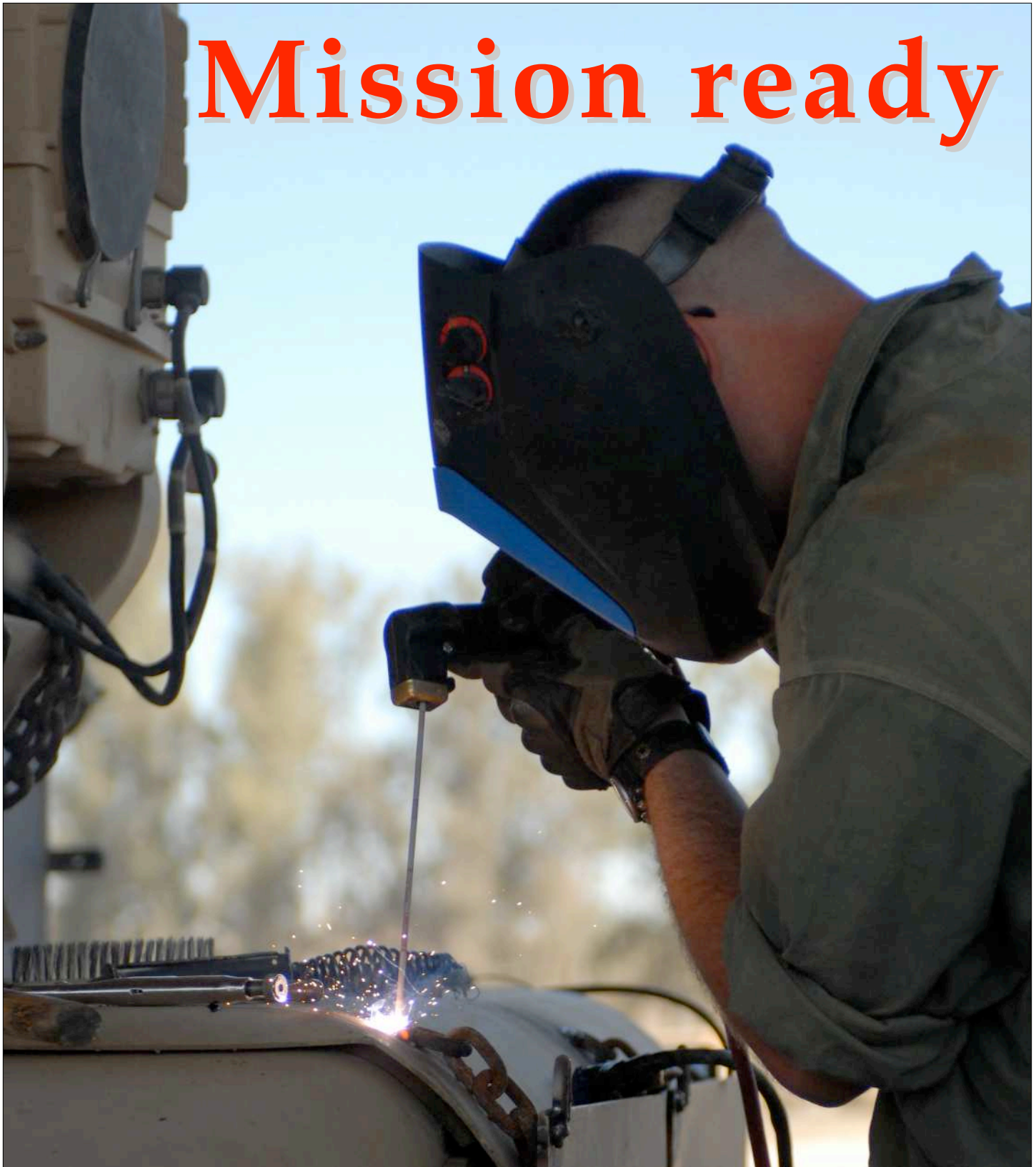




Mission ready



Beacon's Light

Editor's Pen

It's been a busy two months for Strikers. Many have moved out to Combat Outposts and Joint Security Stations, with still more coming in the days and weeks to follow.

Last month, we were able to spend a few days with Blackjack at Camp Liberty. We've included a few photos from that trip on the cover and pages 6 and 7. In the coming months we're hoping to spend time with the other outlying battalions outside of the Striker Operational Environment as our 15 month stay here continues.

We're always on the look out for stories from Soldiers out there doing the job. If you've got photos we can use those as well. Simply send them to the e-mail address below with as much information as possible and look for those stories and photos in these pages.

I hope you enjoy this edition and I look forward to seeing your products.

Thanks for reading,

Sgt. Zach Mott

3rd BCT Public Affairs NCOIC
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Fighting Eagles move off FOB Marez and into COP Knight to help secure Mosul.

Page 4



Blackjack operations help troopers and IA counterparts own the night.

Page 6 & 7



Phoenix Soldiers continue diverse and varied missions. This month they moved to COP War Eagle and kept fit.

Page 10



Mountaineers continue to place barriers along major throughfares to keep Iraqis and American forces safe.

Page 11

On the cover

Sgt. Brandon Felton, a mechanic with Comanche Troop, 4th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, welds a hook onto a Humvee at the Squadron Maintenance Bay on Camp Liberty. Felton and other Blackjack mechanics work long hours to ensure the troopers on the road have what they need and can rely on that equipment.

Photo by Sgt. Zach Mott



The *Striker Beacon* is published in the interest of the Soldiers, Families and friends of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division. The *Striker Beacon* is an Army-funded newsletter authorized for members of the U.S. Army under the provision of AR 360-1. Contents of the *Striker Beacon* are not necessarily the official views of, nor endorsed by, the U.S. Government, Department of Defense or Department of the Army

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Striker Beacon staff writer
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Spc. Joseph Rivera Rebolledo

3rd BCT broadcaster
Spc. Michael Cox

HORT REPORT

Strikers, Family and friends of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division,

As difficult as it is for me to recognize another sacrifice of our Soldiers, I know it pales in comparison to the pain felt by family for the death of their beloved Soldier and hero. Our deepest most heartfelt sympathies go out to the families dealing with the deaths of nine great heroes and warriors. Silver Lions SSG Michael Elledge and SGT Christopher Simpson; our Wareagles SSG Joseph Gamboa, CPL Steven Candello, SPC Joshua Molina, SGT Michael Lilly, and CPL Jason Kazanick, our Engineer brother SSG Jeremiah McNeal, and our friend and fellow leader MAJ Mark Rosenberg, all killed by faceless cowards while they fought for a free Iraq and a safer world.

These Soldiers have paid the ultimate sacrifice, and their deaths will not be in vain. Because of them, other Soldiers and civilians will be saved.

The mission of the Striker Brigade in Baghdad has not changed, but it has become more important than ever. The Brigade recently took control of operations in Sadr City just in time for the political situation in Iraq to spur an

attempted uprising in the Iraqi port City of Basra from rouge elements formerly affiliated with al-Sayeed Muqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army. This uprising resonated to al Sadr's name-sake, Sadr City where the Striker Brigade in partnership with the Iraqi Security Forces is containing the violence to the region.

This is a tense and difficult time for the Striker Brigade, but our mission in Baghdad now is possibly more critical than ever. Progress is being made all over the city. Just west of the central canal from Sadr City, Iraqis are feeling a sense of security and stability like never before. Just a month ago, Iraqis in Old Adhamiyah celebrated Moulid al Nabi, the Birth of the Prophet festival, for the first time in five years. Markets are open and the streets are filled with shoppers; children are going to school; Iraqis are going to work and each day more neighborhoods are getting overhauled to inspire more economic growth. Strikers along side our partners in the Iraqi Security Forces will not allow what is happening in Sadr City to spill over into these peaceful communities.

The brigade has some really tough weeks ahead of it, but I'm confident when we are passed this recent rise in

violence, Baghdad and the rest of Iraq will have reached a new stage of development. Iraqi Security Forces tested and tried here will learn valuable lessons and experiences to better enable them to combat future threats to Iraqi sovereignty; and thanks to the Steadfast and Loyal efforts of the Striker Brigade, other American Soldiers will not have to return to Iraq.

I ask our Soldiers to remain vigilant and remember that our Iraqi partners are fighting and dying for their country. Together with the Iraqi Security Forces, the enemy will gain no ground.

For our Families and friends back at Fort Carson and elsewhere in the U.S., thank you for your continued support and service. Without your support, our mission would be impossible. We are at a critical time here, so now more than ever the efforts you make on the homefront ensures our Soldiers remain mission focused and ready. Thank you for all that you do.

Steadfast and Loyal,

Strikers!

COL JOHN H. HORT

Commanding



Communicating

Col. John Hort, commander of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, speaks to an Iraqi soldier during a visit to the recently established Joint Security Station Tharwa 2 in the southern portion of the southern Sadr City district of Baghdad April 13. The visit allowed Hort and his Soldiers to evaluate security conditions and life support at the station.

Photo by Spc. Joseph Rivera Rebolledo

Fighting Eagles move into sector

by Capt. Richard Ybarra

115th MPAD

MOSUL, Iraq — Fighting Eagles Soldiers are working the latest phase of the fight against al-Qaida in Iraq by living among Iraqi citizens at Combat Outpost Knight in eastern Mosul and gaining their trust by constant patrolling and interaction.

“We conduct atmospherics gathering, talk to the local populace and see what their needs are, what their security level is,” said 1st Lt. Larry Gwinn, a platoon leader with Company D, 1st Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment.

Gwinn also stated that sanitation workers had been hired through the local government and were making a difference in the community.

“It’s about hearts and minds. We check and see how many schools are around, doctors, retired Iraqi army, people that want to help us help them,” added Spc. Jamel Staton Co. D, 1st Bn., 8th Inf. Reg.

This requires frequent patrols that originate from COP Knight. The COP is a small fortified base that allows Soldiers to stay close to the surrounding neighborhoods and act as a quick response force for citizens if needed.

The Fighting Eagles’ rotate into

COP Knight every four days. While at the COP Soldiers complete required duties that vary between those designed to ensure the functioning of the COP to guard duty.

Soldiers fill the downtime by working out, watching movies or playing portable computer games. Card games are a particular favorite of the Soldiers for chewing up excess time on the COP. A game or two of Chinese poker can often be found going on at any time during the day.

“When we are not on a mission we don’t like to talk about a mission. We talk about things that get our minds off of it or play cards, watch a movie or have a fire and have a little small talk about times at home,” said Staton.

The rhythm of COP life goes on relentlessly for the Soldiers as they move from patrols to the COP and back to patrols. Breaking the cycle only on the end of the fourth day when they return to Forward Operating Base Marez.

A return to the FOB does not mean a break from missions for the Soldier’s. It merely changes their location for a different, but still busy, schedule.

“We pull PMCS (Preventive Maintenance Checks and Services) on

all our vehicles; tanks, MRAPs and Humvees, get those fueled up and greased down, order parts if we need to,” said Staton. “We also run missions from FOB Marez, usually just into a different sector.”

A grueling cycle such as this could have an affect on the morale of even the best units. To the contrary, this cycle was just what the unit needed according to Gwinn. The Fighting Eagles, conducting operations in Mosul for more than two months, are now hitting a stride. Gwinn stated that his Soldiers have adapted well and are in a rhythm.

“At first, before we had the actual cycle, it was pretty rough, as far as the optempo goes, the Soldiers were getting pretty strung-out,” said Gwinn. “Now that there is more of a pattern to our schedules, the guys are more in-tune with what is going on. Now that we can give them some predictability, they can make adjustments to their personal schedules.”

Staton added that he and his fellow platoon members could accomplish whatever was required, regardless of the condition or mission.

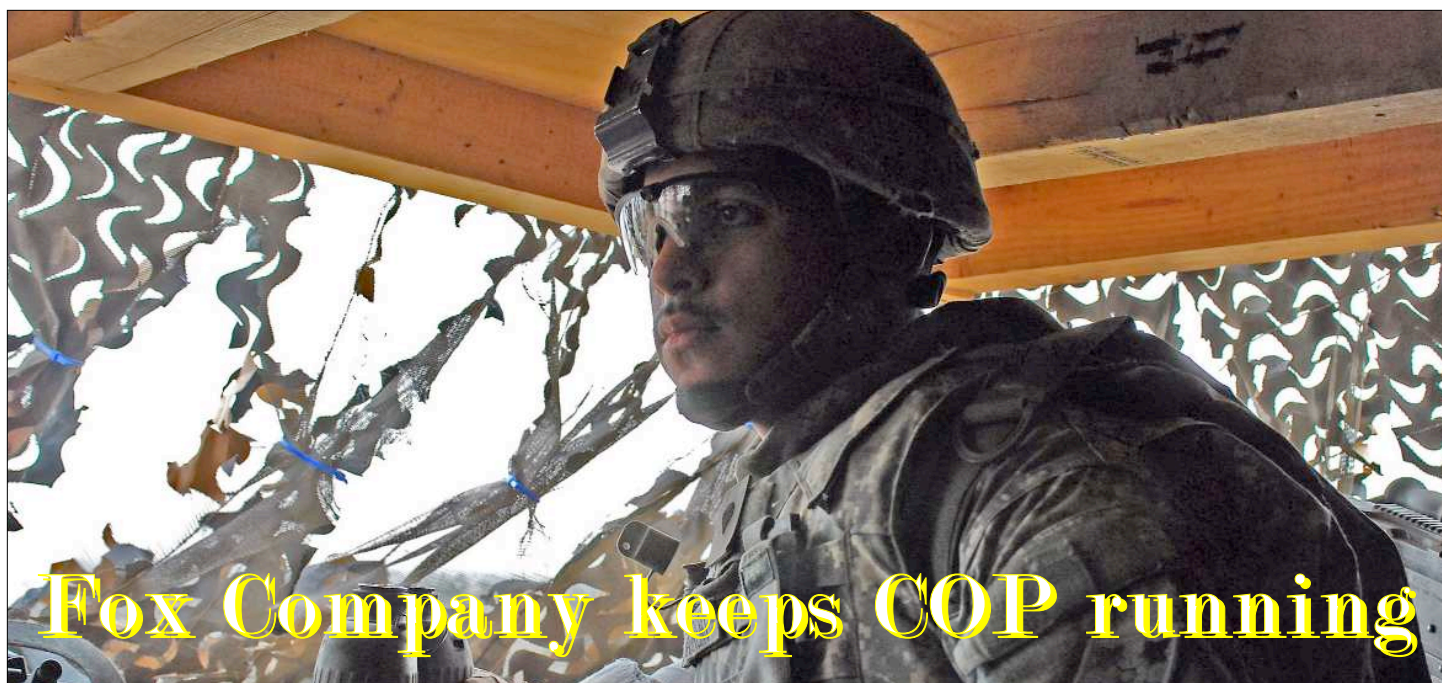
“We are always going to make do ... we are Soldiers first and foremost,” he said.



Photos by Capt. Richard Ybarra

Pfc. Andrew Barger, Company D, 1st Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, fills his tray with food as his fellow platoon members move through the line at COP Knight after a mission into the al-Kadra neighborhood of Mosul.

INSET: Spc. Jamel Staton, 1st Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, keeps an alert posture while utilizing available cover and concealment during a mission in the al-Kadra neighborhood of Mosul.



by Spc. Elvyn Nieves

Striker Beacon staff writer

COMBAT OUTPOST 317 – The Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers of Company F, 1st Battalion, 68th Armor Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, stationed at Combat Outpost Callahan, are ready to continue their vital resupply mission and to maintain their vigilance on security in the area.

The Soldiers successfully made the move from Camp Taji March 7; their task is to provide sustainability for operations in the COP.

1st Sgt. Michael Young, Co. F, a Newport, R.I., native, said his Soldiers' mission is to provide logistical support to 1-68 AR so it can conduct its mission. The company pro-

vides the fuel, maintenance support, mechanics, cooks, fuelers and transportation assets to keep the battalion moving.

"Without bullets, they're not going to be able to fight; without food they're not going to be able to sustain themselves and without fuel they're not going to be able to get the vehicles running," said Young.

Co. F is also in charge of security in COP Callahan, and most Soldiers are rotating for guard shifts.

"We're on the lookout for people shooting rocket-propelled grenades at us, or have hostile intent, and keeping an eye for anything suspicious," said Spc. Angel Marrero, a Pleasantville, N.J., native, who serves as truck driver.

Young said the noncommissioned officers under him understand the mission they have and are able to think ahead and pre-plan.

"In comparison to our last deployment, we had more downtime then," said Young. "You don't see a lot of Soldiers watching movies this time around. When they're not sleeping, it's because they're working."

"I do pretty much nothing else but work since I got here," said Chief Warrant Officer 3 Joseph Bolte, a Marion, Kan., native, who serves as maintenance control technician for 1-68 AR.

Young said he understands the challenge during this deployment and he foresees it as one of great achievements.

"I think this deployment is going to push my NCOs way out of their limits," said Young. "A year later, they're going to look back and see a lot of growth. My Soldiers are the biggest asset. When I get back and retire, I'll know the Soldiers in the support company I was under will be able to pick up."



Photo by Spc. Elvyn Nieves

Chief Warrant Officer 3 Joseph Bolte, maintenance control technician for 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 68th Armor Regiment, repairs the air conditioner of a vehicle that was previously hit by an improvised-explosive device.

Owning the day and night

Blackja



ABOVE: During a joint operation in Ameriyah with the Iraqi Army, Blackjack Soldiers search the air ducts of a house for hidden munitions.

LEFT: Pfc. Ronald Waford, Apache Troop, talks with a group of Iraqi children while on patrol south of Bakariyah in western Baghdad.

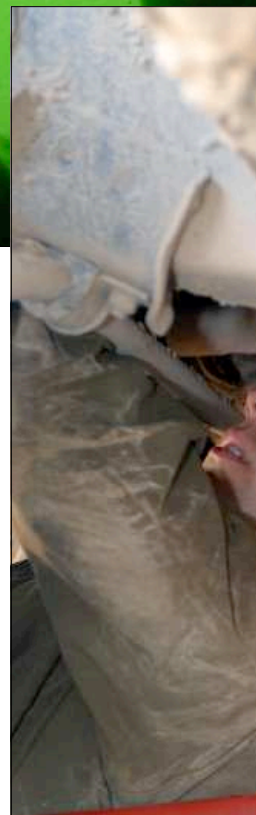
CENTER: Spc. William Gwin, a mechanic with Dragoon Troop, looks underneath a Humvee while performing maintenance at Camp Liberty.

TOP RIGHT: Lt. Col. Monty Willoughby, commander of 4th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, uses his flashlight to read a document during a joint raid in Ameriyah with the Iraqi Army.

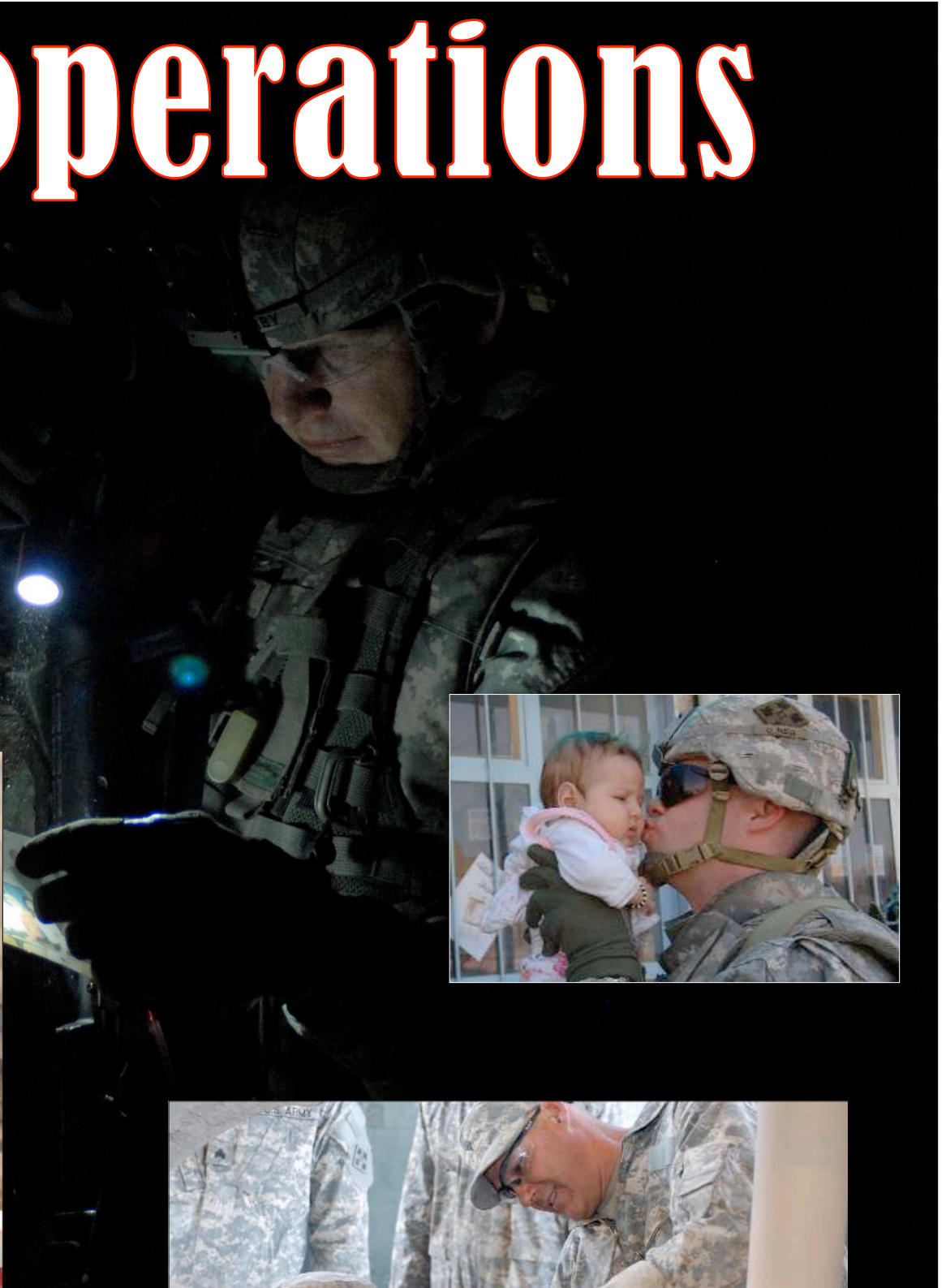
INSET RIGHT: Capt. David Tier, Apache Troop commander, kisses an Iraqi baby while on patrol.

FAR RIGHT: Specialists William Gwin (left) and Ron Larrabee, both with Dragoon Troop, 4th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, work on a Humvee engine while conducting maintenance at Camp Liberty.

Inset Right photo by Sgt. Sharhonda McCoy, Left photo by Sgt. James Hunter; all other photos by Sgt. Zach Mott.



ck operations



Striker shots

Photo by Tech Sgt. Adrian Cadiz, 1st Combat Camera Squadron
2nd Lt. Elizabeth Nelson provides security at a traffic checkpoint in eastern Baghdad with members of the 3rd Battalion, 4th Brigade, 1st National Police Division. Nelson serves as the military police platoon leader with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Special Troops Battalion.



Photo by Spc. Joseph Rivera Rebolledo
LEFT: Pvt. Axel Marson gives "five" to an Iraqi child during a patrol in the Qahira neighborhood of Baghdad. The child was walking by with his sister, and after passing the Soldier, he decided to come back for his "five." Marson serves as a mortar infantryman with 4th Platoon, Company A, 1st Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment.



Photo by Tech Sgt. Adrian Cadiz, 1st Combat Camera Squadron
Sgt. Travis Jochinsen provides security at a traffic checkpoint in eastern Baghdad as members of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs Office interview members of the 3rd Battalion, 4th Brigade, 1st National Police Division. Jochinsen is a military policeman with 3rd Special Troops Battalion.



Photo by Spc. Joseph Rivera Rebolledo
Spc. Francisco Lassiter conducts a foot patrol on the streets of Baghdad's Suleikh neighborhood as a Stryker vehicle passes by. Lassiter, who serves as a tanker with 4th Platoon, Company A, 1st Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, was part of a patrol that was gathering information from residents and visiting Iraqi Army checkpoints.

Streets get back to life in Adhamiyah

by Spc. Elvyn Nieves

Striker Beacon staff writer

ADHAMIYAH – During a joint dismounted patrol with the Iraqi Army on Chem Street, Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers witnessed the changes and progress in the area and its bustling market.

The Soldiers of 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, attached to the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, along with the Iraqi Army Soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 1st Brigade, 11th Iraqi Army Division, and the Sons of Iraq (Abna al-Iraq), have been working hand-in-hand to provide Adhamiyah residents with enough security for them to feel safe walking the streets.

“What we’ve been doing in the last four months is working with our IA counterparts and putting them in the front so people can see their IA is out there to help security as much as we

are,” said Capt. Erik Kjonnerod, commander of Troop A, 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment.

“We wanted to show them their Iraqi Security Forces are out there as much we are. They’re not sitting on check points doing nothing. They go out on patrols just like the Americans do.”

The awakening of the market on Chem Street is attributed to the progress in security in the area.

“When we first got here, we could see an average of 15 to 20 shops open,” said Staff Sgt. Germaine Seabrook, a cavalry scout in Troop A, 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment. “With the help of Iraqi forces, we helped keep the security tight. Most of the Iraqi people started coming back, opening up shops, and the economy started rolling better. The people from Adhamiyah can see how safe it is now.”

The advantage of joint, dismounted patrols is getting Soldiers to talk to

people and letting the people know they are there for security, and they do care about their concerns.

“In the beginning of our work here, the streets were pretty much desolated,” said 1st Lt. Matthew Jensen, a platoon leader in Troop A. “We didn’t see many people walking around. People were scared to get out of their homes. Through civil affairs, micro grants, the Sons of Iraq and our presence, people started coming out. Most of the stores on Chem Street are opened now.”

The populated market in Chem Street proves the success of joint dismounted patrols. The Iraqi people feel more confident to get out of their houses, walk the streets and approach the ISF with their problems and concerns. The SoI keeps the security and peace in the area when the Coalition Forces are not around. Thus far, it’s a method the Iraqi people can see and feel.

Phoenix are moving out, staying fit

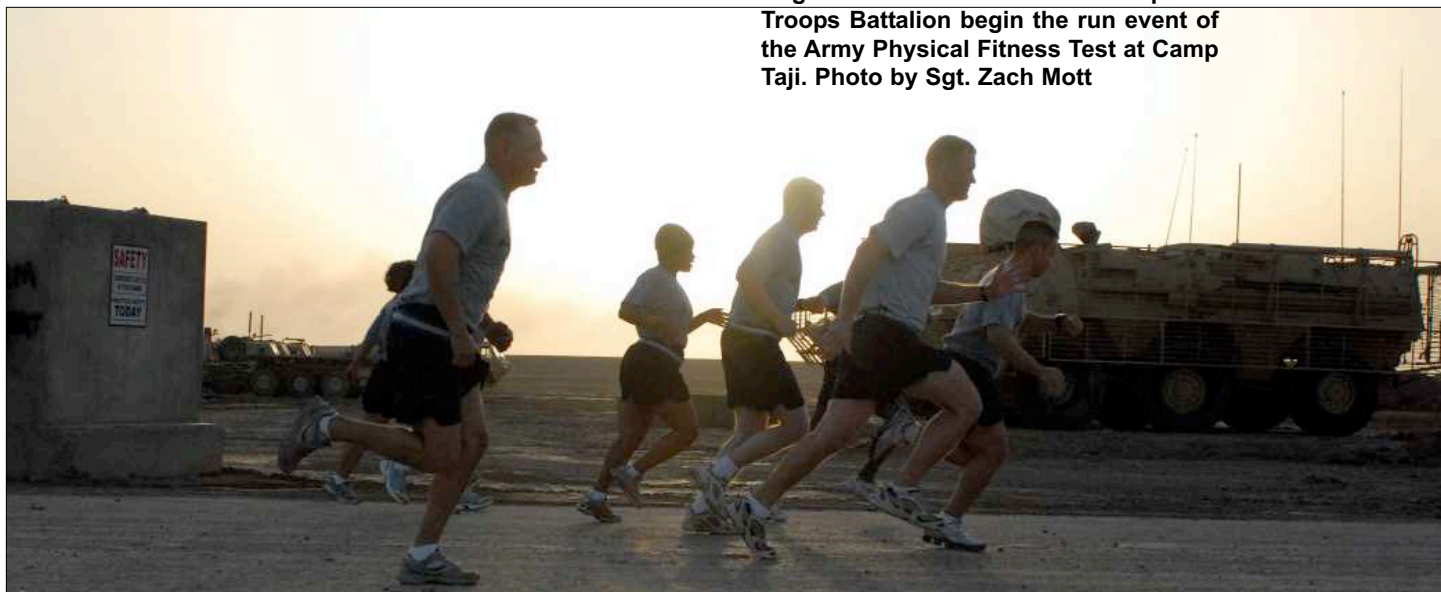


ABOVE: Pvt. Mathew Logston, Company A, 64th Brigade Support Battalion, prepares to check to make sure the weapons of the Iraqi Soldier is cleared at the front gate of Combat Outpost 342. Photo by Spc. Elvyn Nieves

LEFT: Sgt. Jamie Schott, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Special Troops Battalion, checks the connections on the battery of a 10k generator at Combat Outpost 342 in Baghdad. Photo by Spc. Elvyn Nieves

RIGHT: 3rd Special Troops Battalion Soldiers Staff Sgt. Patrick Sanders (rear), watches the time as Capt. Carlos Martinez holds the feet of Sgt. 1st Class Patrice Cenace during an Army Physical Fitness Test Camp Taji. Photo by Sgt. Zach Mott

BOTTOM: Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers with the 3rd Special Troops Battalion begin the run event of the Army Physical Fitness Test at Camp Taji. Photo by Sgt. Zach Mott



Mountaineers are ready all night, every night

by **Spc. Elvyn Nieves**

Striker Beacon staff writer

BAGHDAD – In an effort to reduce the possibility of improvised-explosive device attacks between barriers that have been moved or destroyed Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers from 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, have been conducting barrier maintenance.

While replacing broken barriers, Soldiers from Company A, 64th Brigade Support Battalion, have diligently strived to make sure the barrier line was straight and closed up empty spaces to prevent the placement of IEDs during an overnight mission March 23 and 24.

“Barriers don’t lay well (here) because of the uneven and muddy ground,” said 1st Lt. Clay Hanika, a platoon leader in Co. A, 64th BSB. “We usually lay those barriers on flat

surfaces, but last night we had to stick rocks underneath the barriers to balance them out and lay properly against the next barrier.”

This night’s route in a northern Baghdad neighborhood is a narrow road that created a difficult challenge to these troops.

“We tried to minimize the amount of dismounted Soldiers in this street since you only have one way in and out,” said Staff Sgt. Ricardo Hamlin, a petroleum laboratory specialist in Co. A, 64th BSB. “Our biggest challenge is to be on the look out for booby traps, IEDs and small arms fire.”

Hanika said these types of missions are a constant learning experience where in order to succeed he passes the information of what he saw in the area to the

next convoy commander to give him a heads up to better prepare for the mission.

The barriers serve to cut off exit avenues for criminals trying to stage an attack against Coalition or Iraqi Forces. When the enemy runs away from combat, there won’t be many escape routes because of the barriers.

“We’ve been doing this mission for three months now and my Soldiers always perform great,” said Hanika. “Every time we face a challenge, the Soldiers step up immediately to face it and we’ll continue to do so until we leave Iraq.”



Photos by Spc. Elvyn Nieves

LEFT: Staff Sgt. Ricardo Hamlin, a petroleum specialist with Company A, 64th Brigade Support Battalion, guides the barrier with an Iraqi worker on a main supply route in a northern Baghdad neighborhood.

ABOVE: 1st Lt. Clay Hanika (left) and Staff Sgt. Ricardo Hamlin observe the base of a recently placed barrier to make sure it is level.

Can’t find the *Striker Beacon*? Try looking at the following places:

www.dvidshub.net

To view the *Beacon*, and other Striker Brigade related content, you must create

a log on (anyone is eligible) and click on publications, scroll down to “Striker Beacon” (it’s in alphabetical order) and download a PDF version of the paper.

www.hood.army.mil/4ID/index.html

Information on the 4th ID and 3rd BCT is located in the news section.

www.armyfrg.org

Use your log on infor-

mation obtained at the deployment fair or register for the 3rd BCT, 4th ID FRG and view all the latest information available on the Striker Brigade as well as events available locally.

How Full Is Your Glass?

Commentary by Chaplain (Capt.) Phillip
Rittermeyer

64th Brigade Support Battalion

We all know the difference between the optimist and the pessimist. Most optimists think that pessimists are too negative and any good pessimist can tell you just how annoying an optimist can be.

But regardless of how full or how empty you think your glass is, there is a lot to be said about keeping a good, balanced attitude.

Given our current situation, it might seem easy to slip into the role of a pessimist but I would argue that it is just as easy to slip into the role of the optimist.

Focusing on the negative, while a bit more natural for most people, actually becomes a detriment.

A poor attitude results in, among other things, people not wanting to be around you. If you suddenly start seeing less and less of the people you

normally hang around this could be a sign your attitude is slipping. Nobody likes to be around negative people, not even negative people.

At some point in the course of this deployment even the most optimistic person

will have a bad day. The important thing to remember is that you can have a bad day or two, but an overall attitude that looks to the positive, seeks out the good in others, and tries to stay happy, will get you down the road of deployment with fewer bumps.

As my grandfather says, "Every day may not be good, but there's something good in every day."

Stay alert, stay focused, and stay positive.

Peace of Mind

CAPTION THIS



Photo by Spc. Elvyn Nieves

Caption This goes as such: I'll write some silly caption here and if you can come up with something better, while still remaining printable in a command information publication, I'll run the best one on the back page of the *Striker Bolt*. Think you're up for the challenge? Send your submissions to zachary.mott@iraq.centcom.mil.

My Submission: That didn't turn out right.

Commentary by Chaplain (Capt.) Stephen Pratel
1st CAB, 8th Infantry Regiment

Perhaps you have heard the axiom "Never put a period where God has put a comma." This thought provoking sound bite has been used by philosophers, teachers, preachers, politicians and people from many walks of life over the last 40 years. For some time now, I have sought to discover its source, and the closest I could get was to Gracie Allen, one of America's most famous and beloved comedians. Though Gracie died the same month and year I was born, like many of you, I grew up watching her hilarious antics as part of the Burns and Allen act. If you don't remember Allen you will surely remember Burns, as in George Burns, the universally loved little cigar smoking man who played God in the popular 70's era movies with John Denver. But I digress ...

The story is told that in 1964, when Gracie was close to dying, George was in such grief and sorrow that he could barely speak or function. They had been together since their 20s and had spent nearly their entire adult lives together. George told her that not only did he not want her to die, but that he also didn't want to live without her. In that moment, he saw nothing but a big period, the end of everything he had loved and trusted in life. When she realized she was losing her fight against heart disease, Gracie wrote a note of comfort. In it she said simply, "George, never put a period where God has put a comma." George would later share those profound words with numerous friends throughout his life, and because of his sharing, many have been blessed by its simple yet powerful truth which simply says, "It is OK ... God is in Control."

I don't know if Gracie authored those words in a

moment of inspired loving wisdom to her husband, or if she was echoing something she heard during her lifetime. What is important is that we hear the words, and humbly submit ourselves to their awesome truth and the staggering hope that lies within. It's OK ... God is in Control. I don't know about you, but there have been times and seasons in my life where I felt a big fat period had dropped on me ... Opportunities blocked, relationships ended, doors closed, hopes dashed. Times when all I could see were dead ends. But one of the things that I found, is that God decides on the punctuation of life, setting the commas, question marks, exclamations, periods and so on.

Now truth be told, most of us are horrible when it comes to punctuation. Thankfully, God never misplaces a period or comma, or any form of punctuation in our lives. He places them judiciously and purposefully. And though His choice of punctuation (i.e. ways) are not ours, they are totally trustworthy and ultimately perfect for our lives. As you live through this deployment, whether you are deployed in theatre, serving in a support or combat position, holding down the home front or fighting to keep the Rear D under control, believe me, God cares about the punctuation of your life and believe it or not, through all the chaos, confusion, contradictions and complications of our lives, God is in control and he has a plan. Our place is to learn to trust Him and look to Him for His guidance and direction in discerning the punctuations. I'd like to expand on Gracie's wit and wisdom and say, "Don't let anyone or anything (including yourself) put a period where God has put a comma and don't ever put a comma where God has put a period. It's OK ... God is in control." Say good-night Gracie.



Steadfast and Loyal



Staff Sgt. Michael Elledge
Company C

1st CAB, 68th Armor Regiment
December 21, 1966 to March 17, 2008

Cpl. Steven Candelo
Troop A

1st Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment
June 11, 1987 to March 26, 2008

Staff Sgt. Joseph Gamboa
Troop B

1st Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment

Sgt. Christopher Simpson
Company C

1st CAB, 68th Armor Regiment
July 19, 1984 to March 17, 2008

July 22, 1973 to March 25, 2008

Spc. Joshua Molina
Troop C

1st Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment
April 8, 1986 to March 27, 2008

Staff Sgt. Jeremiah McNeal
Company C

237th Engineer Battalion

Sgt. Michael Lilly
Company B

1st Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment
May 31, 1984 to April 7, 2008

November 16, 1984 to April 6, 2008

Cpl. Jason Kazarick
Company B

1st Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment
July 20, 1977 to April 7, 2008



Photos by Sgt. Zach Mott
An Iraqi baby boy, nicknamed "Alex Callahan," after the Soldier who found him and the base that he was left at, sleeps on a bed at Forward Operating Base Callahan in Baghdad April 5.

Baby left at doorstep finds new home

by Sgt. Zach Mott

Striker Beacon editor

FOB CALLAHAN, Iraq – Spotting irregularities is a tactic that is drilled into the minds of Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers throughout training and in practice while in Iraq.

Soldiers recently watched as a car pulled up to an entry control point at Forward Operating Base Callahan in northern Baghdad. They continued to watch as a woman stepped out of the car holding a bag. Once the woman dropped the bag near the gate, internal alarms were ringing and a careful search was called for and conducted.

That search yielded a newborn baby wrapped tightly in several cloths. Soldiers raced to the bag, retrieved the child and brought him to the aid station to be examined.

"We unwrapped it to make sure he was alive – and he wasn't sick, he wasn't dead, he wasn't injured," said Staff Sgt. Paul Briscoe, the Aid Station NCOIC at FOB Callahan. "He was a perfectly healthy baby. I'm

guessing three to seven days old. He was in perfect health. There wasn't a scratch on him."

This unlikely sight brought images of the Las Vegas native's two children to mind.

"It was like my kids were newborns again," said Briscoe, who serves with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 68th Armor Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division.

After the medics were satisfied the baby, who by this time had drawn the nickname "Alex Callahan" after the Soldier who found him and the name of the base, was in no need of immediate medical attention, the focus shifted to what they would do with the child.

An interpreter working at the base volunteered to go to a nearby store to buy diapers and formula while another interpreter took care of Alex. Briscoe said the aid station became a hub of activity as word spread throughout the small base of the new arrival.

"I've fed him twice, just holding him, watching him, making sure that he's alright," said Doreen Haddad, an interpreter with 1-68 AR, who helped care for Alex. "I've changed his diapers twice. I wanted to give him a bath, but I wasn't able to."

While a forward operating base isn't the ideal location for a baby, Soldiers and those working at FOB Callahan ensured that Alex's stay there was as comfortable as possible.

The baby is to be adopted by the brother of a local national, who works at the base. The brother, and his wife, have been married five years and have been unable to have a baby of their own. The interpreters at FOB Callahan have taken a collection to donate to the family to help care for the baby.

Despite the thousands of miles that separates the Soldiers from their Families in Colorado, one constant remains with this baby and those they left behind.

"He's sleeping and pooping – just like a regular baby," Briscoe said.

Soldier earns Purple Heart

Photos by Spc. Joseph Rivera Rebolledo

TOP LEFT: Capt. Nicholas Countouriotis, a Military Transition Team member at Forward Operating Base War Eagle, explains to Command Sgt. Maj. Daniel Dailey, the senior enlisted leader of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, and Col. John Hort, commander of the 3rd BCT, how he was wounded.

MIDDLE LEFT: Capt. Nicholas Countouriotis, a Military Transition Team member at Forward Operating Base War Eagle, is presented the Purple Heart by Col. John Hort, commander of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, after been wounded.

MIDDLE RIGHT: Capt. Nicholas Countouriotis, a Military Transition Team member at Forward Operating Base War Eagle, shakes hands with Col. John Hort, commander of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, after Hort presented a Purple Heart to him for a wound he suffered in action.



Capt. Nicholas Countouriotis, a Military Transition Team member at Forward Operating Base War Eagle, chats with Col. John Hort, commander of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, after Hort presented a Purple Heart Medal to him for a wound he suffered in action.



Capt. Nicholas Countouriotis, a Military Transition Team member at Forward Operating Base War Eagle, pays close attention to Col. John Hort, commander of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, after Hort presented him a Purple Heart Medal for a wound suffered in action.

MND-B, IA leaders plan for operation



Photos by Maj. Mike Humphreys

LEFT: Maj. Gen. Jeffery Hammond (center), commanding general of the 4th Infantry Division and Multi-National Division – Baghdad, observes as Col. John Hort (left), commander of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Inf. Div., provides guidance to subordinate commanders over a terrain model during a combined arms rehearsal at the 11th Iraqi Army Division Headquarters in Adhamiyah. Also in attendance at the brief was Iraqi Army Lt. Col. Yahyea Rasoull Abdallah al-Zubadie (right), commander 3rd Battalion, 42nd Brigade, 11th Iraqi Army Division. His unit is partnered with units from 3rd BCT, 4th Inf. Div., to secure parts of Sadr City from special groups that have terrorized the district.

BELOW: Iraqi Army Lt. Col. Yahyea Rasoull Abdallah al-Zubadie (left), the commander of 3rd Battalion, 42nd Brigade, 11th Iraqi Army Division; along with Lt. Col. Michael Pappal (center), commander, 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 68th Armor Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division; and Lt. Col. Dan Barnett (right), 1st Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, both of whom are battalion commanders in Multi-National Division – Baghdad, rehearse operations at the 11th IA Div. headquarters in Adhamiyah. The commanders study a combined operation in the Sadr City district of Baghdad to secure the population from special groups that have terrorized the district.



Strikers assist Iraqi brothers-in-arms



Photos by Tech. Sgt. Adrian Cadiz

LEFT: Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers from the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division chat as they provide security at an Iraqi Army combat patrol base in the Sadr City district of Baghdad. Soldiers from the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division were in Sadr City to check on the welfare of the Iraqi Army soldiers and meet with Iraqi Army leadership to discuss security plans in Sadr City.

ABOVE: Sgt. Matt, a military policeman with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Special Troops Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, provides security at a Sadr City District of Baghdad Iraqi Army combat patrol base. Soldiers from the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division were in Sadr City to check on the welfare of the Iraqi Army soldiers and to meet with Iraqi Army leadership to discuss security plans in Sadr City.



Iraqi children demonstrate artistic skills

by Spc. Joseph Rivera Rebolledo

Striker Beacon staff writer

BAGHDAD — A group of Iraqi children, between the ages of 2 and 12, were invited to Forward Operating Base War Eagle for an opportunity to showcase their artistic skills and creativity by painting the concrete walls used to protect citizens.

The children live in a village near War Eagle and walk by the t-walls daily on their way to school, said Capt. Megan Welch, a logistics officer with the 64th Brigade Support Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, adding that the children find the route to school to be a safer way to get to there.

The focus of this painting session was to establish a rapport with the adult and younger residents of the village. For Welch, it was a chance for

the children to make something pretty that they see daily, so she planned the t-wall painting day.

This is one more effort MND-B Soldiers are trying to help establish a solid relationship with the residents of the village and the Iraqi communities, said Welch, a native of La Crescent, Minn. It provided the Iraqi children an opportunity to see Soldiers not as simply armed protectors but someone to interact with also.

As part of the artwork, the children painted Iraqi and American flags, palm trees, flowers, hearts and other designs of their imagination to give

the t-walls a vivid look.

The painting also provides the children a better feeling of how people behind the uniform are, and it shows them Soldiers care for children too, said Welch.

“The kids who participated had a good time and, for us, it was a good opportunity to interact with the neighborhood kids,” said Capt. Walter Zurkowsky, a native of New Hampshire, N.H., who serves as executive officer for Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 3rd BCT.

Welch and her fellow Soldiers from the Mountaineer Battalion organized the day and said they hope to host similar events.

“We had a lot of fun with the kids. It was a good, cooperative community-building event, and we look forward to seeing many of these in the future,” Welch said.



Photo by Spc. Joseph Rivera Rebolledo
Two Iraqi girls celebrate after painting a t-wall at Forward Operating Base War Eagle. During the day, children of the village near War Eagle, who were between the ages 2 and 12, painted their artwork on the t-walls that line the way to their school.



Photo by Capt. Walter Zurkowsky
An Iraqi child paints a design on a t-wall as others watch at Forward Operating Base War Eagle. The children were invited to paint the t-wall they walk by daily on their way to school.



Soldiers patrol Sadr City streets with IA



Photos by Tech. Sgt. Adrian Cadiz, 1st Combat Camera Squadron

BELOW: Iraqi children in the southern portion of the Sadr City district of Baghdad cheer as Sgt. Jake Veith, who is assigned to the 42nd Brigade, 11th Iraqi Army Division Military Transition Team, provides security as Iraqi Army soldiers hand out food products during a humanitarian aid mission.

LEFT: An Iraqi Army soldier from the 42nd Brigade, 11th Iraqi Army Division, takes cover and points to where his men need to go during a firefight against armed criminals in the southern portion of the Sadr City district of Baghdad.

ABOVE: Capt. Will McNutt, assigned as the 2nd Battalion, 42nd Brigade, 11th Iraqi Army Division Military Transition Team chief, provides security from a building rooftop as Iraqi Army soldiers from the 42nd Iraqi Army Brigade, 11th Iraqi Army Division, battle armed criminals in the southern portion of the Sadr City District of Baghdad.



Engineers construct Striker headquarters

by Spc. Joseph Rivera Rebolledo

Striker Beacon staff writer

FOB WAR EAGLE – Soldiers from the Minnesota National Guard's 851st Vertical Engineer Company are constructing a three-story structure that will soon become the headquarters building for the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, at Forward Operating Base War Eagle.

"The structure consists of more than 10,000 square feet of construction, what would be considered in the United States as a commercial site," said Spc. Michael Passeretti, carpenter and NCOIC of the project with the

851st VEC.

Thus far, the crew has torn down and rebuilt most of the internal structure – in little more than two-and-a-half weeks, he said.

Passeretti, who has more than 20-years of experience in the field as a civilian general contractor, along with his team, was given the responsibility to deliver this project before April 10.

The project is "a high-profile mission," said 1st Lt. Josh Savage, platoon leader for the 851st VEC.

"This is the first three-story building we have ever built," Savage said.

On the economy, a construction of

this kind would cost an estimated \$600,000 to \$1 million in the United States, Passeretti said, adding that most of the Soldiers of the 851st VEC working on the project have military occupational skills other than vertical engineers.

The project, he said, has provided

him the opportunity to teach Soldiers how to use the tools and deal with measurements. Even though the Soldiers may not have the school-trained skills for working on this type of a project, the team is running ahead of schedule and is projected to be meet its target date.

"We are fortunate to have the leadership we have," said Passeretti. "They allow me to do my job based on my 20 years of experience."

The Soldiers have managed to keep up with the pace and demands of the given jobs while down-range, as evidenced by the fact they have constructed more than 100,000-square feet of floor in little less than the six months they have had "boots on ground," he added.

"I'm highly impressed," said Savage. "I feel like a coach – coaching a pro team."

For the Soldiers of the 851st VEC, the construction of the brigade headquarters is merely one of numerous projects the team will face together. Next up is building a Morale, Welfare and Recreation facility at War Eagle, which, of course, will be followed by various other missions throughout Multi-National Division – Baghdad.



Photos by Spc. Joseph Rivera Rebolledo

Spc. Michael Passeretti cuts a piece of wood with an electric saw while helping to build a new headquarters building for the 3rd Brigade Combat Team at Forward Operating Base War Eagle. Passeretti serves as a carpenter and project noncommissioned officer in charge with the 851st Vertical Engineer Company.



Staff Sgt. Daniel Jonckowski drives a nail while building stairs while helping to build a new headquarters building for the 3rd Brigade Combat Team at Forward Operating Base War Eagle. Jonckowski serves as a construction supervisor with the 851st Vertical Engineer Company.

Improvements continue at FOB War Eagle



LEFT: Sgt. 1st Class David Mays welds a post while constructing a barbed wire fence in Forward Operating Base War Eagle. Mays serves as the maintenance NCOIC with 3rd Special Troops Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team. BELOW: Sgt. 1st Class David Mays welds a post while constructing a barbed wire fence in Forward Operating Base War Eagle. Mays serves as the maintenance NCOIC with 3rd Special Troops Battalion.



Spc. Derek Oldakowsky, hammers a nail as he constructs a picnic table at Forward Operating Base War Eagle. Oldakowsky serves as a carpentry and masonry specialist with the 851st Vertical Engineer Company which is attached to 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division.

Photos by Spc. Joseph Rivera Rebolledo



Spc. Patrick May cuts plywood during the construction of the Striker Brigade headquarters at Forward Operating Base War Eagle. May serves as a carpentry and masonry specialist with the 851st Vertical Engineer Company attached to 3rd Brigade Combat Team.

Four Silver Lions awarded

by Sgt. Zach Mott

Striker Beacon editor

BAGHDAD – Multiple improvised-explosive devices, rocket-propelled grenades and a hail of gunfire greeted Silver Lions' Soldiers as they conducted route clearance in the southern portion of the Sadr City district of Baghdad April 11.

Abrams Tanks from Company C, 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 68th Armor Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, accompanying the route-clearance vehicles rushed into action to suppress the swelling attack that disabled a Coalition Forces vehicle and injured a Soldier.

The RPG and small-arms fire quickly turned to the two tanks and the Bradley Fighting Vehicle as they maneuvered to protect and then treat the injured Soldier. Sgt. 1st Class John Weatherly, the platoon sergeant leading the armored escorts, directed his troops to engage the criminals – who were firing from behind the cover of buildings and other nearby structures – once they were positively identified.

“We moved up beside the Husky on the right side to put ourselves between the Husky and Sadr City ... and engaged,” said Weatherly, a Culpeper, Va., native.

Weatherly's gunner, Sgt. Rুদ্ধie Williams, is on his second tour in Iraq with the Silver Lions and said he welcomed the opportunity to use the skills he's practiced so much.

“It’s nice having a vehicle that has the capability to actually do that – with the tank – and using it for what it’s for and not just rolling down the streets,” said the Morgantown, W. Va., native.

The fighting continued for more than 30 minutes as Williams scanned rooftops, alleys, windows and everything in between for criminals attempting to engage the patrol as oth-

ers worked to treat the injured Soldier.

“I was worried about guys on the ground that were helping with recovery and excited at the same time as I got to do what I was trained to do,” he said.

Clashes between special groups and members of the Iraqi Security Forces, as well as American troops, in the northeastern portion of Baghdad have increased in recent weeks. Weatherly, Williams and other members of the 1-68 AR have been at the tip of that fighting beside the ISF to help secure Baghdad.

Despite this lofty task, Weatherly, who is on his second Operation Iraqi Freedom tour, remains humble about his actions.

“We’re doing our job. That’s all it is – helping (support) Iraqi (Security) Forces when we’re doing our job,” he said.

His previous experience in Iraq was with the 1st Armored Division during OIF I.

In helping protect their fellow Soldiers, the Silver Lions were able to kill 12 criminals and destroy a cache in a secondary explosion that night. They also continued to provide security so the night's mission could be accomplished.

“We just held the intersection so they could finish placing the guard tower at (Joint Security Station) Tharwa,” he said.

Missions are a daily occurrence for these men, and the events of one day sometimes blur into those of the others. As Weatherly was recounting the actions that day, his voice took on an almost dulled tone – not because he doesn't see what he did that day as dull, just that the pace hasn't slowed since that day.

“It might have only been six days ago, but a lot has happened since

then,” he said.

For their actions, Weatherly and Williams were awarded the Bronze Star with Valor during a ceremony at Forward Operating Base Callahan April 17.



BAGHDAD – Col. John Hort (left) congratulates 1st Lt. as Staff Sgt. Danny Key, a St. Louis native, stands by. He later awarded the Bronze Star with Valor for their action in a night attack on an Iraqi Army checkpoint in the southern City district of Baghdad March 27.



From left, 1st Lt. Galen Peterson, Sgt. 1st Class Ruddle Williams stand at attention after being awarded the Purple Heart Medal by the 6888 Central Postal Directory Company, U.S. Army, Operating Base Callahan in northern Baghdad April 2003. The soldiers are members of the 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 68th Armor Regiment, 3rd Armored Division. They were awarded the medal for their actions against criminal elements during the Battle of Sadr City, a portion of the Sadr City district of Baghdad in re

and Bronze Stars with Valor

by Sgt. Zach Mott

Striker Beacon editor

BAGHDAD – Two Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers led the charge to secure an Iraqi Army manned checkpoint near Sadr City in the earliest days of fighting that broke out there March 27.



Galen Peterson (right) and Jason Key were instrumental in quelling a criminal portion of the Sadr

First Lt. Galen Peterson and Staff Sgt. Jason Key were part of a group of four Soldiers who raced to support a checkpoint that was on the verge of being overrun by an estimated 100 special groups members.

For their valorous

efforts, Peterson and Key, along with two of their fellow 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division Soldiers, were presented Bronze Star Medals with Valor during a ceremony April 17 at Forward Operating Base Callahan.

“They were taking (rocket-propelled grenade) hits on their vehicles left and right, pretty much getting blown apart,” Peterson said, about the Iraqi Army forces manning the checkpoint.

The platoon leader for Company C, 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 68th Armor Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, ordered his troops to drive to the checkpoint in their humvees, but the group was unable to get closer than 300 meters because of disabled vehicles blocking their path.

“We dismounted the four and we assaulted toward the checkpoint,” he said. “All the IA guys were all pinned down between the Colorado barriers and the curb. They were just trying not to get killed.”

Peterson led the movement as Key, Sgt. Kyle Kincaid and Spc. Cory Bushell followed. The group took cover behind whatever they could – buildings, vehicles, trees – as they maneuvered as close as they could to the checkpoint.

When further movement was impossible, the group took refuge in a building that was previously occupied by Coalition Forces.

“We set up two guys on the balcony on the second floor, and myself and the LT went up to the top floor,” Key said. “As soon as we got up there, we started taking precision fire. They knew we were there.”

The humvees provided what cover fire they could to keep the special groups members at bay. Peterson, Kincaid and Bushell fired at the enemy positions while Key set up the

anti-tank weapon. Once prepped, Key fired a round at the window where much of the small-arms fire was originating.

“That pretty much quieted that guy down,” said Key, a truck commander with Co. C, 1-68 AR.

This helped serve as a boon to the Iraqi Army soldiers who, up until this point, were resigned to seeking refuge where they could.

“I think the Iraqi Army kind of followed us a little bit after that,” said Key. “Once they (saw) us come out with some bigger stuff – like the AT-4 – the BMP finally lit up the main gun round and they started actively engaging the enemy at that time. That was kind of like a morale booster for them. It seemed to turn the tide on that little situation.”

The lull brought on by eliminating the primary enemy position served as an opportunity to maneuver the Soldiers out of the building.

“We used that time to get back down. Then we started taking more fire – this time straight down the road toward the Sadr City traffic circle,” Peterson said.

Awaiting Apache helicopters used a Hellfire missile to quiet that gunfire.

Ninety minutes after the battle began, humvees left the scene bound for a Coalition Forces outpost to resupply on ammunition and other goods in case they were called into duty again.

After operating mostly from humvees during the last deployment for the Silver Lions, the tankers are used to pounding the ground with something other than the pads of the track that hurls their tank along.

“The guys are used to the infantry fight,” Peterson said. “My guys actually do really well at it. They’re good at tanking, but these guys are really also good at being infantrymen too.”



Photos by Sgt. Zach Mott

Sgt. John Weatherly, Staff Sgt. Danny Key and Sgt. Galen Peterson were awarded the Bronze Star with Valor at Forward Operating Base Callahan April 17. The Soldiers serve with Company C, 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 68th Armor Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, and earned the Bronze Star while conducting operations in the southern portion of the Sadr City area in recent weeks.

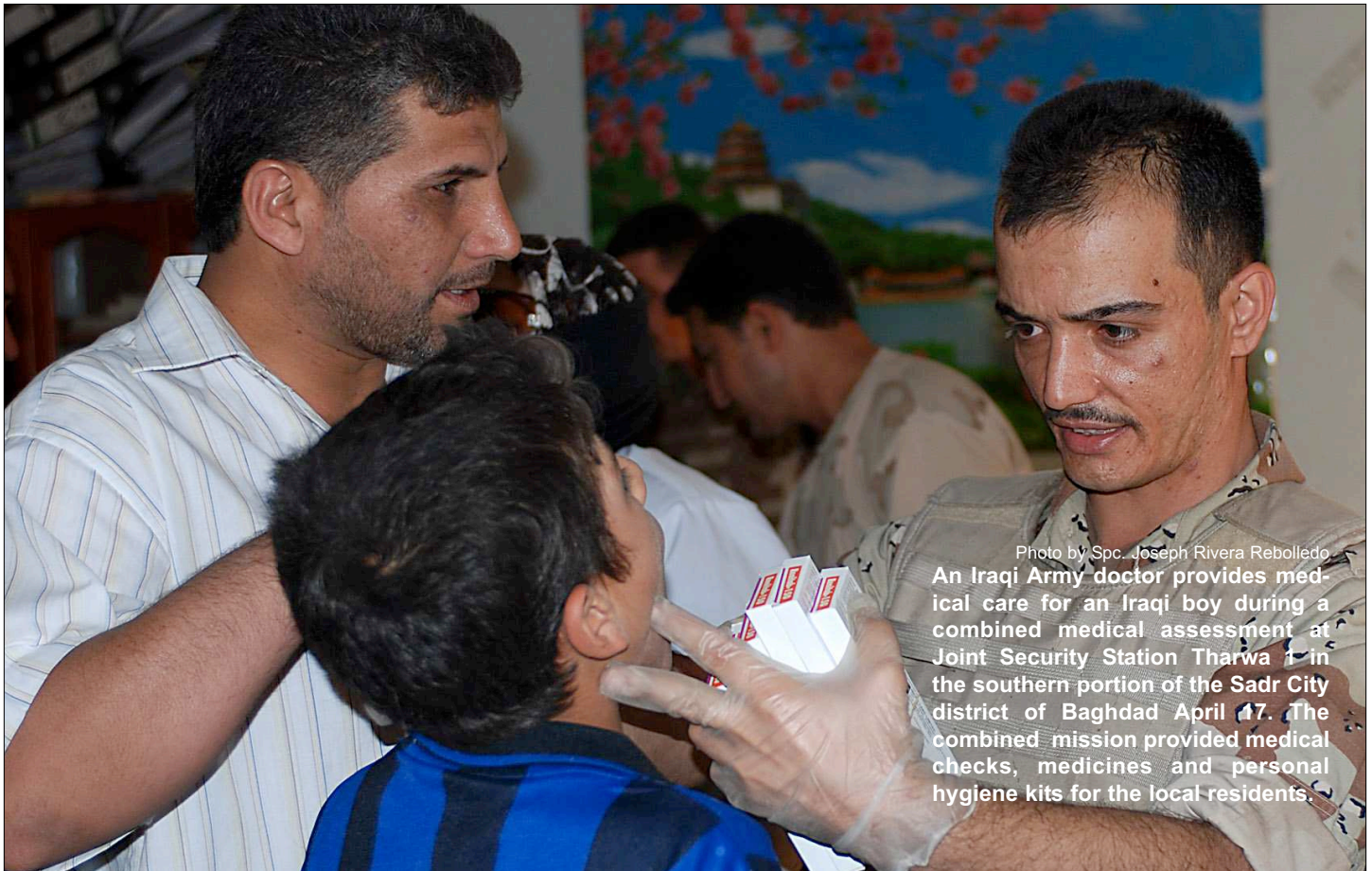


Photo by Spc. Joseph Rivera Rebolledo.
An Iraqi Army doctor provides medical care for an Iraqi boy during a combined medical assessment at Joint Security Station Tharwa 1 in the southern portion of the Sadr City district of Baghdad April 17. The combined mission provided medical checks, medicines and personal hygiene kits for the local residents.

Iraqi Army provides first aid supplies to Sadr City

by Spc. Joseph Rivera Rebolledo

Striker Beacon staff writer

BAGHDAD – Iraqi Army soldiers conducted a combined medical assessment in the southern portion of the Sadr City district of Baghdad April 17.

The operation was supported by Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, which is currently attached to the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, by providing citizens with essential medicines and personal hygiene supplies at Joint Security Station Tharwa 1.

For the assessment, Iraqi Security Forces provided military and civilian doctors to ensure visitors received medical supplies and were not in need of immediate or critical medical care.

Among the attendees were citizens ranging from the very young to the elderly.

During the event, the ISF had the opportunity to deal directly with the Iraqi citizens as they showed the people they can care for them. The assessment brought more than 400 citizens in less than two hours, making the event a successful one.

“It really turned out good; it was successful and turned

out better than I thought,” said Capt. Ryan Mendenhall, a native of Ephraim, Utah, who serves as the fire support officer for the HHC, 1-2 SCR.

Mendenhall said he was surprised by how quickly the people reacted and came to the project.

“This is just a small step to let the people know that we are not here to destroy a home. There is a lot of work ahead of us, and we will continue doing it; eventually, it will pay off,” Mendenhall said.

For others, the amount of people who attended the assessment was unbelievable, due to the gunfire that could be heard in the distance.

“It exceeded my expectations; I didn’t expect anybody to show up because what was going on,” said Sgt. 1st Class Lawrue Bush, a native of Cleveland, who serves as the fire support NCO with HHC, 1-2 SCR. For the ISF and Soldiers of the HHC, 1-2 SCR, this is not the end for this mission.

The Soldiers are expecting the next assessment to be a bigger, and they are preparing to get more supplies, said Bush.

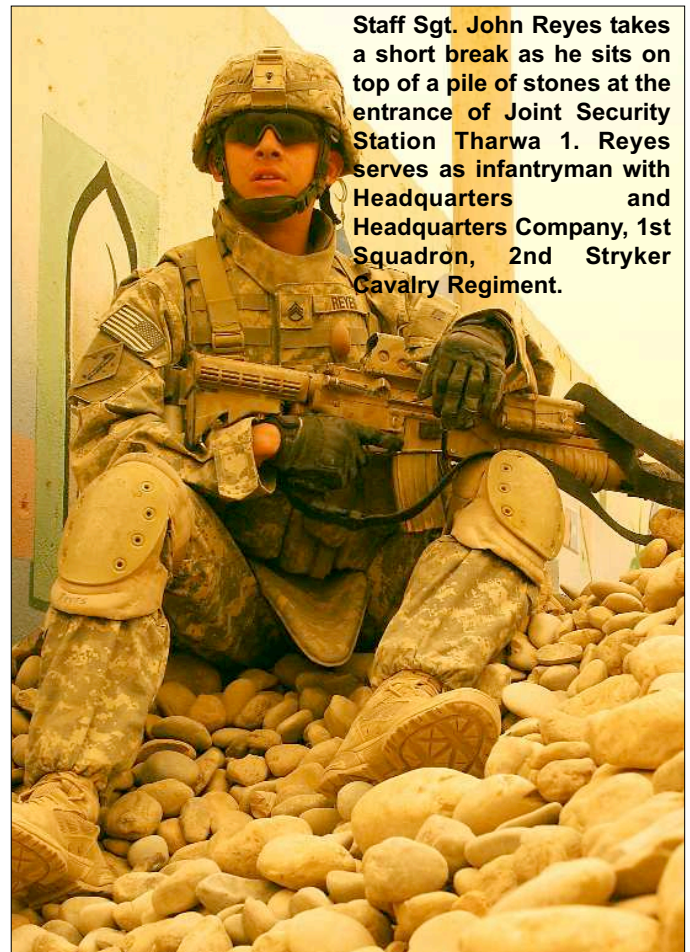
The combined efforts are geared toward helping to improve the location where the assessment was conducted.

“Hopefully the next one is a little bit better,” Bush said.

Soldiers provide support to ISF during MEDCAP mission



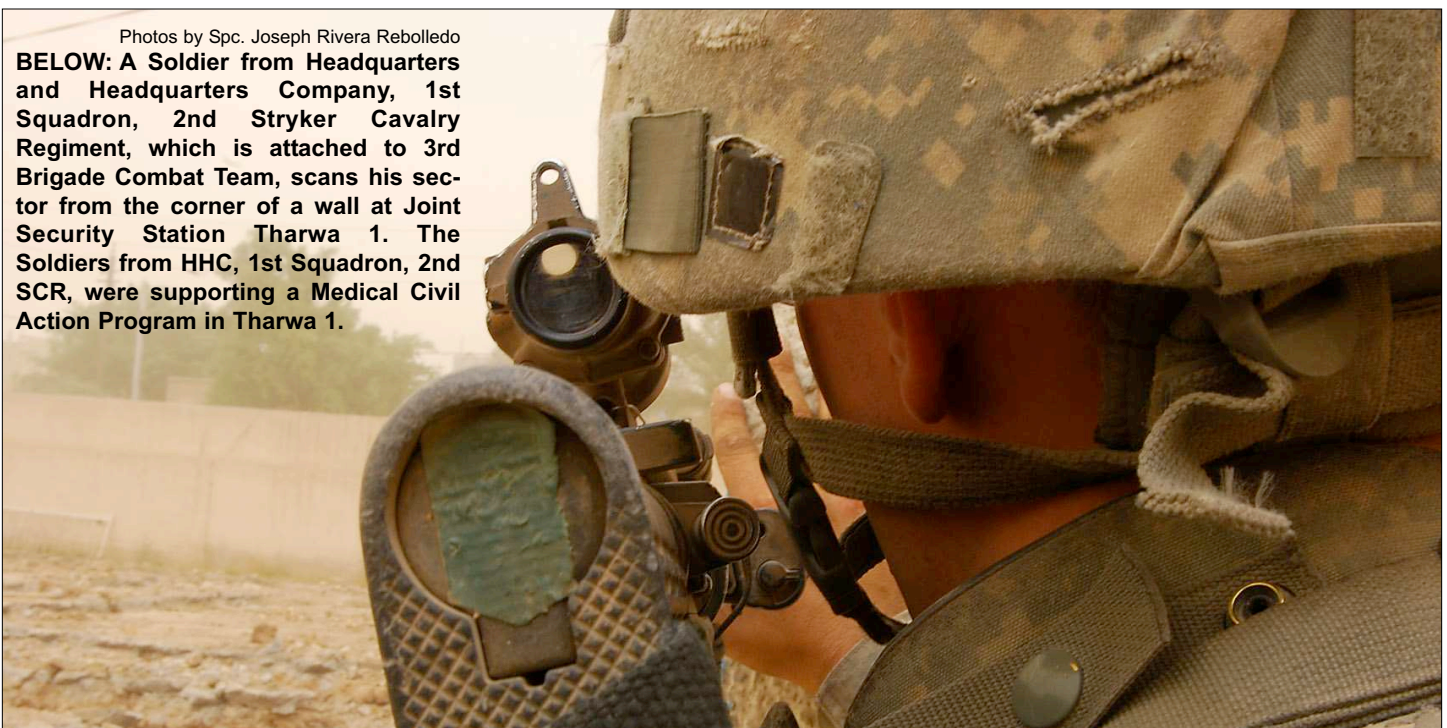
Sgt. Brian Rich (left) and Staff Sgt. John Reyes stand guard during a combined medical assessment at Joint Security Station Tharwa 1 in southern portion of the Sadr City district of Baghdad. Rich and Reyes serve as infantrymen with 1st Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, which is attached to the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division.



Staff Sgt. John Reyes takes a short break as he sits on top of a pile of stones at the entrance of Joint Security Station Tharwa 1. Reyes serves as infantryman with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment.

Photos by Spc. Joseph Rivera Rebolledo

BELOW: A Soldier from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, which is attached to 3rd Brigade Combat Team, scans his sector from the corner of a wall at Joint Security Station Tharwa 1. The Soldiers from HHC, 1st Squadron, 2nd SCR, were supporting a Medical Civil Action Program in Tharwa 1.





Sgt. Nathan Yancer inspects a .50 cal machine gun chamber of an M1-A2 Abrams tank at Combat Outpost Ford in northeast Baghdad. Yancer serves as a tanker with Company C, 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 68th Armor Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division.



Photos by Spc. Joseph Rivera Rebolledo
Pfc. Brandon Wynn puts a tank reactive tile in place in order to close the tank's skirt and finish track maintenance on his M1-A2 Abrams tank at Combat Outpost Ford in northeast Baghdad. Wynn serves as a tanker with Company C, 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 68th Armor Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division.



Staff Sgt. Luis Hernandez calibrates a device at Combat Outpost Ford in northeast Baghdad. Hernandez serves as a tanker with Company C, 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 68th Armor Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division.

Lions on patrol

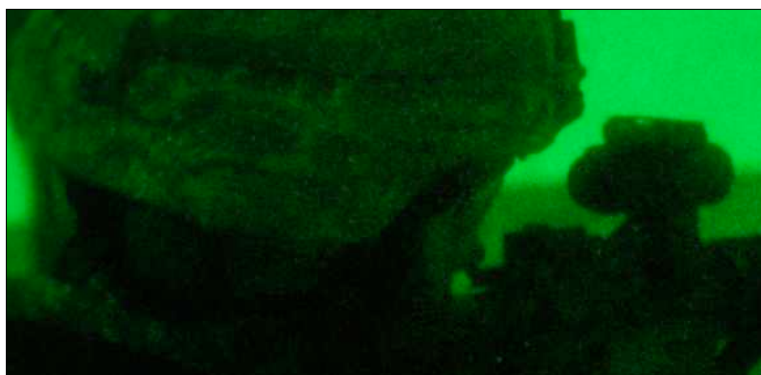


ates to perfection the cannon of his tank with a muzzle reference
d in northeast Baghdad. Hernandez serves with 2nd Platoon,
s Battalion, 68th Armor Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th



Sgt. Nathan Yancer cleans his tank loader's M-240 machine gun on an M1-A2 Abrams tank at Combat Outpost Ford in northeast Baghdad. Yancer serves as a tanker with Company C, 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 68th Armor Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division.

Strikers patrol Sadr City at night



Photos by Spc. Joseph Rivera Rebolledo

RIGHT: Striker Soldiers remain observant to their surroundings during a visit to the recently established Joint Security Station Tharwa 2 in the southern portion of the Sadr City district of Baghdad.

TOP RIGHT: Striker Soldiers remain vigilant to possible threats during a visit to the recently established Joint Security Station Tharwa 2 in southern portion of Sadr City.

TOP LEFT: Striker Soldiers remain alert as they provide security during a visit to the recently established Joint Security Station Tharwa 2 in the southern portion of the Sadr City.

MIDDLE RIGHT: Striker Soldiers provide security during a visit to the recently established Joint Security Station Tharwa 2 in the southern portion of the Sadr City.

MIDDLE LEFT: A Striker Soldier looks through the sites of his weapon while providing security at Joint Security Station Tharwa 2 in the southern portion of the Sadr City district of Baghdad.





Taji to get CHUs!!!

by Sgt. Zach Mott

Striker Beacon editor

Commanders for the Camp Taji-based contingent of Strikers are working with several local architects in hopes of creating a modern take on the typical "CHU Pads." Within recent days a leader emerged from the pack and construction has begun in the Striker Village.

"My design is an update of European Gypsy encampments," said Ali Ahmed Hussein about his winning design. "I think of it as a little slice of home in Iraq."

Early designs centered on the traditional Hesco-encased pads that propagate other FOBs and camps throughout Iraq. But, because Strikers do not rest on the laurels of others, a challenge was issued to revamp the design, to think 'outside the box.'

Soldiers who have glimpsed at the

model design, as shown at the top of this article, are excited at the opportunity to live in modern buildings while deployed to Iraq.

"This is fantastic, I love modern architecture," said one of the Soldiers who attended the unveiling who will remain anonymous because I didn't catch his name.

That same Soldier also mentioned how much enjoyed the flora that accompanied the design.

"If only they had a green thumb like my dad, then we'd be able to grow our own food."

Soldiers were also excited at the prospect of getting one of the penthouse CHUs. Others, by contrast, preferred the lower level CHUs for the simple fact that they don't want to walk up the stairs wearing all their gear.

Now that this design is approved

and funded, the compounds are currently being constructed. While the initial approval called for the CHU pads to be constructed in as little as two hours, Hussein leaves the timeline more in the hands of others.

When questioned, he had one response, "En sha Allah."

Hussein immediately ran back to his car yelling something about not being able to rush perfection as he whipped a beret toward the reporter.

Initial planning is being made to prepare CHUs at Forward Operating Base War Eagle, where the Strikers are set to move in the coming days, weeks or months ... we're not sure yet.

For those at other camps, FOBs, Combat Outposts or Joint Security Stations, there are currently no CHU plans. But, keep your fingers crossed. Hussein has many plans in mind.

CAPTION THIS RESULTS



The Results

This month there were a few less submissions.

MAJ Horine celebrates the approval of his Chapter 15 by baking a batch of his special Teaberry Swirl Mint Cookies for the TOC – Capt. Joe Hill

MAJ Horine celebrates as he proves lard is useful as a hair gel and for baking cookies – Capt. Joe Hill

MAJ Horine does his best Cameron Diaz impression when he asks, "Is that hair gel?" – Capt. Joe Hill

Brian prepares for his annual visit to the dentist.

C is for cookie, that's good enough for me.

Will they send me home if I'm not in accordance with the Army height/weight standards?

Years later, Brian would woefully reflect on that infamous day when he confided his cookie fetish to another member of the command

Cookies are power. If I share my cookies, I lose my power.

Got Milk!

With a badass haircut, the white man's overbite and 150 cookies, Brian gets ready for a date with Zunda the DFAC dessert lady.

Striker Top 10

This month's Top 10 list was inspired by none other than Striker 3 as supplied by Sgt. Pedro Martinez. Here we go:

Top 10 Reasons Lt. Col. John "Johnny D" Digiambattista Rolls Up His Sleeves

10. Are you going to tell him not to?

9. AR 670-1 does not apply if your last name has more than 13 letters.

8. Prior to enlisting in the military, LTC Digiambattista was a bovine artificial inseminator, ever since then he's always feels he's needed to go "elbow deep into any situation.

7. He suffers from a constant plague upon his lower arm known only as SWS or Sweaty Wrist Syndrome, exposing said lower skin is the only panacea for this illness

6. You try taming the wild beasts that

inhabit his arms in an ACU jacket.

5. He was an arm model for men's watches in the Sears Spring Catalog of '05 and is trying to relive his former glory days.

4. Due to an unforeseen error in his uniform issue, he received sets of Large/Regular tops with Small/Regular Sleeves.

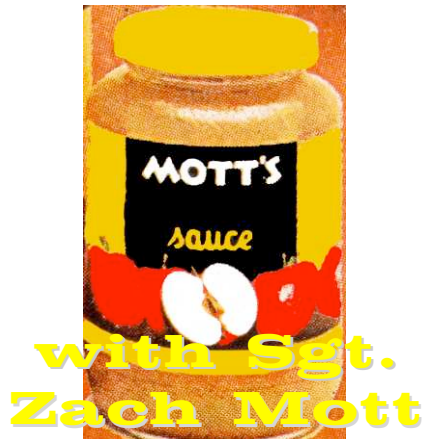
3. Local Nationals have told him that exposed forearms are a sign of masculinity.

2. He got into a "Who's forearms are harrier" contest and beat out Robin Williams for bragging rights for the next 10 years.

1. He's Johnny D by God, what more reason could you need?

If you've got a submission for the monthly 'Top 10' list, send it to zachary.mott@iraq.centcom.mil





Dear Sauce,

Tax season passed and the nearest H&R Block isn't on my normal patrol route. What can I do? Do I even need to file taxes this year? I've heard that Soldiers are exempt from filing taxes when they're overseas. Help me out Sauce.

Brokejack

Dear Brokejack,

Those are all excellent questions. But, let me set the record straight: Soldiers are NOT exempt from filing taxes while deployed overseas. However, you can wait to file your taxes until after you return. The Internal Revenue Service

allows deployed servicemembers a 180-day grace period from the time they return from deployment to file their taxes. This means that you will have six months to file your 2007 and 2008 tax year returns from the time we return in 2009. Be sure to note "OIF Extension" on your tax form. Your local tax office can better assist you with this when the time comes.

If you would still like to file your taxes for the 2007 tax year, there are numerous online options to help you through the process. The Sauce is particularly fond of the ones that send money to his account. Be sure to "donate" your refund to The Sauce.

Soldiers, NCOs compete for honors



Photos by Sgt. Zach Mott

Quarter Board

LEFT: Staff Sergeants Brandon Bray (left) and Dwayne Smith (right) flank Spc. Jasmine Buck (center left) and Sgt. Candice Caudill (center right) after earning the quarterly Soldier and NCO honors for the Striker Brigade. Buck, Company C, 64th Brigade Support Battalion was named the 3rd Brigade Combat Team Soldier of the 2nd Quarter. Caudill, Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 3rd BCT, was named the 3rd BCT NCO of the 2nd Quarter.

BELOW: The Soldiers and NCOs who competed for the quarterly honors are kneeling in the front row. The NCOs who accompanied their Soldiers to the board stand in the second row. The senior NCOs who presided over the board stand in the back row.



LEGENDARY 3RD BCT MOMENTS

BY SPC M. COX



20 MINUTES LATER....



THIS CONVERSATION WENT INTO EXTRA INNINGS....WAY EXTRA!