicopter along with an air weapons team escort of Apaches or Kiowa gunships.

"Partnering with the Lift Aviation Battalion has given us the opportunity to put lethal combat power on top of targets very rapidly without (the insurgents) knowing we

are coming,” said Prior, of Carroll, Iowa. “We can grab high value targets with usually very little resistance and bring them back to exploit them for information.”

“We still do it the old fashion way, too,” Prior continued. “The Recon Platoon will roll out in the Strykers to do the same kind of mission. We also do a fair amount of dismount stuff – especially where there is restricted terrain or where it is difficult to get in – we will drive to a dismount point, marshal there, and then walk in a few kilometers.”

Even though the time-sensitive nature of their work often gives RECCE 4-9 the element of surprise, their work is still very dangerous.

“Almost every situation we go into is hairy,” said Steele, who is from Gastonia, N.C. “You don’t know if you are going to die today or not.”

“Since a lot of (the suspects) are high value targets, they will fight it out,” Cotton added. “They are willing to die rather than be captured. They’ll hear you coming into their house, and they will try to get to the room that has their weapons.”

Three RECCE 4-9 Soldiers have been wounded in action severely enough to not return to duty.

“It’s not that I’m not scared,” Cotton said. “We get sent down roads no one else goes down. You’re always worried, but it’s how you deal with it.



Soldiers from Recon Platoon, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment bring a suspected al-Qaida member back for questioning during a successful raid Sept. 20 in Iraq.

You just deal with it.”

Despite the constant threat, RECCE 4-9 Soldiers say they enjoy their work.

“I’m pretty happy to get to do what I do here,” Edmond, Ok., resident Cotton said. “It’s dangerous, but you honestly get to see it make a difference. Morale is good. These guys know what they are doing does make a difference.”

Since the beginning of September, RECCE 4-9 has captured three of the top four high value targets in their brigade’s area of operations.

“They have had many, many successes, and they have been very, very effective for us,” Prior said. “These are COIN (counter insurgency) operations so we are working hard to separate the population from the insurgents – to get the people to stand up to protect their area, but there will always be a big component of going out and getting the bad guys.

“We are involved in lethal contact quite frequently, although frankly it has been a lot less lately, and that is the definition of success in many ways,” the commander continued. “My recon platoon has stood out, because we focus on them and they have been very, very effective at rolling up bad guys, high level bad guys. We have gone through a lot of number one (high value targets) with the recon platoon. They have contributed a huge amount to our main mission, which is to secure the people of Iraq, making it a less violent place so the people of Iraq can have a chance for a democracy in a peaceful environment.”

Tomorrow night, the Soldiers of RECCE 4-9 will do it all again. Another bad guy to get off the streets. Another night’s work making Iraq a safer place.



Soldiers of Recon Platoon, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment pose for a photograph in front of a Blackhawk helicopter Sept. 19 in Taji, Iraq.

5th CRT gets IA maintenance up to speed

*Chief Warrant Officer Victory Mooney
Co B, 202nd BSB*

The 5th Combat Repair Team of the 202nd Brigade Support Battalion in support of the 2nd Battalion, 12th Field Artillery Regiment is diligently working to build strong relationships with the Iraqi army.

Over the past few months, mechanics of the 5th CRT have been working hand-in-hand with IA soldiers from the 5th Special Troops Company training them in motor pool operations and maintenance procedures while simultaneously repairing their small but poorly maintained fleet of vehicles.

Before the 5th CRT took over training and maintaining the IA vehicles, the IA soldiers had failed numerous times to support joint coalition force and IA missions because of the poor condition of their vehicles. Once the decision was made to bring out mechanics from the 5th CRT to provide maintenance and logistical support, Sgt. 1st Class Eric Winters, the 5th CRT maintenance NCOIC, knew this would be an uphill struggle to maintain both the large number of vehicles from the 2-12 FA battalion and the IA's equipment, totaling more than 300 pieces of equipment simultaneously.

The 5th CRT faced many challenges working with the IA forces. These challenges included a language barrier, poor training of IA in the realm of proper maintenance and care of their equipment, lack of technical manuals to give guidance and instruction in Arabic, and little to no established logistical support structure. The IA soldiers owned five vehicles which were in such terrible shape they were considered non-mission capable. In layman's terms, these vehicles were bro-

ken beyond repair. This posed serious challenges for the 2-12's mission to train and conduct joint operations with the IA forces as this would require the use of their vehicles, which seemed to always be unserviceable.

To solve these problems, the 5th CRT needed to get the IA soldiers to understand the reason why they should stop removing parts from one vehicle and moving those parts to another vehicle, teach them how to conduct Preventive Maintenance Checks and Services on their vehicles, teach them how to troubleshoot and properly diagnose mechanical faults and perform services on their vehicles. These were only a few of the challenges, but Winters felt that if the IA soldiers were capable of learning how to conduct good PMCS, then most of their maintenance issues would disappear.

These were not the only challenges the 5th CRT faced. In addition to the aforementioned challenges, all maintenance conducted at the IA compound occurs in a dilapidated building with no running water nor air conditioning, a floor made of sand and dirt, and limited tools.

One training task Winters took on personally was training the IA on PMCS. He felt that if the IA soldiers could master this task, many of their maintenance related issues could be solved.

"When the IA soldiers fully understand how to maintain their vehicles by the technical manual, then their training capabilities will increase," he said.

Some other procedures Winters set in place were tracking non-mission capable parts ordered for the IA vehi-



Courtesy photo

Spc. Jared Kent of the 202nd Brigade Support Battalion's 5th Combat Repair Team and an Iraqi mechanic inspect the undercarriage of a HMMWV Sept. 18.

cles, a deadline report tracking system, establishing a service schedule for each vehicle, and quality control procedures that occur weekly. The quality control procedures are an additional set of checks conducted by the IA mechanics to ensure their vehicles are mission capable prior to moving out.

A few of the 5th CRT's mechanics who assist Winters in getting this monumental maintenance operation working are Staff Sgt. James Smith, Sgt. Eric Boyer, Spc. Benjamin Latham, Spc. Brian Daniels, Spc. Jared Kent, and Pfc. Christopher Logan.

5th CRT established maintenance procedures for IA soldiers that have created an optimistic future for the IA maintenance program. Although, there are many obstacles and hurdles to overcome, the 5th CRT continues to forge through, making a strong statement that maintenance is critical before, during and after all operations.

IA forces have come a long way since the 5th CRT arrived. There is still much to accomplish, but progress has been made. IA forces have improved in their abilities to fix and maintain their vehicles and equipment, evident by the numerous missions they now conduct with coalition forces. They are well on the way to self sufficiency, thanks in part to the hard work of the 5th CRT.





Courtesy Photo

Spc. Aquime Dulairjeune poses with his new Iraqi friends.

A New Attitude

By Spc. Aquime Duclairjeune
202nd BSB

Can a single day change the way one thinks about a certain culture or way of life? My answer is yes!

I was frustrated and emotionally tormented when the Twin Towers went down. I was there. I watched as people began to jump out of windows and burn up in flames. I watched as the towers fell down and immediately hate grew in my heart.

After 9-11, I thought all Iraqis or “those people” were evil and demonically driven. I didn’t think they value life because of all the people that were taken away that day. My prejudices began to grow more and more when I heard or read about something that happened in Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom. The death toll for American Soldiers and coalition forces were increasing day by day. Likewise, my hatred was increasing.

Six years later, I can’t believe it. I am here witnessing it for myself. I have been in the U.S. Army for two and half years. I am part of a 15 month tour in restoring Iraqi freedom. I feed about 100 Soldiers and other personnel including locals and Iraqi army. My experience over here has changed my whole attitude completely. The locals and Iraqi army are so humble, friendly and polite. I came to realize that we are both fighting the same war. Little by little my prejudices, animosity and attitude toward Iraqis began to fade away. I realized they want freedom just as bad as I do. They want to have a normal life and not have to worry about that threat we call terrorists.

I wanted desperately to write this story because I know there might be someone out there that felt the same way I did. I would like that individual to reconsider and examine themselves first before prejudging someone else or someone’s culture. Who are we to judge?

Hey Mr. Postman, bring me a dream

By Staff Sgt. Geoffrey Burleson
45th MI Co.

One of the most appreciated positions during deployment is the mail handler.

This position is usually tacked on as an extra responsibility on top of a Soldier’s day-to-day job.

Mail handlers are the Soldiers at the company level who receive and distribute mail to Soldiers in the company. We tend to get mail about three times a week. This means when we get it there is usually a lot of mail. The mail handlers take time out of their missions to sort and distribute the mail.

The mail handlers have never complained about the time it takes to do the job or the many times that they stop to give another person their mail. Most often when you talk to the mail handlers they enjoy the job because of the satisfaction they get making Soldiers happy.

The best part of this is that everyone loves to receive mail and is very excited when they get it. As we watch the mail handlers bring in the mail and begin sorting, everyone excitedly anticipates getting mail.

As you watch the mail handlers pass out the mail you watch Soldier’s attitudes and expressions change with the excitement of receiving a letter from home, packages of things that make life a little more comfortable, and pictures of loved ones.

Soldiers can go from having a bad day or being upset about something to happy and content again. You also have the Soldiers who have spent a long hard day on the hot battlefield who return to mail waiting on them, which makes life more bearable.

The mail handlers do not often receive a lot of thanks for their work but they are always appreciated.

We typically have a mail handler on hand throughout the day so that when Soldiers have time they can pick up their mail. Mail is one the key things that keep Soldier’s morale high, while it is an extra responsibility for someone, it is something that is vital to our day-to-day operations.



Courtesy photo

Spc. William Lantzy and Pfc. Amanda Albrecht, intelligence analysts with the 45th MI Company, eye their mail.

AWAKENING, From Page 5

On the second day, the turn out was similar. Men lined up around the corner, all wanting to do their part. The doors were closed after 700 men were processed, putting the total number of volunteers at 1,200.

Five days after Operation Headhunter began clearing the city of al-Qaida, the Iraqi people saw the changes and were eager to join the effort.

“We are very happy and very proud about the turn out,” Jasim said. “This proves the people are supporting their tribes and their leaders. It proves we are against the terrorists because we volunteer despite their previous threats against this kind of thing.”

The message to al-Qaida operating in the area is that they should not only fear U.S. and Iraqi soldiers, but they should also be fearful of the Iraqi people themselves.

“We will take the fight to them,” Prior said, “but they should be more afraid of the people because when the people decide to step up, (the insurgents) will have no where to run or hide. Terrorists fear a people who will not cower to them.”

The Iraqi volunteers were given blue or yellow reflective belts to distinguish them as the newly appointed security force. The Iraqi Army armed the volunteers with AK-47s, and they were immediately put to work. The volunteer security force now mans checkpoints along with U.S. and Iraqi Army soldiers. They also provide security for local leaders and stand guard at the Tarmiyah market.

Prior said volunteers continue to be processed, putting more Security Contract Force personnel to work where they are needed. Many of the volunteers are already trained Iraqi police that were forced into hiding by al-Qaida. The goal is to integrate them back into a fully-accepted police force recognized by the people and government of Iraq.

“The change in the last two weeks is remarkable,” said 1st Lt. Michael Bennett, third platoon leader of Company C, 4-9 Inf. “The people wave and talk to us now. It used to be that when we walked up the streets, the



Photo by Spc. John Crosby

An Iraqi volunteer with the Critical Infrastructure Security Contract Force mans a checkpoint as dozens more seek to volunteer to fight Al-Qaida in Tarmiyah, Iraq, Sept. 19. More than 1,200 men volunteered within the first two days of what is being called the “awakening” of Tarmiyah.

shops would close on us. Al-Qaida would enforce strict fundamentalist Muslim laws. No smoking, no alcohol and forbade them from talking to us. And they didn’t.

“The other night we were on the street out here and a group of men walked right up to us,” Bennett continued. “Before the people would vanish after sunset. They came right through the gate and offered us information. It was unreal.”

Bennett said he believes the people of Tarmiyah realize and understand that coalition forces are there to help them. Al-Qaida’s goal was to control and dominate the city through terror, and Bennett believes the people see that is not the coalition forces’ plan.

“Before we couldn’t patrol the street for more than ten or 15 minutes without getting shot at,” he said. “Today we walked the market for over two hours without any problems. I think that shows clear, distinctive progress in how things are going.”

Three 4-9 Soldiers were killed and many more were wounded in action in Tarmiyah before the awakening.

“The level of violence is way down,” Prior said. “There have been a few IEDs, but a big difference in comparison to the daily violence of before. More importantly the attitude of the people and their participation has changed.”

Prior said credit for the initial success goes to Iraqi and U.S. Soldiers.

“The Iraqi army has many quality men who are both patriots and great soldiers,” he said. “Coalition forces and the Iraqi army did a great job in using controlled violence and expressing respect and restraint when required, which is essential to the mission for the Iraqi people.”

Jasim said his people want an honorable and peaceful life. He hopes for a future where they can provide decent livings for their families while his people maintain their own security forces.

Prior said they are still early in the process of reclaiming the city. The hardest part will be for the Iraqi people to overcome their justified fears of terrorist organizations and to sustain peace and security in the area. The peoples’ attitude and behavior will be the deciding factor in preventing the terrorists from returning.

“The success is not measured in how many bad guys were killed or captured,” Prior said. “Success will be measured in how the people react now that they’re gone.”

The battle is now psychological, political and economic more than military. Now it’s up to the Tarmiyah citizens, and as the awakening indicates, they are well on their way to a peaceful and secure future.



KHAN BANI SA'AD, From Page 7

A large crater about three meters in diameter was right beside the vehicle. Chipix then checked the immediate area for wires and indicators of a secondary roadside bomb.

The Soldiers traced the wire to a canal and found a burlap sack sitting ominously between tire tracks left by vehicles on previous missions. The sack sat hidden under the dust with several wires protruding from it. It was a secondary IED located not six meters from the first explosion. A small stuffed animal sat on top of the sack, displaced by the first blast.

Alaniz relayed the information to the JCOP, and security was on the way.

Capt. Joe Byerly, 3rd platoon leader, was at JCOP Key West when he first heard that 1st Platoon was hit by a roadside bomb. He went directly to the command post.

Arrow Troop Commander Capt. Dustin Heumphreus told Byerly he needed as many troops as possible to perform sensitive site exploitation and search the houses around the blast site.

Byerly gathered an element of two Strykers and 11 more personnel who traveled to the scene to assist the disabled vehicle, provide additional security and search for personnel in the area.

"I briefed Capt. Byerly on who had been evacuated, that the vehicle was disabled and that there was a suspected secondary IED," Alaniz said. "I showed him the pressure wire and told him it possibly led to the houses on the other side of the canal. I told him the Strykers would have to provide support by fire without crossing the canal in case the wires led across to the other side."

Byerly agreed and led his team across the canal.

With the mounted team providing security over watch, the dismounted team moved quickly through gardens and fields to the first house.

The Soldiers threw flashbang grenades into the building and moved in quickly to secure and search it. They met no resistance as they swept from room to room. Around the back, Summerbell found a stash of different types of wires, some similar to the wire found at the site of the roadside bomb.

A hole, about four-feet wide by four-feet deep, hidden by logs, brush and sheet metal was found and uncovered around the side of the house.

Byerly said holes like that can be used to hide explosives and weapons for later use.

The hole and wire were destroyed with two fragmentation grenades.

Just as quickly as they had arrived, the Arrow Troop Soldiers left, sprinting across a barren landscape to the next house. They moved rapidly and fluidly through the rooms of the house, ready to escalate force if needed.

Again there were no personnel in the house. The team exited the house and moved to the last building, everyone mindful of watching their sector. They entered silently.

"Clear!" could be heard from outside the house.

"We found something, sir!" a Soldier relayed to the platoon leader.

They discovered the roadside bomb's power source. Pressure wires were found leading from the house, across

the canal, to the blast site. The windows of the house were painted green making them opaque to provide concealment for the enemy to watch coalition forces and arm the bomb. A wire was found tied to a window that had perfect line of sight to the blast area.

As the Arrow Troop Soldiers discovered, the building was used as an enemy observation post and IED trigger point.

The Soldiers then neutralized the secondary IED through a controlled detonation.

Engineers from the 92nd Engineer Company, 3rd Sustainment Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division assisted

Arrow Troop by towing the damaged Stryker back to the JCOP.

Although no suspects were apprehended after the blast, Arrow Troop still pinpointed where the IED originated and led. The secondary IED, estimated to be a 50-pound HME charge, was detonated under the coalition forces control and no one was seriously injured. Intelligence on an ever-changing enemy was collected and lessons were learned.

What started out as a day interacting with the local populace and handing out candy to kids could have turned a lot worse had it not been for the actions and reactions of Arrow Troop, 2-1 Cav.



Cpl. James Dyke of Troop A, 2nd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division hands out toys to the many children who live at this house in Kahn Bani Sa'ad, Iraq, Aug. 29. Passing out toys and keeping good public relations with the people of the city builds trust between Soldiers and citizens, and helps Soldiers gather information on insurgent activity in the area.



Fire in the Hole



Soldiers from the Mortar Section of Troop A, 2nd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division from Fort Lewis, Wash., fire 120mm mortars, the largest mortar in the Army's arsenal, from a Stryker vehicle at Joint Combat Outpost Key West, Iraq, Aug. 28. Mortars can be fired mounted on a Stryker for more mobility and to provide the crew safety from small arms fire.

Photo by Spc. John Crosby

SOUND OFF! ————— What will you do ————— with all of your hard earned deployment money?



"Go on vacation to Hawaii. My wife has always wanted to go and my four- and six-year-old boys would have a lot of fun."

Maj. Ted Qualls
Land Warrior Product Manager
PEO-Soldier



"Take my wife and daughter to Disneyland. My daughter has been asking me to go for a long time."

Sgt. Joseph Reyes
Field Artillery Meteorologist
HSB, 2-12 FA



"Definitely put it into savings. I'm thinking about opening my own martial arts academy."

Pvt. Ashley Gunning
Logistics Specialist
Co. B, 202nd BSB



"I just got married so I am going to build a family with it."

Spc. Matthew Todd
Infantryman
Co. B, 4-9 Inf. Regt.

Wedding vows much more than just words

By *Capt. Terry Cobban*
2-12 FA Chaplain

Here is a question I dread: What are your hobbies? It is not that I don't have any; it's that they include what I shall call "tasks." One of these tasks which make up my hobbies is proof-reading. From the time I first attended seminary, I have been involved in proof-reading papers.

Once I graduated seminary this hobby of proof-reading did not end. Currently, I have a friend studying in England. In fact, he is nearing the completion of PhD studies and has contacted me to proof-read his dissertation. Naturally, it has one of those long titles that only PhD students sit long and hard thinking about. I shan't bore you with it except to say that the paper is concerned with a topic related to English grammar and its usage.

To date I have read three chapters. Surprisingly, I find the topic interesting. As I read each new chapter, I find myself being inculcated with deeper insights into language and its proper usage. Though I am the one doing the correcting, I find he has taught me a great deal. What sticks with me is that words are not just a combination of letters but are constructed to convey meaning from one person to another so as to make a lasting impression and/or impact.

So what? That is all nice for you chaplain, but what on earth are you trying to say? Just this: As deployment has continued from weeks into months I find, as we chaplains were told to expect, a breakdown in marital relationships.

With excited nervousness many couples stood at an altar or before a Justice of the Peace and recited some vows, making a pledge in words to be committed one to another, for better or worse, until such a time as only death might rend them apart. Obviously, many have come to see such words as only combinations of letters. If they conveyed any meaning they no longer do.

But why is this so? Simply put, the meaning of "marriage" has been lost. No longer does it mean two becoming one. Rather, all too often it means, "so long as you make ME happy." Unfortunately, happiness is not found in what others will do for you. No, happiness in marriage comes when I give of myself to the other. A lasting marriage happens when each spouse takes the meaning of the wedding vows seriously and then sets about to become one with the other. How can this union into one occur if both expect to be given to in order to find happiness without giving of him/herself to the other? Herein lies the most common reason to so lax a commitment to the wedding vows: self-centeredness. Fortunately, it can be corrected,

but only if you are willing to explore the meaning behind the vows, the meaning they were designed to convey: a commitment to become one with the other. And that involves giving of oneself to the other in order to find true happiness.

If you are having marriage difficulties your unit chaplain has resources for both spouses to use in order to strengthen the marital bonds – over time – even if they have already begun to break.



A Soldier's Prayer

Spc. Erik Larson
Company B, 1-38 IN

All mighty God, we call upon you on this, the eve of darkness.
Count us in Your graces as we step into the dark and dreaded places that all others fear to tread.
Shine Your light into the shadows, so we may see the wicked and know their faces.
Guard our souls from those that seek to destroy our souls, and let them fall by the sword.
Allow us to return to our homes whole in both body and spirit.
Give us the strength of will to strike down the wicked, and bring peace to man and nation.
And should I fall, let it be such a fall that it shields others from death.
Let not our sacrifice of sweat and blood be for naught.
For we are those few who, of free will, step into wilderness, through war, through pain, fire and death to guard that which we love more than our lives.
Remember our names in the Book of Life, and care for us greater than we can ever care for one another. Amen."



Easy Sudoku

	3	5	9				1	6
2	7	9					3	
					4	7		9
	5		3					
6				8				3
					2		5	
9		3	7					
	6					9	4	7
7	1				6	3	8	

by Chris Okasaki, Department of EE&CS, USMA

Rules: Fill in the empty cells with the digits 1-9 so that no

digit appears twice in the same row, column, or 3-by-3 box.

FATALITY ALERT

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS, 25TH INFANTRY DIVISION
MULTI NATIONAL DIVISION NORTH
CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE SPEICHER, APO AE 09393

One Team,
One Mission –
Security for Iraq's People!

AMMO HANDLING AND SOLDIER/CREW QUALIFICATIONS

The Combat Readiness Center (CRC) Investigation of a recent Class A Fatal Accident experienced by this Command identified two Present & Contributing Causes:

- The download of weapons system ammunition was not performed to standard (**TRAINING & LEADER FAILURE**). Had Soldiers been properly taught and trained to perform this task IAW guidance outlined in applicable FMs, TMs and DA PAMs, and closely supervised by their leaders, a Soldier would have known to break down linked ammo into lengths that could be easily carried and placed into ammo cans for safe storage. It must be noted, however, that the Soldiers did not deliberately perform an unsafe act; rather, they did not know the proper procedure to execute the task of downloading ammunition. Instead, they placed long, very heavy belts of ammunition into a vehicle bed. As a result of this improper storage, one round of the ammo penetrated the primer of another round, causing both it and a second round to detonate, and fatally injure one Soldier.
- The Commander of a combat vehicle failed to inform and brief his Soldiers after tasking them to download ammo (**LEADER FAILURE**). Had the vehicle commander briefed and instructed the Soldiers how to conduct the task to standard, they would have broken down the ammo belts into smaller linked segments, and carefully placed them into cans with the appropriate packing material. While the leader knew the standards, he made the dangerous assumption that his Soldiers also knew them, even though they did not. As a result, a Soldier who was assisting them in the download task but not familiar with the vehicle's weapon system dropped a heavy linked belt onto another belt, causing two rounds to detonate and fatally injure him.

The report also identifies a need for all leaders to ensure their Soldiers are trained on the safe operating procedures for the equipment they use to accomplish their mission. The critical importance of safety and training can not be overstated when dealing with new or unfamiliar equipment. As we begin to introduce new units into the AO, it is essential to train and enforce the highest standards of safe equipment operation when we hand the mission over to prevent future accidents.

The CRC Board noted that with this fatal accident, there have been six Class A/B accidents involving ammunition handling since 2005. Commanders, Leaders and Soldiers must be trained and supervised in the proper handling, packing and movement of ammunition to prevent further occurrences of these preventable injuries. High OTEMPD is not an excuse for failing to train, maintain and enforce the proper standards.

Leaders and Soldiers must ensure these Lessons Learned are integrated and enforced!

GARY S. PATTON
COL, GS
Chief of Staff

ENSURE WIDEST DISEMINATION; BRIEF TO SOLDIERS & POST ON BULLETIN BOARDS!

You'll only be **SAFE** when **Standards Are Fully Enforced!**

FATALITY ALERT

MND-N 07-04

SAFETY ALERT

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS, 25TH INFANTRY DIVISION
MULTI NATIONAL DIVISION NORTH
CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE SPEICHER, APO AE 09393

One Team,
One Mission –
Security for Iraq's People!

NEGLIGENT DISCHARGES

THIS IS SERIOUS LEADERSHIP BUSINESS!



BEFORE



AFTER

WHICH DO YOU PREFER?

1. Negligent discharge is a breakdown in weapons handling discipline. MND-N has experienced too many negligent discharges and all are unacceptable. Leaders and Soldiers are responsible for preventing negligent discharges. Performing proper clearing procedures is a basic Soldier task and it must be performed in accordance with procedures outlined for each weapon system. Failing to properly clear a weapon puts everyone at risk and can cause serious injury or loss of life.

2. Supervisors will verify that their Soldiers are properly trained on loading, unloading and clearing procedures. Supervisors need to ensure their Soldiers maintain the highest level of proficiency on this task. There is nothing accidental about negligent discharges. Soldiers must maintain situational awareness, muzzle awareness and weapon discipline at all times. Weapons handling can never be taken lightly. The highest level of care will be taken when clearing all weapons and weapon systems – it's imperative for maintaining Soldier safety.

WALTER E. PIATT
COL, GS
Chief of Staff

You'll only be **SAFE** when **Standards Are Fully Enforced!**

ENSURE WIDEST DISEMINATION, BRIEF TO ALL SOLDIERS AND POST ON BULLETIN BOARDS!

SAFETY ALERT

MND-N 07-07

Medium Sudoku

			4	7	9		8	6
							5	
3	6			8		9		
				1				9
		5				6		
4				6				
		6		9			7	8
	7							
8	2		7	3	1			

by Chris Okasaki, Department of EE&CS, USMA

Rules: Fill in the empty cells with the digits 1-9 so that no

digit appears twice in the same row, column, or 3-by-3 box.



Hard Sudoku

		9						
5			9		8			6
	7		3					
			1	9		2	6	
				6				
	5	6		3	7			
					5		4	
6			2		3			8
						1		

by Chris Okasaki, Department of EE&CS, USMA

Rules: Fill in the empty cells with the digits 1-9 so that no

digit appears twice in the same row, column, or 3-by-3 box.

SAFETY ALERT

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS, 25TH INFANTRY DIVISION
MULTI NATIONAL DIVISION NORTH
CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE SPEICHER, APO AE 09393

Electrical Fire Safety & Hazards in MND-N

- Two of the most common causes of fire in theater are the overloading of circuits, and circuits not being wired IAW industry electrical standards. These, coupled with the improper use of power strips and extension cords, can lead to costly and even deadly results. Reduce risk by taking the necessary steps to prevent a catastrophic fire.
- Everyone is a Safety Officer, but Commanders and Leaders are responsible for reducing and mitigating risk down to an acceptable level. It is important to remain aware of these hazards and take the required corrective actions. Leaders must ensure that subordinates are trained and ready to react to such hazards and that adequate fire prevention tools (alarms, fire extinguishers, exit drills, SOPs, etc.) are maintained and on hand.
- The following are guidelines and actions to take to mitigate most electrical hazards and risk.
 - Appoint on Orders, individuals to perform the duties of unit Fire Warden. The Fire Warden is the direct representative to the unit commander and will have the authority to enact and enforce the fire prevention program.
 - Hold at least one annual fire safety training class for all personnel to attend.
 - Conduct walk-through inspections periodically to identify hazard deficiencies and take action to correct them in a timely manner.
 - Provide and maintain smoke detectors in all living and work areas.
 - Provide and maintain 10 pound, 4A, 60BC, portable fire extinguishers, placing them throughout all living and work areas no farther than 75 feet from each other. Inspect them monthly and turn them in if they are uncharged or damaged. Replace extinguishers immediately with operational ones until the turn-in/replacement process is complete. Train and educate all personnel on the proper use and handling of portable fire extinguishers.
 - DO NOT daisy chain extension cords or piggy-back power strips. Ensure the amperage of all connected devices do not exceed the maximum allowed per power strip, outlet, or power converter. Ensure power requirements of all devices meet/match the electrical service voltage provided.
- Electrical fire safety is everyone's responsibility; stay proactive to ensure Soldier safety.


WALTER E. PIATT
COL, GS
Chief of Staff

ENSURE WIDEST DISSEMINATION, BRIEF TO ALL SOLDIERS AND POST ON BULLETIN BOARDS!

SAFETY ALERT

MND-N 07-06

Sudoku Answers

Solution to Easy Sudoku

5	8	9	6	7	1	2	4	3
7	4	3	1	2	8	9	5	6
1	9	2	8	5	7	4	6	3
3	8	5	1	7	9	4	6	2
3	5	7	2	1	7	1	5	8
2	1	7	2	6	5	9	8	4
1	8	4	3	9	5	1	2	6
4	2	7	9	8	1	6	5	3
6	3	3	9	2	7	3	8	1

Solution to Medium Sudoku

5	9	1	4	1	5	2	3	8
7	5	9	3	8	4	1	1	1
8	1	4	5	2	9	5	5	5
2	1	9	7	5	3	5	4	4
7	9	8	4	6	5	1	1	1
4	7	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
3	6	7	1	1	1	1	1	1
5	4	8	4	9	3	7	3	1
4	3	1	4	7	9	3	8	6

Solution to Hard Sudoku

3	2	1	6	4	9	5	8	7
8	5	4	5	1	2	4	6	9
6	6	9	5	3	7	3	2	1
4	1	6	7	4	3	9	2	2
7	8	2	6	5	1	7	4	6
6	4	7	1	1	1	1	1	1
3	6	7	1	1	1	1	1	1
5	4	8	4	9	3	7	3	1
4	3	1	4	7	9	3	8	6

SAFETY ALERT



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS, 25TH INFANTRY DIVISION
MULTI NATIONAL DIVISION NORTH
CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE SPEICHER, APO AE 09393



M-240B/H MACHINE GUN GROUND PRECAUTIONARY MESSAGE

- The U.S. Army Tank and Armament Command (TACOM) Safety Office issued a Safety of Use Message on proper loading and clearing of the M-240B/H Machine Gun.
 - Summary Of Problem:** The purpose of this is to clarify the warnings in TM- 9-1005-313-10. During recent training and combat missions, it is apparent that Soldiers are not following loading and clearing procedures in the M240 Series Machine Gun Operator's Manual. Soldiers are improperly placing the weapon on "SAFE" with the bolt in the forward position. Subsequent attempts to charge the weapon while on safe lead to a jammed weapon with the bolt far enough rearward to feed and fire a round.
 - Expected results if failure occurs:** Engagement of the safety without locking the bolt all the way to the rear can cause the gun to jam when attempting to fully charge the weapon. Once jammed, the only way to clear the weapon is either to open the top cover which will fire the fed round or remove the trigger assembly which can result in a "run away" weapon.
- User Actions:
 - Correction Procedures:**
 - At no time should the safety be engaged when the bolt is forward. M240 series weapons fire from the open-bolt position; consequently, the safety should only be actuated when the bolt is locked in the full rearward position.
 - The user will follow instructions on loading and clearing the M240-B/H as stated in the **WARNING PAGE 0009 00-1 of TM 9-1005-313-10, which specifically states the weapon safety must be in the fire, "F" position, before actuating the bolt/op rod assembly.** The user must follow these procedures as written. These procedures are demonstrated during NET fielding.
- Leaders will enforce the Standards outlined in this message and the TM.


GARY S. PATTON
COL, GS
Chief of Staff

ENSURE WIDEST DISEMINATION; BRIEF TO SOLDIERS & POST ON BULLETIN BOARDS!

You'll only be SAFE when Standards Are Fully Enforced!

SAFETY ALERT

MND-N 07-02



LIGHTNING 6 SENDS #18 Small Kill Team (SKT) Tactical Risk Assessment

Kidnapping of U.S. personnel is a stated goal of our enemy, and numerous incidents and attempts have been recorded and reported across Iraq. Our enemy's intent is to achieve a spectacular attack generating a worldwide media event prior to the mid-September commencement of Ramadan and the pending Operation Iraqi Freedom progress report to Congress. To that end, the capture and exploitation of American Soldiers is among their highest targeting priorities.

This was likely the motivation behind the 26 August foreign fighter attack on a Small Kill Team (SKT) operating in Samarra. During this series of lethal engagements, our forces heroically defended the attack, then pursued and destroyed the enemy.

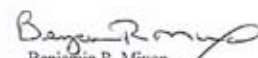
Due to the nature of their operations, Soldiers conducting SKT missions are among the most vulnerable of our formations.

In order to ensure the protection of our force and to deny the enemy the capability to exploit the kidnapping of our Soldiers, leaders at all levels must conduct thorough Composite Risk Management in order to mitigate the risks associated with SKT operations. Task Force Lightning units will review their SOPs and TTPs for SKT employment. Task Force Lightning units will ensure the tactical hazards associated with SKTs are identified and that control measures are implemented and supervised in accordance with METT-TC for each SKT operation.

To date we have had tremendous success with our SKTs. We will continue to effectively employ these lethal, successful operations in order to defeat the enemy and promote security throughout MND-North.

BCTs will report to the MND-N G3 Chief of Operations when this information has been rapidly disseminated down to the company level, with suspense of 3 September 2007.

One Team, One Mission—Security for Iraq's People.


Benjamin R. Mixon
Major General, US Army
Commanding



FALLEN RAIDERS

IN LOVING MEMORY...



PFC Anthony J. Sausto
May 10, 2007
Co. A, 1-38 IN

SPC William J. Crouch
June 2, 2007
Trp. A, 2-1 CAV

PFC Willard M. Powell
Aug. 16, 2007
Co. C, 4-9 IN

PFC Aaron D. Gautier
May 17, 2007
Co. B, 2-23 IN

SGT Cory M. Endlich
June 9, 2007
Trp. B, 2-1 CAV

SFC Daniel E. Scheibner
Aug. 29, 2007
Btry. C, 2-12 FA

CPL Jonathan V. Hamm
May 17, 2007
Co. B, 2-23 IN

SGT Danny R. Soto
June 16, 2007
Btry. C, 2-12 FA

SFC David A. Cooper Jr.
Sept. 5, 2007
Co. B, 2-23 IN

PFC Robert A. Worthington
May 22, 2007
Co. B, 4-9 IN

SPC Zachary A. Grass
June 16, 2007
Btry. C, 2-12 FA

SPC Joseph N. Landry III
Sept. 18, 2007
Co. A, 2-23 IN

SSG Kristopher A. Higdon
May 22, 2007
Co. B, 4-9 IN

SGT Joel A. Dahl
June 23, 2007
HHC, 2-23 IN

SPC Nicholas P. Olson
Sept. 18, 2007
Co. A, 2-23 IN

SSG David C. Kuehl
May 22, 2007
Co. C, 4-9 IN

CPL Victor A. Garcia
July 1, 2007
Co. B, 1-38 IN

SPC Donald E. Valentine III
Sept. 18, 2007
Co. A, 2-23 IN

SPC Mathew Philip LaForest
May 25, 2007
Co. C, 4-9 IN

CPL Brandon M. Craig
July 19, 2007
HHC, 4-2 SBCT

SPC Graham M. McMahon
Sept. 19, 2007
Co. B, 4-9 IN

PFC Junior Cedeno Sanchez
May 28, 2007
Co. B, 1-38 IN

SPC Rhett A. Butler
July 20, 2007
Trp. B, 2-1 CAV

CPL Luigi Marciante Jr.
Sept. 20, 2007
Co. A, 2-23 IN

SSG Thomas M. McFall
May 28, 2007
Co. B, 1-38 IN

PFC Shawn D. Hensel
Aug. 14, 2007
Co. B, 2-23 IN

CPL David L. Watson
Sept. 22, 2007
HHC, 2-23 IN