

# IBC

## Iron Brigade Chronicles

Vol. 1, Issue 13  
October 23, 2006



Valentines Day  
was as hot as fire  
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All clear  
Pages 4-7



Fighting  
Eagles hunt  
for insurgents  
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Transition  
team helps  
IPs on patrol  
Pages 4-7



Keeping tabs  
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# One year later ...



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Lifesaving training  
Published for the Soldiers, families and friends of the 3rd HBCT, 4th ID



An Army in transition  
Published for the Soldiers, families and friends of the 3rd HBCT, 4th ID



MEDCAP helps  
children, adults  
Pages 4-7



Hunters return to  
Iron Brigade AO  
Pages 4-7

Published for the Soldiers, families and friends of the 3rd HBCT, 4th ID

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## Cover Photo

The covers of the *IBC* from throughout the year display the missions the brigade has undertaken in this year-long deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

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# Striker Six, Seven send

## Strikers,

The tragic loss of Staff Sgt. Ryan Haupt, Sgt. Norman Taylor and Pfc. Nathan Frigo leaves our hearts heavy as we prepare to complete our mission. Any loss, but especially a loss this close to mission completion, is simply heart breaking; and losing these three great Soldiers in one action is crushing. Our prayers are with their families, friends and comrades.

This is the last chance we will have to get a message to you before we address your assembled units personally at McMahon Theater. We want to ensure that each of you understands what a tremendous impact the successful conduct of your assigned mission here has had on the people of Iraq, on the American people and on the people of the region.

The selfless and impartial actions of you and your fellow Soldiers have demonstrated to the Iraqi people that there is hope for a democratic and impartial government. Your effective blend of combat and civic actions has brought many of the insurgents back into the political process. You have started them on the path of reconciliation. In a country where they have witnessed corruption, deception and abuses of power for 35

years, you have shown them a model for the future. Whether they can achieve such a lofty goal remains to be seen, but you have ensured that they have the opportunity and have provided them with an excellent example. We could have done no more in this critical area.

Your relentless pursuit and destruction of al-Qaeda and related terrorists has been awesome. The effect has been felt both here in Iraq and back in the United



Col. Brian D. Jones

States. Because of your determination to destroy these killers, the Iraqi people are safer and the American people are able to enjoy a life virtually uninterrupted by the threats and wanton acts of violence that these murderers employ. And that's why we serve.

We could have done no more in this area while we were here; but this is a fight that will continue to demand the attention and sacrifice of our Armed Forces for the foreseeable future. Make no mistake: this threat is real and dangerous, and it must be confronted.

Your actions are also reverberating around the Middle East. Regimes in Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Egypt feel threatened by the possibility of

a truly democratic government emerging in Iraq. They are taking an active role to defeat the chances of a democratic political success in Iraq. They may clothe this opposition in religious or political garb, but the fact is that they do not want the "dangerous" ideas of democracy to affect the ways they are able to exert control on their people. Your role in this is to provide a chance of democracy not only for the Iraqi people, but to allow them to

serve as an example for their neighbors.

We could not be more proud of the manner in which you have conducted yourselves individually and as units. The sacrifices you have made and the losses we have suffered cannot be repaid or replaced; but they must be remembered.

Freedom isn't free, and your time here should

illustrate vividly the very thin line between what we enjoy (and often take for granted) in our American way of life and the circumstances of others who lack the legacy and blessings of democracy.

Thanks for all you have done and for all you do. Stay safe.

**Strikers!**

**Steadfast and Loyal!**

**Striker 6 and Striker 7**



Command Sgt. Maj.  
David H. List

## In memory of ...

**Staff Sgt. Ryan Haupt**  
**Company A,**  
**1-68 Combined Arms Battalion**

**Sgt. Norman Taylor**  
**Company A,**  
**1-68 Combined Arms Battalion**

**Pfc. Nathan Frigo**  
**Company A,**  
**1-68 Combined Arms Battalion**

## Gone, but not forgotten

# Easy Company's prayers answered a thousand times

by Staff Sgt. Samantha M. Stryker  
5th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

On Ramadan's night of a thousand prayers, Soldiers from the 4th Infantry Division count one prayer as having been answered as they prepare to return home after a year-long deployment in Iraq.

But there is still work to do during the final celebrations of Ramadan and the night of power before these units can manifest for flights and ship their equipment home.

This night means only one thing to the men of Easy Company, 1-68 Combined Arms Battalion — another force protection mission outside the wire.

For some it is their last mission before they leave this desert land, for others it is just one more presence patrol in sometimes hospitable urban areas. But for every Soldier, any one mission is a matter of life and death.

"This patrol is the last mission for some of you, but everyone needs to treat this mission like you did the first," said Sgt. 1st Class Bobby Simmons, platoon sergeant to Soldiers mounted with gear. "Let's all make it home."

First Lt. Christopher Kidd, Co. E, 1-68 CAB, explained why it is important that his engineer and infantry Soldiers contin-

ue these missions in spite of the fact his unit is days from leaving country.

"We are looking to disrupt any (anti-coalition) activity by being in the area and looking for mortar tubes," Kidd said. The engineer officer said in recent days mortar fire aimed at Forward Operating Base Warhorse originated from the north.

"Force protection measures can not stop until the new guys learn the ropes," he added.

Kidd stated that presence patrols not only help to deter insurgent activity but also helped to build and maintain good relations with local communities.

Platoon members drove on the rural roads skirting the river outside of Septia looking for mortar tubes or any other tell-tale signs of insurgent activity. After arriving at the Governor's Center, leaders briefly met and shared information with Gen. Mudafa, who is the leader of the Iraqi Police emergency-reac-



Sgt. Joel Mancillas, Company E, 1-68 Combined Arms Battalion, stands on guard near a Humvee during Easy Company's patrol in Huwaydir.

tion force in Baqubah.

In the town of Huwaydir, a Shia town, Soldiers quietly delivered medical supplies as locals smiled and waved at them.

"We want to leave here as the silent professionals we are," said Master Sgt. Eugene Moses, operations sergeant major, 1-68 CAB.

"We will continue to lean into the fight until we are on the bird," said Moses. "We must stay focused until we are all done. For us there is no difference between day one and the last day."

Moses echoed what other leaders are saying about how Soldiers and the brigade are better than before because they were able to accomplish their mission, which was to leave Iraq in better condition than when they arrived. They accomplished this by improving the infrastructure to meet basic human needs and improve the country's security by training the Army and police forces.

Right-seat rides and handovers are slowly taking place between the battalion and their replacements, 1-12 CAB. As one prayer is answered and the Soldiers prepare to return to Fort Carson, Colo., they keep many more prayers in their hearts for lost friends and comrades who will not make the journey home with them.

Their year of service is coming to an end, but they leave the foundation for even more improvement in the next year. The men of 1-68 CAB can be proud of what they have accomplished here in Diyala Province. So can the people of Iraq.



Photos by Staff Sgt. Samantha M. Stryker

1st Lt. Christopher Kidd, Company E, 1-68 Combined Arms Battalion, pats the head of an Iraqi boy during a recent foot patrol in Huwaydir. Kidd and fellow members of Easy Company are in the final days of their current deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

## UNsung

## HEROES

by Lt. Col. John Shawkins  
3rd HBCT, 4th ID

It is 3:50 a.m. and night covers the land; the local residents of Diyala Province are sleeping, a hush pervades the night. However, not everyone sleeps; insurgents continue their efforts to destroy a unified Iraq, and the determined Soldiers of the Striker Brigade stand ready, throughout 24,000 square miles of their area of operation, to stop them.

The Striker Tactical Operations Center is the nexus of this effort; it is the nerve center that synchronizes and controls the actions of the Striker Soldiers. In the TOC, under the dim glow of flat screen monitors and computer screens, a team works on operational graphics, reports and answers routine questions.

The transient calm is suddenly broken by the crackling of radio nets and phones ringing. Reports start flowing indicating possible wounded as a result of an attack in Baqubah and the hospital needs coalition medical assistance with the wounded.

Instantly, the battle captain announces, "attention in the TOC!" The battle major moves to the center of the TOC to better control the sudden burst of activity.

The radio and telecommunications operator relays traffic on the command network. Simultaneously, a call comes from a battalion miles away; the unit has troops in enemy contact and needs immediate support from helicopters.

The battle captain, Sgt. 1st Class Cory Givhan, Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, updates the battle major and turns to work the troops-in-contact.

The most crucial element at a moment of action is communication between the various elements inside the TOC.

"Communication is always a challenge, you never can have enough of it," said Givhan.

Once the call for action raises questions start flowing: How many people are there? Are they in contact? Are there any casualties? What do we have to do to fix this? Do we need a medical evacuation?

The air space manager, Pfc. Dale Lundberg, HHT, 3rd HBCT, punches out a rapid message to the supporting attack aviation unit, as the battle major shouts guidance to him.

"I need basic information to give the pilots a situational brief," Lundberg said.

"We are a funnel, a conduit of all that information. We funnel that information to the various aviation battalions."

Lundberg is responsible for making sure the air is clear in case counter fire is necessary. He is performing a duty usually occupied by an NCO and the upgrade was not without its adjustments.

"It was stressful when I first started. The tempo was real fast paced," he said. "I was by myself on nights and I had no one to fall back on for support but eventually everything began to fall into place and became second nature."

Lundberg confirms Apaches are available. The Fires and Effects Coordination Cell receives urgent request to fire illumination rounds in support of the battalion in contact and the Air Force Joint Tactical Controller announces that fixed wing jets are available if needed. Within 10 minutes everything is coming together. The battle NCO quickly delivers an updated message to the division on his command post as the battle major calls to inform the brigade commander of the situation. Within 30 minutes the pace has slackened and the team settles into their routine rhythm, until the next call to action.

These events occur regularly for the Soldiers of Striker TOC, but what is noteworthy is, with the exception of the battle major, and one battalion liaison officer, the 25 Soldiers on duty this night are all enlisted or noncommissioned officers and these Soldiers keep the TOC in motion.

Iraq is a squad leader's fight where corporals make potentially strategic decisions. The same is true for the Striker TOC where junior NCOs and Soldiers have stepped up, often filling positions held by captains and majors 10 years ago.

The mission of the TOC is to provide the framework on which the brigade commander can visualize and control the fight. The mantra of the Striker TOC is, "Who else needs to know?"

Command always resides with the commander, but control is managed by the TOC. Information is critical when fighting a brutal counter-insurgency. The TOC must take the chaotic inflow of bits and pieces of data and reports from myriad sources and, in turn, produce coherent

Photos by Pfc. Paul J. Harris

Staff Sgt. Artis Alexander, battle NCO, Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, monitors the screens for incoming information in the Tactical Operations Center at Forward Operating Base Warhorse.



Sgt. James Tebbe, aviations operations specialist, Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, discusses clearing the airspace around forward operating Base Warhorse with Pfc. Dale Lundberg, aviation operations specialist, HHT, 3rd HBCT.

knowledge for the brigade commander, so he can make key decisions and commit resources accordingly. More importantly, the TOC must be able to take immediate decisive action within the limits of the commander's intent and lastly, the TOC must enforce compliance. The TOC is often the first and last stop for those seeking clarification, guidance or assistance.

Every member of the team must know and execute their assigned rolls. While the Soldiers do not face the same level of threat as those on patrol, their actions will either help or hinder the fight and knowing this leads to high-levels of stress, but it also fills the members of Striker TOC with a strong sense of purpose and pride.

Serious mistakes made in the TOC can have catastrophic consequences, and like Lt. Col. Jim Rice, deputy commander, 3rd HBCT, said early in the deployment to the TOC team, "The TOC must be plugged in and must minimize mistakes; the fight is already confusing enough. The stakes are too high."

**Awarded:**

**1,681 CABs**  
**454 CIBs**  
**91 CMBs**  
**98 Purple Hearts**

# Strikers comp

by **Sgt. Zach Mott**  
*IBC editor*

Striker Soldiers have seen much in this year at war.

The brigade was initially spread across Diyala and parts of Salah al-Din provinces. The Hunters of 2nd Squadron, 9th Cavalry were initially attached to the 101st Airborne Division before returning to the Striker Brigade in August. At that time, the Fighting Eagles and Pacesetters were then attached to the 82nd Airborne Division.

Notable events from throughout this year were Operation

Cowpens which saw the 1-8 Combined Arms Battalion find numerous caches in and around the Jabouri Peninsula in March.

In June, the brigade played a pivotal role in the death of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

The Iraqi Army has assumed a larger role in Iraq's future by taking control of portions of the area of operations.

Unfortunately, there are 15 Strikers who will not be returning to Fort Carson with us. These heroes will never be forgotten. Their memory lives on in every one of us.



Lt. Col. Jeffrey Martindale, commander, with some local children during a mission.

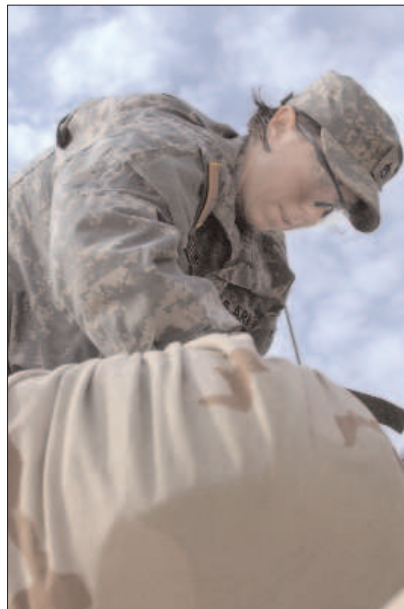


Photo by Pfc. Paul J. Harris

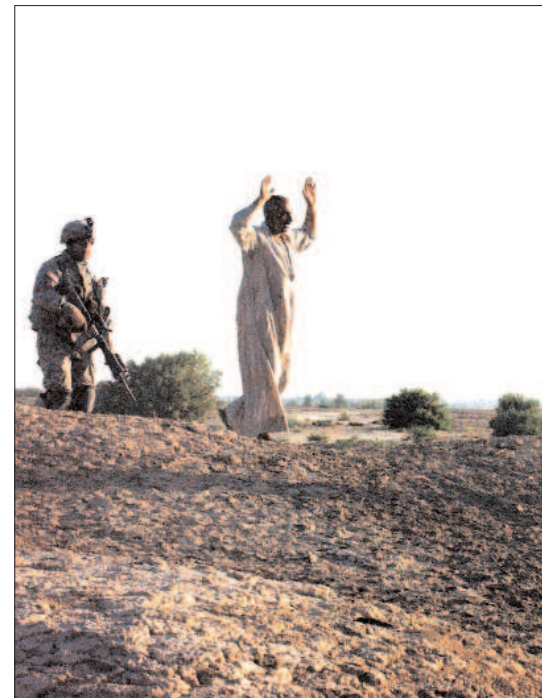
**ABOVE:** Soldiers from the 64th Brigade Support Battalion, carry a simulated casualty to the troop medical clinic at Forward Operating Base Warhorse in January.

Photo by Sgt. Zach Mott

**RIGHT:** Staff Sgt. Selena Bastine, Company A, 3rd Special Troops Battalion, places her ruck sack in the back of a Humvee at Camp Buerhring, Kuwait, prior to driving into Iraq.



**More than:**  
**1,600**  
IEDs  
detonated **1,100**  
IEDs  
discovered



Staff Sgt. Roberto Martinez, commander's gunner, follows a detainee to a holding point while his fellow soldiers conduct Operation Shaku Maku, a joint operation between the 101st Airborne Division and Soldiers from 1-68 CAB in June.

# Complete OIF tour

More than:  
**17,000**  
Patrols  
conducted



Photo by Sgt. Zach Mott  
Commander, 1-8 Combined Arms Battalion, enjoys an alternate means of transportation on a March foot patrol in Balad.

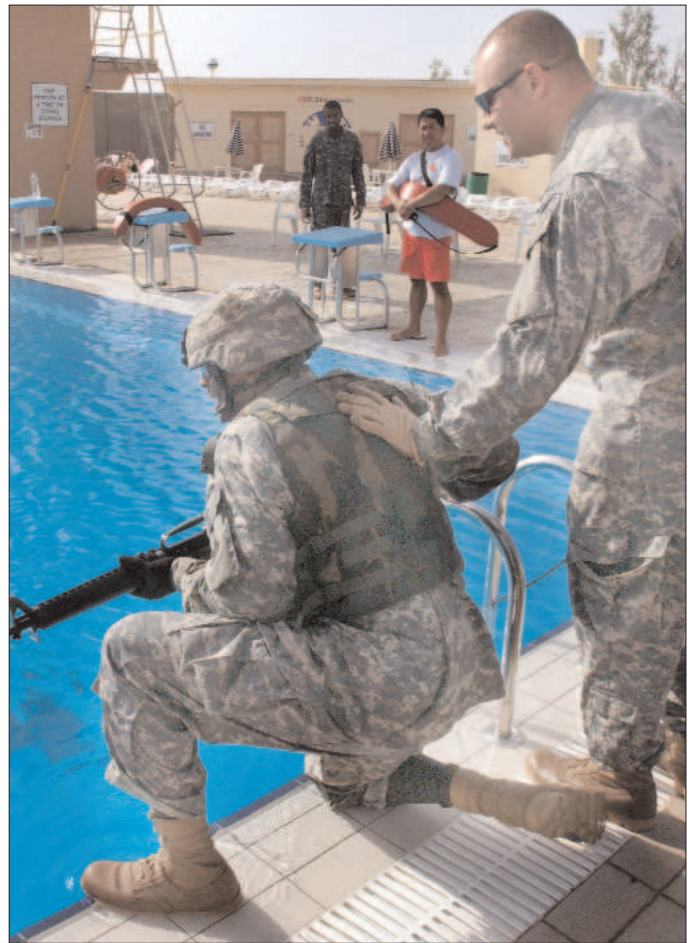


Photo by Pfc. Paul J. Harris  
During drownproofing training at Logistical Support Anaconda in May, Staff Sgt. Jacob Finger gives Staff Sgt. Derrick Gwin, both from 3rd Battalion, 29th Field Artillery, a friendly shove to start Gwin's training.

**1,327**  
Terrorists  
detained  
as of Oct. 18



Photo by Pfc. Paul J. Harris  
Staff Sgt. Jacob Finger, Company A, 1-68 Combined Arms Battalion, follows a Yellow Silver Lion comrade leads the way during a patrol in the 4th Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 5th Iraqi Army.



Photo by Pfc. Paul J. Harris  
Spc. Shawn Axtell, 2nd Squadron, 9th Cavalry, patrols a field during a mission in April.

## Hunters patrol Hamrin Lake

by Sgt. Zach Mott  
*IBC editor*

Water can be a scarce resource in many regions of Iraq. However, there are some areas, namely along the Tigris and Euphrates river valleys, that thrive because of the direct access to water.

These liquid highways can also serve as an avenue for insurgents to traffic their goods, be it improvised explosive device materials or people. In northern Diyala Province, there is a man-made lake in the village of Hamrin that could serve as a quick getaway for insurgents.

Soldiers from the 2nd Squadron, 9th Cavalry, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Task Force Lightning conducted a reconnaissance of the lake to assess the enemy's capabilities as well as show the ability to halt this trafficking lane.

"We're mostly focused on showing the capability to the enemy so that they know that they'll have to account for that or at least keep that in their decision cycle," said Lt. Col. Louis Lartigue, commander, 2nd Squadron, 9th Cavalry, after piloting several tours around the lake.

Soldiers from the squadron's support unit had to make a few repairs and changes to the boat trailer prior to it getting on the water.

"We serviced the engine to make sure everything ran," said Staff Sgt. Phillip Kitchen, team chief, Service and Recovery Section, Dragoon Troop. "The prop that was on it when we got it was destroyed, so we had to re-do the prop; sand it down, grind it down, make it bet-



Photos by Sgt. Zach Mott

**ABOVE:** The boat used by Soldiers from the 2nd Squadron, 9th Cavalry is lowered into Hamrin Lake.

**TOP:** Soldiers from the 2nd Squadron, 9th Cavalry and members of the Iraqi Army's 3rd Brigade, 5th Division return to the shore after patrolling Hamrin Lake in northern Diyala Province.

ter. The boat had a hole in it so we had to patch the underside of the boat so that it wouldn't leak in."

In getting the boat on the open water, and not the fast-moving river during previous operations, there were a few kinks that will need to be worked out.

"So far, it's good. It got into the water; the trailer's a little high based on what we had to work with when we built it," said Capt. Dave Buehler, commander, Dragoon Troop.

After taking over operations from the 1st Squadron, 32nd Cavalry when the unit redeployed to the United States in August, the Hunters wanted to authenticate the tool before handing it over to its eventual

replacements.

"We're validating both the maintenance readiness of it and the functionality of the boat out in the lake to prove that it's actually a task that we need to (hand) over to the next unit," Buehler said.

Earlier in this deployment to Iraq, the Hunters conducted similar operations on the Tigris River while at Forward Operating Base Wilson. For many, this wasn't their first time cruising the waterways of this mostly desert country, but most relished the change from the norm.

"But when it comes down to it, it's fun to get out on the water and do something different than a regular 1114 patrol," Lartigue said.



8 A Soldier from 2nd Squadron, 9th Cavalry searches the boats near Hamrin Lake while a boat patrols the waterway.



# COMBAT STRESS!!!!

## Don't take it out on your family

by Pfc. Paul J. Harris

*IBC staff writer*

The sound of the boom, the smoke, the smell of gunpowder and the flash of light are memories that might not go away after Soldiers come in contact with the enemy or an improvised explosive device. Memories such as these can linger inside the mind causing sleeplessness, nightmares and stress. These symptoms are normal but left untreated they fester into larger issues.

For Soldiers of 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team help is available from a variety of different sources.

"Whatever the Soldier has done I am not here to slam dunk him I am here to support him," said Chaplain (Maj.) Rory Rodriguez, chaplain, 3rd Battalion, 29th Field Artillery, 3rd HBCT. Chaplains, in most cases, are available the moment a Soldier has returned from combat.

Rodriguez starts by asking basic questions such as what happened? What was your response? How do you feel? He does this to ascertain their state of mind and soul.

"Some people respond with anger or don't respond at all,"

Rodriguez said.

"It is what they say or they don't say."

Spc. Christopher George, food prepa-

ration specialist, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 3rd Battalion, 29th FA, spoke with the chaplain after he and his teammates were involved in a firefight with insurgents.

"He made sure that everybody was dealing with it alright and made sure we did not have any freaky dreams," George said. "He made us call somebody to say I am alright, I chose to call my Dad; because I knew my wife would freak out and want details."

The other option Soldiers have is going to mental health services. Mental health can diagnose more serious cases such as post traumatic stress disorder or prescribe medication or techniques to ease the pain of a traumatic experience.

Spc. Veren Govindeisami, water specialist, Company B, 64th Brigade Support Battalion, benefited from some of the techniques mental health showed him. Govindeisami was wounded from a roadside bomb while performing gunner duties on a patrol. He kept replaying the incident over and over again in his mind, having nightmares and waking up at exact same time each night. Mental health told him to try and sleep through the dream without waking up and over a period of time the nightmares went away.

In addition to a chaplain being present for Soldiers when they return from combat there is also the Combat Stress Team.

"(We) talk to Soldiers trying to pull the events out and when they open up a lot of it is anger and guilt and that is good," said Staff Sgt. Aaron Andrade, behavior health specialist, 883rd Medical Company attached to 3rd HBCT. "These

types of feelings are normal to have. It is your bodies' reaction to an abnormal situation."

The Soldiers from the Combat Stress Team provide an informal setting for Soldiers to discuss their issues. Very rarely is anything formally documented and like mental health and the chaplain, anything discussed is strictly confidential.

"It's not voodoo it's counseling," said Maj. Carlos Silva, social worker, 883rd Medical Company.

With the Striker Brigade will going home soon, Silva cautions Soldiers to talk about their return home expectations with loved ones so to avoid a letdown. If there is an expectation of a welcome home party or a special night out Soldiers need to express this to their loved ones.

"It does not have to be a chaplain or a combat stress team to help a Soldier through a critical event. Any Soldier, any colleague if they just stop and talk to the Soldier can be beneficial," said Chaplain (Maj.) Michael Reeves, 1-68 Combined Arms Battalion. "You be that friend, you put that hand on the shoulder. You are helping as much as a chaplain or combat stress team."

Photo illustration by Pfc. Paul J. Harris





Photos by Spc. Joshua R. Ford

Lt. Col. Jeffery Martindale, commander, 1-8 Combined Arms Battalion, and Mayor Amir Abdulhadi Marhun, Balad mayor, present an Iraqi woman with compensation for her land, which is being used by coalition forces on Forward Operating Base Paliwoda.

## Soldiers give compensation to landowners

by Spc. Joshua R. Ford

*3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division*

When coalition forces came to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, they borrowed land from Iraqi landowners throughout the country to facilitate military infrastructure needs to base strategic operations.

The more than 800 acres of land that makes up Forward Operating Base Paliwoda was borrowed in July 2003. Now, three years later, the United States Army is giving compensation for what most of the true landowners of Paliwoda thought they had lost forever.

Lt. Col. Jeffery Martindale, commander, 1-8 Combined Arms Battalion, and Balad government officials – including Balad mayor Amir Abdulhadi Marhun – paid 64 land owners during a ceremony Sept. 28 on FOB Paliwoda.

“It is a pleasure to pay you today,” said Martindale. “I thank you for allowing us to use your land and I thank you for waiting so long to receive this money.”

The lot owners of Paliwoda were paid from July 2003 through March 31, 2006, said Staff Sgt. Omar B. Dave, paralegal non-commissioned officer, 1-8 CAB.

“We were disappointed when America took our land but now we are happy because we have legal honor to what is rightfully ours,” said Thana Mohamed, a Balad merchant and owner of a

small lot on FOB Paliwoda.

There are approximately 419 true land owners of the FOB and each will receive compensation depending on the size of the lot they own on Paliwoda. Paying all 419 Iraqis will cost the United States Government approximately \$775,000.

Out of the 419 Iraqis, each owns about 250 to 300 square meters and will receive \$1,600 to \$2,000 for their property.

Sgt. Brian White, Balad radio station liaison, 310th Psychological Operations Company, reached the landowners with Balad’s only radio station to broadcast the message.

Immediately after the broadcast, dozens of landowners went to the local Joint Coordination Center to claim their property for a deserved compensation, said White.

To receive payment each land owner had to go through a series of screenings to determine if they were a legitimate land owner in the first place. The screenings included verification of land deeds dated before July 2003 and identification that matched the name on the deed. Unfortunately, all 419 land owners could not make it in time to receive payment.

“People that did not show up to get paid will get their money when they come forward with the proper documentation,” said Dave. “This is just the beginning. Units that deploy to Paliwoda in the future will pay the leases to the owners.”

It has not been established as to how often the Iraqi landowners will get paid, but it will not be a monthly event. The leases will be paid every six months to a year, added Dave.

“We came here to help the Iraqi people and we needed a base to conduct operations from. Since we aren’t an occupation force we’re going to pay these people for the land they’ve let us use,” said White.

“My family is happy. It’s like anyone who would lose something and then regain it. It brings true joy to my family,” said Mohamed.

A landowner of Forward Operating Base Paliwoda signs papers to receive compensation for land he hasn’t seen since the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom.



# *From 'Black Knight' to 'desert warrior'*

by Pfc. Paul J. Harris

*IBC Staff Writer*

Lee, Grant, Eisenhower and Patton are some of the most storied names to grace the halls of the United States Military Academy at West Point; names that were made during a time of wars distant and near.

It is now time for a new generation of former cadets to make names for themselves. Names that might not leap off the page at first glance but names Soldiers of the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team might recognize. Names like Wells, Zavage and Kutsko. Three graduates from West Point from different backgrounds and upbringing putting their leadership skills to the test in the desert confines of Iraq.

82 officers, roughly 25 percent of 3rd HBCT deployed officers, are West Point graduates.

Capt. Leona Kutsko, Project Coordination Cell, 3rd HBCT, West Point class of 2003, grew up in Old Forge, N.Y., watching her older brother go through the trials of being a cadet. When it came time to decide which service academy was right for her it was a simple choice for her to "Go Army."

"(I) don't like to be on a ship and I don't like to fly," said Kutsko.

Every cadet has to have a congressional nomination and Kutsko was nominated by former Sen. Alfonse Marcelllo D'Amato (N.Y.)

In readying cadets for Army life, a regular physical fitness test was administered every six months at West Point. After the initial first-year orientation, physical fit-

ness becomes less of a worry. The "Beast" is a grueling seven week introduction to cadet life.

Patience is key to success in a stressful environment like West Point,

Kutsko said. In relation to Iraq, we are going to be here for a long time, with changes happening constantly. It made us mature a little bit faster (with the West Point experience) because of the responsibility load, which has helped me in dealing with being deployed.

Capt. Julie Zavage, battle captain, 64th Brigade Support Battalion, graduated from West Point in 2003 and remembers the infamous day of Sept. 11. The campus was put on alert but the faculty decided to proceed with daily life as normal as possible, Zavage said. No classes were canceled but in between we would catch glimpses of the news on TV.

Zavage has two older siblings that attended West Point and that was a big factor for her deciding to go there.

I wanted to experience the traditions of this magical place that I had heard so much about growing up, Zavage said.

With the scandals associated with the other service academies, Zavage was very positive about her West Point experience.

I never experience resentment (for being a woman) in my leadership positions at West Point, Zavage said. With West Point making us take leadership positions it helps us prepare for the challenge of dealing with male-female working relationship issues.

Lt. Col. Leonard Wells, commander, 3rd STB, attended West Point from 1984 to 1988 and was never made to feel like

an outsider.

"I was a cadet like everybody else," Wells said.

Wells currently is on his third deployment to Iraq and if he were in charge of West Point today he would not change the curriculum drastically to cater more to the Global War Terrorism.

West Point teaches you the thought process but it does not give you the silver bullet or magical answer, Wells said. They give you core values and fundamentals to tackle situations. The same process I used as a second lieutenant to solve a tactical problem I use today.

The process is to lead by example, something that is ingrained in the brain of every cadet from day one at West Point.

Your Soldiers expect you to do everything that you ask them to do and take care of them at the same time, Wells said.

Right now we have Soldiers on force protection. Leading by example is for me to put the same gear that they have on and check up on them to see if they need anything, he said.

I find out a little bit about the Soldiers, where they are from, have they been on mid tour leave yet. Then at 2 a.m. I put the same stuff on again and go to a different tower. I am not going to ask them to do anything that I would not do.

An issue that has been the same for all three former cadets is the getting over the stereotype that West Pointers are arrogant.

Once you get out of West Point it is up to you to determine how well and how far you go, Wells said. Once you get your commission we are all second lieutenants whether you went to West Point or not.

# FAR # 11

## NCOs are the keepers of the standards!

Noncommissioned officers are known as the “Backbone of the Army” for a reason. It is because of NCOs that a mission is accomplished.

By enforcing standards, NCOs ensure that Soldiers are safe in everything they do. Strict enforcement whether it’s packing up a container or patrolling an insurgent-laden village leads to bringing everyone home safely.

As NCOs, if you allow a deficiency to pass your eye, you have set a new standard. Each Army regulation dictates a Soldier’s conduct. However, were it not for NCOs enforcing those standards those regulations would be meaningless.

NCOs perform pre-mission checks to ensure their Soldiers are properly outfitted before leaving the wire. NCOs conduct post mission checks to ensure that each Soldier retained their gear while outside the wire.

Ensuring a Soldier is properly outfitted for a mission allows them to be prepared for any situation that may arise.

Eye protection and gloves are two of the most common violations that NCOs must correct. These items are vital to protect a Soldier’s two most valuable assets: hands and eyes. Without either, a Soldier is next to useless.

NCOs will continue to enforce standards for the betterment of all because without standards we would be nothing less than the insurgency we are fighting to eliminate.

# Random Thoughts

We’re going home. What wonderful words. Words that invite visions of favorite people, favorite places, favorite activities and favorite food. They also start us thinking about the year that has been. It’s been a challenging year; one not without struggle and suffering. The Bible says that we should “rejoice in our suffering, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance character; and character hope. And hope, does not disappoint us ...” (Romans 5:3-5a).

As we reflect on the year, we may not be so sure about rejoicing in the suffering but we will certainly celebrate the good things, surely strive to learn from the bad things and hopefully integrate them effectively into the new people that we are becoming through it all. We will remember the Soldiers who died advancing the cause of freedom, and more personally, protecting the left or right flank of his buddy. We will look for the wounded who have returned home ahead of us. We will discover how things have changed at home, how we have changed and how all of those changes will play out in our lives.

Confidently, we will rest in the knowledge that we were given a tough job and we did it – persevering together – in an exemplary manner. We will solemnly acknowledge the price we paid for our success. I pray that we will rest peacefully, in the presence of family and friends who love us and who seek our best.

Then, because we are Soldiers, we will recommit ourselves to preparing for the next mission. We will look out for our buddies who may not have anyone to meet them when they come home – and we will include them in our total reintegration to American society. We are a team. We will not forget. We will persevere in peace – together – as we have in war. May God help us all.

## Photo share



Photo by 1st Lt. Duane Sanders

Some down time during an overnight mission at an Iraqi Army compound yielded this shot. The M1-A2 tank was parked directly underneath one of the guard towers. The strong directional light on the tank was a result of the tower spotlight above it. About 15 feet to the right, Iraqi and U.S. Soldiers were standing around a bonfire. The wind happened to be just right and blew the smoke over the tank.



Photo by 1st Lt. Duane Sanders

I took this shot during my first air assault mission in Iraq. I got a “window seat” and was able to capture this image just as both birds banked to the right in unison.