

THE RAIDER

Tribe

March 2010

Vol. 1, Issue 6



"To The Objective!"

RAIDER 6

COLONEL JOHN NORRIS

4th SBCT COMMANDER



Raider Tribe,

Our journey began just over a year ago when Gen. Odierno asked for another Stryker Brigade to be deployed to Iraq.

Over the past year, we have achieved great things and your commitment and dedication to the mission have been unwavering. You have been part of an historic movement that will be remembered by not only the Iraqi people, but by Americans for generations to come.

March 7 was the focal point of the first half of the deployment. The countless hours spent training, mentoring, advising, and assisting our Iraqi counterparts paid off, with a successful election marked by a high voter turnout of 62%, with more than 10 million people voting and minimal violence at the polls. That is almost 2 million more people voting in the 2010 election than in the 2005 election. The voter turnout was impressive considering a morning filled with numerous 2-liter coke bottle improvised explosive devices with the intent to intimidate voters from voting. The Iraqi people remained determined and the people spoke loudly.

The success of this election came from the operations carried out in the months prior. Our Iraqi Security Force partners worked tirelessly during the days leading up to, and during the election, demonstrating a high level of professionalism that has become deeply ingrained in their force. Together, by sharing intelligence and reconnaissance assets, we have been able to obtain warrants and

arrest 75 members of al-Qaeda in Iraq and special militia groups. Taking these terrorists off the streets has made Iraq a better place. The ISF and U.S. forces have also found 118 IEDs, 14 explosively formed penetrators, 28 vehicle-born IEDs and 148 caches, most of which were uncovered through tips from the local populace. This is a sign that the Iraqi Security Forces have gained the peoples' trust and together, they can bring peace to Iraq.

These achievements have not come without sacrifice to the Raider Brigade.

While I was home on leave, I had the privilege to meet with our Raider Warriors who have been wounded in action. These men have made a sacrifice for our nation in an effort to not only bring peace to Iraq, but to ensure that the American people are safe as well. The men are in good spirits and are making steady progress toward recovery. You would be justly proud of the support they have received from our rear detachment, families and the Army. The medical care they are receiving is the best that I have ever seen.

Yet, despite our successes, we cannot think that the deployment is over. With six months remaining, we face new challenges and a new purpose that may be even greater than our last. We represent the last Americans that will directly partner with the Iraqi Security Forces and meet daily with the citizens of Iraq. Our brigade will be the last combat brigade in Iraq and we will have the privilege to represent the official end of Operation



Iraqi Freedom, in essence, conduct "the last patrol." This is an incredible honor that is nested with our nation's long term strategic goals to have a strategic partnership with Iraq that will continue to assist in stabilizing this region. It is imperative that we finish our mission here in Iraq strong and using the words of Brig. Gen. Mangum, our deputy commanding general, "the most important thing that we will leave behind is our example."

We have three important focus areas that will take all of our energy and effort to accomplish.

First, we need to lay the groundwork to give an opportunity for the economy in our area to grow. In a highly agricultural region, we need to work with our embedded Provincial Reconstruction Teams to develop the farming communities in the area. We hope to accomplish this by working with the United

States Agency for International Development to provide training to farmers about watering techniques and growing methods. We will begin to fund drip irrigation projects that use 75% less water and greenhouses that reduce the amount of water evaporated from the soil, allowing the farmer to grow more food that can go to market.

The second part of our operations will be to continue to develop, advise and assist the Iraqi Security Forces. As we move ahead, we need to mentor our counterparts and impart our knowledge and help leaders in the ISF to create a well-run, well-trained force that is a reflection of Iraqi society. The Iraqi Security Forces need to continue to help the people of Iraq by providing security and

short term humanitarian assistance while the new government is officially seated. Reaching these goals will take long hours of classes, simple conversations, and feedback from combined operations.

And finally, we must execute the responsible reduction of forces out of Iraq. We are partaking in the biggest logistical movement of supplies since the end of World War II. We need to conduct this operation carefully, always remembering that we are stewards of the tax payer's money. If it makes economical sense, we will sign it over to the Iraqi Security Forces for use in their operations. We will ensure that we leave the bases we have been operating from cleaner and better than how we found them. Equipment must be properly identified and

either turned into the proper place or packed for shipment back to the U.S.

As we focus on these missions and see the end of the deployment coming, we need to focus even harder and leaders need to combat complacency. Let's make sure that our Soldiers and battle buddies are doing the right things, conducting the checks and inspections to standard and watching out for each other so we can all come home safely. I am sure that Command Sgt. Maj. Huggins would want me to remind you: The enemy is still out there, so act accordingly and BE SMART, BE SAFE, and when necessary BE LETHAL.

Raider 6
"To the Objective!"



"The Last Patrol"

The Raider Brigade is working with acclaimed artist James Dietz in creating a piece of art that captures the legacy of both American and Iraqi history with the original commissioning of "The Last Patrol". This print will represent the triumphs of the Raider Brigade as we assisted the Iraqi Security Forces and Government of Iraq in forging ahead on the road to both democracy and independence.



Do not miss out on this limited time offer to own museum quality art at a fraction of the price as it captures our brigade's legacy. Each print is only \$100 and will come with its own certificate of authenticity including historical narrative. Only by ordering during this presale can you ensure such deal. After the pre-sale has closed, these prints will become available starting at \$175.



For more information:

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NOTE: Pictures are works by artist James Dietz that were previously commissioned

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On the cover:
Photo by Sgt. Bryce S. Dubee,
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6th IA Div., 4-2 SBCT open new operations center



Photo by Spc. Luisito Brooks, 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

Lt. Gen. Ahmed Hashim Aouadi, commander of the Baghdad Operations Command, cuts the ribbon of the new Joint Operations Center during the official opening ceremony at Forward Operating Base Constitution, March 15.

Story by Sgt. Bryce S. Dubee
4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

BAGHDAD – After months of planning and construction, the 6th Iraqi Army Division and the 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division held a ribbon cutting for the recently completed Joint Operations Center on Forward Operating Base Constitution March 15.

“This JOC will prove to be an invaluable asset in the effort to provide security to the Iraqi people,” said Lt. Col. Darron Wright, deputy commanding officer of 4th SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div.

While the new facility, designed to be the central node for the sharing of infor-

mation between U.S. and Iraqi forces in western Baghdad, had been in operation since before the March 7 Iraqi National Elections, the ceremony represented the official opening of the operations center.

With a quick snip of a pair of gold-handled scissors, Lt. Gen. Ahmed Hashim Aouadi, commanding general of the Baghdad Operations Command, cut the ribbon on the state-of-the-art center, which brings the intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities of the U.S. and Iraqi militaries under one roof.

These combined assets were put on display for the guests and media present at

the ceremony in the form of a simulated operation which showed U.S. and Iraqi service members working in the JOC, coordinating operations with troops on the ground.

Watching aerial surveillance footage of U.S. and Iraqi troops approaching an objective, a U.S. Soldier working in the JOC communicated directly to the troops on the ground, sharing the latest intelligence with them and providing updates to other staff members in the command center.

One row ahead of him, an IA officer relayed updates to his fellow Iraqi Soldiers as they detained two men and pre-



Photo by Spc. Luisito Brooks, 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

U.S. and Iraqi military leaders walk through a display of recently seized weapons after cutting the ribbon on the new Joint Operations Center March 15.

pared to assault a building. Upon completing his communication to the field, he too provided an update to the rest of the JOC.

The demonstration showed the close level of side-by-side coordination the facility is capable of, and its use in combining efforts on the battlefield.

For Staff Sgt. Brad Mateski, a network and systems administrator assigned to 472nd Signal Company, 4th SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div., the JOC opening represents the end of months of work and planning, as well as the start of work in a new location.

“The new facility has greatly improved network capabilities,” he said, explaining that the structure not only has more space but is more secure as well, providing a complete voice and data network.

Mateski, who worked

with members of 16th Engineer Brigade during the planning and construction of the JOC to advise where to run data lines and place power conduits, said the pro-

cess has been fun.

“It’s kind of like building your own house,” he said. “You get to say, ‘This goes here, and this goes here.’”

Because the old JOC was literally right next door, transitioning to the new facility was merely a matter of unplugging things, moving them, and plugging them back in, he added.

Overall, Mateski said he’s looking forward to working in the new JOC and continuing his relationship with his Iraqi partners.

“They treat us like family over here,” he said. “I’ve had a real good experience working with them.”

The key to the completion of the new battlefield assets has been the partnership trail that runs straight to its front steps, he said.

“With this new JOC complete, it will symbolize the great cooperation between Federal Police, 6th Iraqi Army,

See JOC, page 6



Photo by Sgt. Bryce S. Dubee, 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

During the Joint Operations Center opening ceremony at Forward Operating Base Constitution, March 15, Lt. Col. Darron Wright, deputy commanding officer of 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, praises the efforts of all involved in constructing the new facility.

...JOC from page 5

Iraqi Police and the Raider Brigade,” said Lt. Hassin, an officer with 6th IA Div. “It will ensure that the communication between the both sides is good.”

Pfc. Chris Bozarth, a Soldier with 4th SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div., commented that the new JOC is a big improvement from the old one.

“Try to imagine a sardine can, and that was what the old JOC was like,” laughed the Bowie, Texas native who had worked inside the old JOC since being deployed to Iraq last fall. “(Our job) is to support the IA’s mission. If they need our support, we coordinate assets to whatever sector they need.

“Now there is a centralized location

in which information is gathered and shared.”

During his speech at the ceremony, Wright summarized the purpose of bringing everyone together under one roof. “Together, the Iraqi Army, the Iraqi Police and the Federal Police forces will be able to ensure the security of Iraq’s future more efficiently.”

Engineers attend JOC grand opening

By Spc. Brian Johnson
1434th Engr. Co., USD-C

BAGHDAD – As leaders from 6th Iraqi Army Division and 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, celebrated the grand opening of a new joint operations center at Forward Operating Base Constitution, Mar. 15, leaders from 16th Engineer Brigade and 101st Engineer Battalion celebrated getting them to this day.

The new JOC affords American and Iraqi forces the opportunity to bring command and control elements together under one roof.

“This structure provides the ability for our IA partners to work side-by-side with our 4/2 BCT brothers and train them how a tactical operations center should function,” said Brig. Gen. Glenn C. Hammond, III, commander of 16th Engineer Brigade.

The JOC provides a common picture of the current battlefield to both forces, which allows the Iraqi forces better

command and control across their battle space while providing American forces an opportunity to see the effectiveness of their supporting role. The culmination will eventually lead the Iraqis to fully independent operations, said Hammond.

“This is exactly what our mission is here in Iraq; enable the Iraqi Army to protect their nation and eliminate the threats,” explained Hammond.

Planning for the construction of the new JOC took more than a month to complete.

“The Soldiers of the 1434th Engineer Company, 101st Eng. Bn., worked for many weeks, giving hands-on training that included basic carpentry, electrical and safety skills,” said Lt. Col. Charles Cody, commander of 101st Engineer Battalion.

The U.S. engineers, from 101st, 621st Survey and Design Team and 1434th Engineer Company, worked alongside their Iraqi counterparts another two months after the planning phase to finish the project.

“The efforts of the 1434th Eng. Co. exceeded our expectations,” said Cody. “This joint operations center will be a shining example of the continued partnership between our nations and militaries.”

Leaders from the U.S. engineers said they were very proud of the effective of the partnership – the proof was in the building.

“The satisfaction and pride that I have seen in the engineers that built this project is easily witnessed,” said Hammond. “From their faces as they take in the entire structure to the manner they describe the various details of the new facility.”

Hammond said that when it is time for the U.S. engineers to go home soon, their indelible mark upon this land will be demonstrated in more than just the tracks they have laid in the sand.



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. April Mota, 101st Eng. Bn., USD-C

Pfc. Joshua Tillmonh, 1434th Engineer Company, and Pvt. Hayder Jabar Kamal, 6th Iraqi Army Field Engineer Regiment, complete another truss to add to the roof of the joint operations center on Forward Operating Base Constitution.

Air assault training with a twist

**Story by Spc. Luisito Brooks
4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.**

CAMP TAJI – The UH-60 Blackhawk and Mi-17's rotors tossed clouds of dirt into the air on their approach, as Soldiers from the 36th Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army and 2nd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division ran to the landing zone to be air lifted back to base, completing their mission March 14, in Tarmiyah.

“The IA came up with the idea to combine the training mission and the cache search,” said 1st Lt. Shawn Kitchin, the platoon leader with A Troop, 2nd Sqdn., 1st Cav. Regt., 4th SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div. “Both objectives needed to be done, so we planned it and executed it.”

The day before, all of the participants involved in this mission came together to rehearse the proper way to load and unload the helicopters. Rehearsals went on all day until the sun had almost set.

“We practiced a lot and it was fun,” said Lt. Hasim, a 9th IA Div. officer. “Everyone was excited about this new experience and training because we are working with our partners the American Soldiers.”

The training event had been in the planning stages for a few weeks and luckily the weather was good, explained Staff Sgt. Eric Rodrigues, a squad leader with A Troop.

“We air assaulted into what are key spots that were used to bury caches,” said Sgt. Matt Engelbecht, a team leader with A Troop. He added that they used military working dogs and mine detectors during the search.

The team navigated through tall, dry grass and brush, looking for anything that could possibly be the location of a cache.

“We looked all over that place for a few hours and we didn’t find much, but this mission wasn’t wasted,” said Engelbecht, a Weatherford, Okla. native. “The IA can now take this training and build from this point forward.”

After the long mission, the team returned to Taji, the body language of most of the Iraqi and Raider Soldiers the same- exhausted.

“It always feels good to get this body

armor off especially after walking so much today,” said Engelbecht.

The group came together to conduct an after action review, to discuss and evaluate what happened during the day, and what was learned from the mission.

“The mission went very well because many of my Soldiers never had this experience before,” said Hasim. “Now we can take what we learned and be more confident with (future) missions.”



Photo by Spc. Luisito Brooks, 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

In preparation for an air assault mission, Soldiers with the 36th Brigade, 9th Division Iraqi Army Division practice loading and unloading from an Mi-17 “Hip” helicopter Mar. 13.



MANCHU

Sgt. Maj. Lee Baleme

4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment Operations Sergeant Major



To the Families, Friends, and Soldiers of the Manchu Battalion

I am pleased to have the opportunity to write about my perspective associated with a few years of deployments to Iraq.

First, let me say I am fortunate to be a Manchu here in Iraq as many people have felt our organizations success. From the Manchu Soldier, the Iraqi Army jundi and leader, the Iraqi Policeman, the local shaykh or tribal elder, to the citizens of this country, many have felt the accomplishment of our cooperative partnership in OE Manchu. Our allied action against both criminals and insurgents has created an environment of relative peace and contentment. Evidenced by the recent sovereign elections, Iraqi citizens turned out in record numbers in the hope of a more thriving and peaceful life.

I look back at the Iraqi response to our early presence and think how proud I was and still am for our great nation to have freed this country of a brutal dictator. In 2003, I had the privilege of serving a few small communities on the Iranian border, where a good number of senior Iraqi men, tribal shaykhs, and local businessmen all were excited about the prospects of a newer and freer life without Saddam. They spoke passionately of many years of torture, harassment, oppression, and the brutal killings of whole families for simple public statements against the Party or the dictatorship- basic freedoms we as Americans hold dear, such as freedom

of speech and freedom of press were foreign to Iraqis. Then, Iraqis envisioned a country of fresh opportunity, prosperity, and better education. A place where Iraqi children could grow up without the horrid experience many endured in the prior three decades. These men fought the Iranians for many years and grew tired of battle after battle in their own back yards, the constant shelling, despair and death everywhere. They and their families wanted peace!

From then to now, Iraqis have worked very hard, sacrificed more than we can fathom, and have earned their sovereignty. Recently, Iraq as a self-governing nation held its first autonomous National Elections in many, many years. The national pride here is palpable and Iraq's nascent government is willing and ready to serve the people. Equipped with a well-trained Iraqi Army with experienced leaders and a capable Iraqi Police Force, Iraq is developing its own national identity of security for the populace and protecting its borders from negative outside influence.

There is still work here in Iraq for the many US Servicepersons yet to come. Soldiers whom have deployed here in the past remember tough fighting for days on end. The Manchu's were very much a part of that struggle to fight insurgents, and criminals, who did not see the vision of a prosperous Iraq. American forces in Iraq saw the vision of freedom for Iraqis- some fought and gave their life



for it- all fought beside hopeful Iraqi Security Forces and citizens looking for security in their town or village and peace for their families. Soldiers, who deploy here now, and in the future, are tested and experienced in the ways of counterinsurgency. Prepared to teach, coach, and advise our allies, Servicemen and women will continue to work closely with the Iraqi Security Forces using the skill and experience we did not possess early on. Skills that make us a better fighting force to maintain peace now and anywhere we deploy.

One thing is certain: great change has taken place in this country. The men and women of our Armed Forces have sacrificed quite a bit for this country, furthering the wellbeing and security of not only this entire region, but our country as well.

Sgt. Maj. Baleme
"Keep Up the Fire."



Backpacks! Food!

Raiders give back to Iraqi locals



Photo by Pfc. Kimberly Hackbarth, 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

JOINT SECURITY STATION NASIR WA SALAM, Iraq — Spc. David Cupp, a driver with Company B, 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, helps load bags of food onto Iraqi Army trucks to be driven to a local school and distributed to civilians in need, Mar. 19.



Photo by Spc. Luisito Brooks, 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

CAMP TAJI, Iraq — During a normal patrol of a primary school, Sgt. Michael Landeros, a Soldier with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, gives a stuffed animal to a young Iraqi girl after school was let out for the day Mar. 30 here.



Photo by Sgt. Bryce S. Dubee, 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

BAGHDAD — Soldiers with 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, hand pink backpacks to Iraqi schoolgirls during a humanitarian aid drop here, Mar. 25.

School supplies!

through humanitarian aid drops



Photo by Pfc. Kimberly Hackbarth, 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

KHANDARI, Iraq — Sgt. Adam Culver, with 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, hands a stuffed animal to an Iraqi girl outside a school here where Soldiers participated in a humanitarian aid drop Mar. 17.



Photo by Sgt. Bryce S. Dubee, 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

BAGHDAD — Spc. James Robert, a M249 machine gunner with 1st Platoon, Company C, 1st Battalion 38th Infantry Regiment, hands a backpack full of school supplies to a young Iraqi boy during a humanitarian assistance drop March 25.



Photo by Pfc. Kimberly Hackbarth, 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

KHANDARI, Iraq — Pfc. Jordan Hiers, and infantryman with 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, grabs a stuffed animal out of the trunk of his humvee to give an Iraqi child after a humanitarian aid mission here, Mar. 17.



Photo by Sgt. Bryce S. Dubee, 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

BAGHDAD — A Soldier with 422nd Civil Affairs Battalion, attached to 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, hands out fruit candies to Iraqi children during a humanitarian aid drop here, Mar. 25.



TOMAHAWKS

1st Lt. Brandon Pasko

Company A, 2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment executive officer



Tomahawk Soldiers, families, and friends,

Company A fulfilled the challenges of preparing for elections while continuing to secure the operational environment outside of Camp Taji, Iraq.

Partnered with the 1st Battalion, 35th Iraqi Army Brigade, Aztec Soldiers were charged with the responsibility of ensuring the IA's success in establishing protective measures for the Iraqi populace.

Together, through the month of February, we focused on developing several schools within the city of Saab Al-Boor and surrounding area into polling sites that provided voters a feeling of safety and security. On March 5, the Tomahawk Battalion initiated an aggressive security strategy where all platoons within the battalion maintained constant presence throughout the operational environment. For the following two days, Tomahawks followed and supported the IA in the occupation and defensive development of the polling sites. As we surveyed each polling site, we were able to see the fruit of our labor from the previous month. Several supplies, to include hundreds of rolls of concertina wire, pickets, and other various materials, provided by U.S. Forces, were systematically distributed to all the polling sites by Iraqi Soldiers. With those supplies, the Iraqi Soldiers reinforced the defenses of each polling site by building obstacles in accordance with the classes that our Soldiers previously taught.

In addition to the preparation of the

physical layout of polling sites, we also assisted the IA in conducting various rehearsals that proved to be crucial in the prevention of spectacular attacks and during emergencies. At night time, the platoons throughout the Tomahawk Battalion cleared areas of interest to deny enemy the opportunity to prepare an attack on election day. Because of the operational tempo during the preparation for elections, Aztec Soldiers willingly sacrificed their comfortable conditions of living on Camp Taji while resting out in sector in order to maintain the security presence. On the day of elections, March 7, Aztec Soldiers and the 1st Bn., 35th IA Bde., led by sCol. Mohammed, witnessed their efforts develop into success.

Although we heard explosions take place in the far distance, we denied the enemy the opportunity of effectively terrorizing the populace. Not a single incident threatened the livelihood of anyone within the population of 80,000 citizens living within or around the city of Saab Al-Boor.

Now that the National Election is over, Co. A moves forward by fully focusing on the assessment and development of Iraqi Security Forces in order to ensure a successful transition of all combat operations in September 2010.

In addition to this shift in focus, Co. A celebrated its change of command transitioning the responsibility of command from Capt. Dennis A. Grinde to Capt. Na-



than E. Showman. Not only did Aztec Soldiers get to celebrate the ceremony with Command Sgt. Maj. Johnson, the 1st Armored Division command sergeant major, and Lt. Col. Wright, 4th SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div. deputy commander, but Maj. Walid, 1st Bn., 35th IA Bde. acting battalion commander, visited Camp Taji to witness the ceremony, demonstrating his thanks for partnership with Capt. Grinde. The ceremony helps Co. A transition to a post-election atmosphere with energy. Aztec Soldiers thank Capt. Grinde for his dedication and leadership from March 2009 to March 2010. In addition, we look forward to building a new relationship with Capt. Showman. Once again, Co. A is pleased with the triumph of the elections and looks forward to future development and transition of the Iraqi Security Forces.

Lt. Pasko
"Tomahawks!"

Soldiers, teachers give school supplies to local Khandari children

**Story by Pfc. Kimberly Hackbarth
4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.**

JOINT SECURITY STATION NASIR WA SALAM, Iraq – Their backpacks were torn and frayed, the flaps hanging open with books peeking out from broken zippers; they were the lucky ones.

The rest of the children clumsily carried everything in their arms and against their chests as they ran inside the gates of the small school in Khandari, a rural area northwest of Baghdad.

With a delivery of new backpacks to hand out, Soldiers from 422nd Civil Affairs Battalion and the 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment “Manchus,” followed closely behind the children as they filed into their school March 17.

Children packed together in line, eagerly waiting as the local contractors heaved large bags stuffed with backpacks through the gate.

The first group of schoolchildren was wary upon first seeing the American Soldiers led by 1st Lt. James Hester, a civil affairs team leader with Company B, 422nd CA Bn.

“The headmaster brought (the children) out and said, ‘We’re going to bring the first graders out because they’re scared of Americans,’” said Hester.

After seeing that the uniformed visitors were there to help, the children smiled and gladly accepted the gifts without any concern about whether they were from Americans or Iraqis.

A Nahia council member, alongside school workers and Hester, pitched in to distribute 600 backpacks to the children.

The backpacks, purchased with Commanders Emergency Relief Program funds, contained notebooks, pens, pencils, rulers, crayons and markers.

“We donate school equipment to students so they can function at a higher level (in) school,” said Hester.

Even though the school year was ending soon for the students, the backpack and school supply donation helps set them up for their futures and to encourage them to continue learning, he explained.

Watching from behind a gate at the entrance of the school, Spc. Jared Bower, a 4th Bn., 9th Inf. Regt., team leader escorting the civil affairs Soldiers, was among the few Soldiers on the ground at the backpack donation site and said he saw smiles on both students’ and teachers’ faces.



Photo by Pfc. Kimberly Hackbarth, 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

A civil affairs team leader with Company B, 422nd Civil Affairs Battalion, 1st Lt. James Hester (center), and workers at a primary school in Khandari, northwest of Baghdad, hand out new backpacks containing school supplies for the children March 17.

“(The children) probably don’t have supplies,” said Bower. “Now teachers won’t have to worry about what (their students) are going to write on or write with.”

Bower and several other ‘Manchu’ Soldiers regularly provide security and assist through humanitarian aid drops with 422nd CA Bn.

Hester praised the Manchus for their support of 422nd in being able to continue providing Iraqis what they need and said he believes they are leaving a lasting impression on the local people.

“It’s a long lasting reminder of the Manchu Battalion and the things they’ve done in the area to try to promote a better sense of government,” said Hester.

Hester explained that when the Government of Iraq and U.S. forces do projects that improve civil capacity, such as opening a water treatment facility, it might not always be noticed by the children. Whereas humanitarian aid for children helps show them their government cares even for them.

“Today, they saw someone doing something good for them specifically,” said Hester.

With their new backpacks hanging from their backs, apprehension gone, the school children smiled as they headed back to class.

First female four-star general visits, inspires Raider Soldiers

Story by Pfc. Kimberly Hackbarth
4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – Standing at parade rest in the doorway of the 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division headquarters, Spc. Jacqueline Williams, a medic with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, was excited, waiting to call the headquarters to attention for a distinguished guest.

Though she'd done it many times before for important visitors, this guest meant a little more to her as a female Soldier, as the guest that day was the first female four-star general in U.S. Armed Forces history – Gen. Ann Dunwoody, commanding general of U.S. Army Materiel Command.

The general visited the brigade March 22 and received a brief from leaders of 4th SBCT about the Stryker unit's mission, the Stryker's role in current operations, recommendations about changes to the maintenance program of the Stryker, changes to the vehicles basic equipment load and configuration of the new blast seats.

While the brief was taking place, a group of female officers had gathered outside the brigade headquarters, as excited about the general's visit as the young specialist had been earlier that morning.

"She's had a very interesting career and it kind of just shows you that just because you're a girl and there's things you can't do [such as] Ranger School [and] Special Forces, you can still have a really fulfilling career," said Williams.

Dunwoody's visit just so happened to be during Women's History Month,



Photo by Pfc. Kimberly Hackbarth, 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

Gen. Ann Dunwoody (left), commanding general, U.S. Army Materiel Command, greets Spc. Tori Figgers, a legal clerk with 702nd Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division at the brigade headquarters building March 22.

a time to celebrate the achievements of women throughout history. In addition to being the first female four-star general Dunwoody has claimed many other "firsts" in women's history in the military including becoming the first female to command a battalion in the 82nd Airborne Division and being the first female to command the Combine Arms Support Command at Fort Lee, Va.

During her trip, the general gave command coins to outstanding Soldiers of the brigade, including Spc. Brittany Bell, a medic with HHC, Bde.

"She's very appreciative of what I do, being a female in an all-male platoon," said Bell, a Savannah, Ga. native. "It's nice to be recognized by someone of her stature."

Dunwoody's visit also provided Bell

with inspiration for her own future.

"I do have hopes to go to (officer candidate school), so it's nice to know that it is an attainable goal to reach such a high rank as a female in the Army," she said.

Climbing up in the ranks herself, Capt. Aisha Hughes, incoming commander of Company B, 702nd Brigade Support Battalion, said she views Dunwoody's accomplishments as an example of equal opportunity for females in the military. Hughes explained she has been given a lot of opportunities while in the Army not because of her gender, but her performance as a Soldier.

"As far as gender and a difference, I mean, I haven't really seen much of a difference," said Hughes, a New Or-

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ROCK 6

Lt. Col. John Leffers

1st Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment Commander



Greetings Rock Warriors!

The mid-tour mark is closely approaching. The battalion's focus has been preparing for the elections and working to mitigate most, if not all, potential threats. In addition to the election preparations, the companies continue to work closely with their partners. The results of yesterday's National Elections in Iraq clearly indicate that the hard work with our Iraqi Security Force partners has allowed the citizens in Abu Ghraib to safely cast their vote.

Company A continues to patrol their area with their partners, Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police. Their focus has been to exploit and cease various locations that have been or could be weapons caches. These actions helped contribute to successful elections by eliminating potential disruption through violent force.

Company B continues to work closely with the local councils and tribal alliances that are prevalent throughout their operating environment. The "balancing act" that must be maintained when dealing with tribal/sectarian issues in the Co. B operational environment make it potentially the most volatile area from a sectarian perspective. Co. B has also continued with efforts to improve the quality of life of the local nationals. Several micro-grants have been approved and will be paid out to three small businesses in their area of operations to increase economic activity and opportunity for the people. A humanitarian aid drop was conducted

at a local orphanage to assist the children and care providers at the facility.

Company C continues to play an important role in partnering with the local government structure of Abu Ghraib. Weekly interactions include qada and Nahia council meetings along with numerous other engagements with civic and local leadership aimed at improving services and facilities throughout Abu Ghraib. The rapport and relationships that Co. C has built with these leaders has improved the efficiency and effectiveness of the battalion's non-lethal efforts. Through their tireless efforts, Co. C has a number of civil capacity projects that have started or are close to starting. Contractors have begun refurbishing the Al Baytola Female High School in the Zeitun area of Abu Ghraib. Similar projects at Al Najid and Ebn Kuthair schools will also be starting soon. Micro-grants for the Al Ban Market area have been funded and will be paid soon to improve the vitality and resources of this important market area. Several humanitarian aid drops are planned to improve educational opportunities for the Abu Ghraib Market will consume much of Co. C energy over the coming months and, if successful, will be the defining project of the deployment for the battalion.

Headquarters and Headquarters Company has taken over many of the responsibilities associated with manning the Joint Command Center, allowing a platoon from Co. C to revert back to patrolling which has provided the battalion with additional combat power. HHC has also been responsible for the numerous



projects occurring throughout the Battalion footprint to improve operational capabilities and the quality of life for the Soldiers. A newly remodeled building now provides a home to an enabler element, providing uninterrupted business for them. Additional towers are being erected to improve communication, gravel throughout parking areas, and an additional fuel point are just a few of the ongoing projects.

In closing, I want to congratulate all Rock Warriors on a very successful National Elections for Iraq. This has been the culmination of seven years of very difficult sacrifice by U.S. Soldiers and U.S. National Treasure, so your efforts honor all those who have fought in Iraq. Thank you for your continued support of all the Rock Soldiers and their Families.

Rock 6
"Rock of the Marne!"



Photo by Spc. David Robbins, 16th Eng. Bde., USD-C

Soldiers of 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division approach the ziggurat at Aqur Quf Mar. 11. The ziggurat, once a popular tourist destination west of Baghdad, now sits dormant. Soldiers of the 16th Engineer Brigade Survey and Design Team traveled to the ancient ziggurat to assess and verify the electrical needs of renovating two modern structures at the base of the temple.

By Spc. Brian Johnson
1434th Engr. Co., USD-C

BAGHDAD – Soldiers from the 16th Engineer Brigade Survey and Design team conducted a site assessment on several buildings at an historic site in Aqur Quf, 20 miles west of Baghdad to assess and verify the electrical needs of renovating two modern structures at the base of an ancient ziggurat there.

The ziggurat, a stepped, temple tower, is the Mesopotamian equivalent of the Egyptian pyramids. Aqur Quf's ziggurat, rising 180 feet above the desert floor, was considered to be built more than three and a half millennia ago.

Recently, the Iraqi Ministry of Antiquities approached 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, for help with restoring some modern structures at the temple in order to attract visitors to the site which would revitalize the economy and preserve the temple.

The modern structures at the base of the ziggurat, built in

the 1960s, functioned as a museum and administrative building throughout the second half of the 20th century. However, after years of war, the site is not what it once was.

"The administrative buildings have been degraded and looted," said Sgt. 1st Class Kyle Markel, from Chillicothe, Ohio, a member of the survey and design team.

According to Markel, the ziggurat and temple areas have suffered no damage but the modern buildings are in need of restoration work. The restoration, still in the planning stages, will eventually be completed by local Iraqi contractors.

"We came to the site to look at the electrical installation and to validate the existing scope of work for the electrical project," said Markel.

"The museum had nothing electrical left in it; no lights, no switches, and wires have been literally pulled out of the walls," said Spc. David Robbins from Cincinnati, Ohio, a member of the team, also sent to assess the site.

According to Robbins, even the electrical panels were re-

moved from the museum and administrative buildings at some point, leaving holes in the walls.

“This was a functioning facility,” said Markel. “It’s now not functioning at all.”

During their visit to Aqur Quf, Robbins and Markel had the opportunity to explore the ruins. They said the experience deepened their understanding of the significance of the museum and administrative buildings.

They were awe struck after exploring the ancient ruins.

“When I climbed the steps and was able to see the monument up close and the fine details about how it was constructed; it’s impressive to think that 3,500 years ago someone had constructed this,” said Markel. “It’s an engineering feat because it is still standing after all these years.”

Both Robbins and Markel said they hope their work will help

reopen this historical site someday and bring tourists back to the area; including them.



Photo by Spc. David Robbins, 16th Eng. Bde., USD-C

Soldiers of 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division approach the ziggurat at Aqur Quf Mar. 11. The ziggurat, once a popular tourist destination west of Baghdad, now sits dormant. Soldiers of the 16th Engineer Brigade Survey and Design Team traveled to the ancient ziggurat to assess and verify the electrical needs of renovating two modern structures at the base of the temple.

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leans native. “It’s been a very equal playing field.”

Before leaving, Dunwoody met with a group of female officers from the bri-

gade, shaking their hands and expressing her gratitude for their service in Iraq.

“I’m so proud of all you,” said Dunwoody. “You’re making history yourself.”



Photo by Pfc. Kimberly Hackbarth, 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

A 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division Soldier explains the capabilities of a Stryker to Gen. Ann Dunwoody (left), commanding general, U.S. Army Materiel Command at the brigade headquarters building March 22.



Photo by Spc. Luisito Brooks, 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

Gen. Ann Dunwoody, commanding general, U.S. Army Materiel Command, greets a 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division Soldier at the brigade headquarters building March 22. Dunwoody visited the 4th SBCT Soldiers to discuss the responsible drawdown of forces as they reach the halfway point in their deployment.



BLACKHAWK 6

Lt. Col. Richard Heyward

2nd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment Commander



Troopers, families, and friends of the Blackhawks,

The past month has been an exceptional one for the Blackhawk Squadron. Our entire team's participation, vigilance, and partnership with the Iraqi Army and Police provided the security necessary for Iraqi citizens to vote their conscience.

As the command sergeant major and I moved through the area, we saw voters proudly displaying their trademark purple fingers, security forces helping voters get to the polls, and families dressed in their best clothes to publicly show their commitment against terrorism and support for a new Iraq.

Between 60-70% of the eligible voters turned out, largely because of the combined success of the Iraqi Security Forces and the Blackhawks in the weeks and hours before the election.

The humanitarian assistance drops, the key leader engagements, the barrier support, and the capture of caches and wanted individuals built the confidence of the people to take a stake in their future.

Just hours before the polls opened, the ISF thwarted a bike bomb. Blackhawk operational environment did not experience a single enemy attack. People in Tarmiyah went on record to state they lived in the safest place in Baghdad. Be proud of your contribution to this historic event.

At the six month mark now, I ask you reflect on everything this squadron has accomplished.

In Zaidon, the Blackhawks disrupted enemy efforts to attack Baghdad, and have duplicated the same success in Tarmiyah. Your engagements with security forces and local leaders encourage the Iraqis to finally stand on their own. Whether conducting a patrol, flying a unmanned aerial system, developing intelligence, or planning the next big operation every Trooper contributes to this amazing team effort.

However, it is essential we not become complacent in our achievement. The enemy votes too, and not just on election day. He still watches and awaits an opportunity to strike in the hopes of undo-



“Every Soldier in this squadron is an essential member of this team and contributes every day to our mission.”

-Lt. Col. Richard Heyward

ing everything we have accomplished. Stay vigilant – be professional and disciplined in all we do.

In the near future we will continue to help our Iraqi partners build their capabilities through air assaults and advanced training. We will help connect them to the people through humanitarian missions and sustained security. How-

ever, you will also start seeing us shift to returning the joint security stations and enabling the Iraqis to take further lead in their security. This is what Brig. Gen. Mangum describes as, “sealing the deal” so we can fulfill our promises under the Security Agreement, and depart Iraq with honor and in a manner that achieves victory for the sacrifices made by so many.

Command Sgt. Maj. Griffin and I are continuously impressed with your professionalism, discipline, and dedication to the mission. You set the standard in everything you do and your accomplishments do not go unnoticed. Every Soldier in this squadron is an essential member of this team and contributes everyday to our mission.

**Blackhawk 6
“Out Front, Blackhawks!”**

Infantrymen trade bullets for backpacks

**Story by Sgt. Bryce S. Dubee
4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.**



Photo by Sgt. Bryce S. Dubee, 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

Platoon leader of 1st Platoon, Company C, 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment, 1st Lt. Matt Sawdy, hands a backpack full of school supplies to a young Iraqi girl during a humanitarian assistance drop March 25.

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – With their Strykers parked outside, 1st Lt. Matt Sawdy led 1st Platoon, Company C, 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, into the building, his men setting up a security perimeter along the way.

Inside the courtyard, the lieutenant met with his Iraqi Army counterpart, discussed plans for the day's mission, then took a knee, placing his M4 carbine at his side and picking up a bright pink Barbie backpack.

Soldiers from the platoon conducted a series of humanitarian assistance drops March 25, delivering roughly 2,400 backpacks full of school supplies to children at schools in their operational environment.

As Sawdy and his men took their positions to begin distributing the supplies, teachers from the school led their eager students into the courtyard.

"It's good to get out here and help the kids out," he said. "As a father, it makes you feel good."

As security continues to improve in Iraq, the infantrymen are finding themselves conducting more of these types of missions rather than the high-intensity combat operations they would have conducted during their previous deployments.

After two deployments to Iraq full of intense fighting from 2003 to 2004 and again from 2006 to 2007, Sgt. 1st Class Adam Asclipiadis assumed this deploy-



Photo by Sgt. Bryce S. Dubee, 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

An Iraqi boy smiles while holding his new backpack, filled with school supplies and toys he received during a humanitarian assistance drop March 25.

ment would be similar.

"This deployment is different from the last," the San Jose, Calif., native said, explaining that even with the pre-deployment emphasis on supporting the Iraqi Security Forces, citizens and government, the amount of non-lethal missions he's conducted this deployment came as a surprise.

"Even the non-kinetic operations at (the Joint Readiness Training Center,) the key leader engagements, and all that did not prepare my brain for this," the infantry platoon sergeant said, as smiling schoolchildren lined up to get their supplies. "There's a sense of satisfaction that the deployments we did before meant something."

This fact is something that Asclipiadis imparts on his Soldiers, admitting that sometimes there's a challenge in explaining this new reality to young infantrymen, straight out of training, who anticipate they will be heading into a fight.

"Ever since basic, they've been drilled 'kill, kill, kill, assault and breach.'— We're not really doing any of that, so you have to re-focus them," he said, adding that while some might get frustrated at times with the boredom of something like a school supply drop, he feels his Soldiers will realize the significance of their actions in the long run. "Years from now they'll look back and say, 'I did that.'"

Participating in the mission that day, while on his first deployment, was Pfc. Benjamin Dodd, a M240 machine gunner. He said that while it's not what he

expected, he's embracing his new role.

"It's a totally different war now," the Rockville, Tenn., native said. "We're trying to build (the Iraqis) up now as a country."

Dodd said he's appreciative of the real-world experience he's gaining while deployed and better understands the sacrifices of the Soldiers who came before him.

A Stryker driver from Milladore, Wisc., also on his first deployment, Pfc. Robert Grassel agreed, echoing a comment spoken by Asclipiadis earlier that day.

"Sgt. A said that this deployment is better because he'd rather go home with all of his Soldiers than a bag full of memories," said Grassel.

For Dodd, while he's first and foremost an infantryman, he enjoys watching the Iraqi children running away with smiles on their faces and arms full of school supplies.

"If I had to do projects all the time," he said, "these are the kind I'd want to do."



Photo by Sgt. Bryce S. Dubee, 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

Excited Iraqi boys play to the camera and show off the toys they received during a humanitarian assistance drop March 25 in which Soldiers from 1st Platoon, Company C, 1st Battalion 38th Infantry Regiment, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, delivered roughly 2,400 backpacks filled with school supplies and toys.



Photo by Sgt. Bryce S. Dubee, 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

Eager Iraqi schoolgirls wait patiently in line to receive backpacks filled with school supplies and toys during a humanitarian assistance drop March 25. Soldiers from 1st Platoon, Company C, 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment, delivered backpacks to school children in the area.



VIKINGS

Company F, 52nd Infantry Regiment,
2nd Battalion, 12th Field Artillery Regiment



Viking Soldiers, families, and friends,

Company F, 52nd Infantry Regiment set the standard for executing joint operations and force protection operations in and around Baghdad over the course of February.

Co. F, stationed out of Camp Liberty, has adapted well to their support role for Iraqi Army Battalions of the 6th IA Division. The exceptional capabilities of battalions of the 6th IA Div. do not afford them opportunity to “kick in doors.”

However, as members of Task Force Viking, Co. F, 2nd Battalion, 12th Field Artillery Regiment, has built a good working relationship and partnership with 3rd Battalion, 54th Brigade, 6th IA Div. and 4th Battalion, 22nd Brigade, 6th IA Div. over the course of the deployment.

Since the beginning of the deployment, Co. F has been asked by the IA Battalion to support 12 operations (dubbed “Lightning Response”) for 6th IA Div.

Over the last 30 days, Co. F has conducted three of the 12 joint operations.

During “Lightning Response”, Co. F advised and assisted with military working dogs, Explosive Ordnance Disposal, or metal / mine detectors.

In addition to providing support assets, Co. F established blocking positions around the Muhallas where the IA Soldiers are conducting operations.

Co. F assessed the tactics, techniques, and procedures of the IA, then advised and assists them on how to improve their

abilities at these positions.

These missions are always a success because they continue to legitimize IA Soldiers and display the unity of effort between U.S. Forces and Iraqi Security Forces.

While conducting “Lightning Response” with the IA, Co. F was also tasked with force protection operations for TF Viking.

Co. F assumed TF Viking Quick Reaction Force throughout February.

As QRF, Co. F is called out on several different missions including disabled ve-

**“No matter the mission,
Co. F is able to adapt and
overcome. ”**

-Capt. Vic Morris

hicle recovery missions.

On one recovery mission in particular, Co. F was sent to recover a Kellogg, Brown, & Root vehicle located on the eastern border of Fallujah.

This is outside of the Raider Brigade operational environment and the United States Division – Center OE.

Receiving guidance from levels as high as USD-C, Co. F relayed communication through air assets and 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment.

The disabled vehicle was not found at



the initial location and Co. F quickly established a hasty defensive position while attempting to get an accurate location.

After receiving refined guidance on location, Co. F located the wrecked vehicle.

Throughout this deployment, there are very few, if any, in Raider Brigade who can say that they went out of the USD-C OE to conduct a mission.

No matter the mission, Co. F is able to adapt and overcome. While the company's size is an unusual challenge for an infantry company, Co. F completes every mission with professionalism and proficiency that is hard to rival. They are always ready, willing, and able to accomplish any mission.

**Capt. Vic Morris
“Vikings!”**

Legal office settles old debts



Photo by Sgt. Bryce S. Dubee, 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

Sgt. 1st Class Phillip Neal, the 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division's legal office's non-commissioned officer in charge, counts out money to be paid for a foreign claim during a claims payout mission on March 10. The 4th SBCT legal office handles about 25 foreign claims a month, paying for accidental damages and property loss incurred by Iraqi citizens as well as land leases from Iraqi landowners.

**Story by Sgt. Bryce S. Dubee
4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.**

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – As U.S. forces proceed on course with the responsible drawdown of forces in Iraq, Soldiers in the 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division legal office are working hard to set things right and tie up loose ends among Iraqi citizens who are owed compensation from the U.S. government.

The Army has programs in place designed to address any claims filed by Iraqi citizens, including property damage, injury or loss of life, and even paying landowners lease payments for land used by the U.S. military.

For example, if a 20-ton Stryker accidentally backs into an Iraqi citizen's car, the drivers can't exactly exchange information and let the insurance companies take care of it.

Instead, the citizen can file a claim with the military, which is then processed and paid out by military legal professionals.

On March 10, members of the 4th SBCT legal team travelled to Abu Ghraib near Camp Liberty to pay claims they had received and pick up new claims that had been filed.

That day, the legal Soldiers were especially excited because, in addition to regular claims payments, they had a chance to do something that hadn't been done in a while.

"We've gone out on numerous claims missions," said Sgt. 1st Class Phillip Neal, the brigade legal office non-commissioned officer in charge. "What makes this one special is that this is the first time we've actually gotten to pay a lease claim for land that we've occupied and have a lease for, for the time



Photo by Sgt. Bryce S. Dubee, 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

Sgt. Corbin Reiff, the claims non-commissioned officer in charge for the 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division's legal office, talks with an Iraqi translator who helps the legal Soldiers process claims paperwork on March 10.



Photo by Sgt. Bryce S. Dubee, 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

Sgt. 1st Class Phillip Neal, the 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division's legal office's non-commissioned officer in charge, counts out money to be paid to an Iraqi woman for her land which had been leased by the U.S. military. March 10 was the first time in several years that land leases had been paid out by the U.S. military in Iraq. The 4th SBCT legal office handles about 25 foreign claims a month, paying for accidental damages and property loss incurred by Iraqi citizens as well as land leases from Iraqi landowners.

period that we've occupied it."

When U.S. forces launched the 2007 "Surge" offensive, aimed at rooting out insurgents across Iraq, the increase in forces and expanded U.S. presence meant the Soldiers had to set up combat outposts and joint security stations in new areas, oftentimes taking over homes and property owned by Iraqis with the agreement that they would reimburse the property owner at a later date.

"We have the ability to help others," said Capt. Alex Arca, the brigade claims, contract and fiscal law attorney, who explained that the average damage claim takes about two to four weeks to process, while claims for land leases can take more than a year.

This was the first time in several years that the Army has paid out land lease claims to Iraqi landowners, with the 4th SBCT legal team paying out roughly \$225,000 out to claimants. And while some of the lease claimants expressed frustration in the length of the process,

"No one's bigger than 4-2 SBCT."

Securing funding to pay for the leases was the most time consuming part of the entire process, said Scott Mason, the acting chief of real estate for the U.S. Forces-Iraq J-7, who also travelled out to Abu Ghraib to assist in processing the lease claims.

Mason praised the 4th SBCT legal office and said he was truly impressed by their hard work and dedication to processing the lease claims.

"Everyone said it would take six to eight months, but Sgt. 1st Class Neal and his guys did it in a little over a month," he said. "Whoever follows behind me need to see this is how it should be done."

Neal took the praise in stride, saying that even though his shop may have the largest claims mission in Iraq; it is all part of the job.

"It is quite the workload," he said with a smile. "But that's what we're here for."



Photo by Sgt. Bryce S. Dubee, 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

Capt. Alex Arca, the claims, contract and fiscal law attorney for the 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division's legal office, signs paperwork during the processing of a foreign claim on March 10.



FORGE

702nd Brigade Support Battalion



Mid-deployment ceremonies offer new advances for BSB

**Story by Pfc. Kimberly Hackbarth
4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.**

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – Standing before an entire company, with a battalion commander to his right, Capt. Wayne Dahl felt an extreme sense of pride and focus on the mission ahead of him.

Just as the commander of Company A, 702nd Brigade Support Battalion before him did, Dahl became the new company commander part way through a deployment.

At a change-of-command ceremony here, Feb. 1., the company said goodbye to its previous commander and welcomed Dahl, who believes that changing commanders while deployed isn't a bad thing.

"Overall, it will definitely benefit the battalion," said Dahl. "It gives multiple commanders experience to command their companies while deployed (that way) there will be that many more officers that already have that experience."

Though he went from assistant brigade sustainment officer to company commander in the middle of a deployment with Soldiers he didn't train, he had nothing short of an optimistic outlook for the future of his company.

"(Being new) enables a fresh set of eyes to look at the operation and just

help tighten down some of the areas that can be tweaked or refined," said Dahl.

Dahl's previous job gave him a special insight that benefits him as the Co. A commander.

"(Working at brigade) allowed me to look at the entire brigade mission and I was also very involved with looking at how this battalion supports the brigade as a whole which helps me lead the company and utilize the assets effectively,"

standards and also exceed the new commander's standards," said Collins.

Changing commanders during deployment also has ups and downs for the incoming commander, as experienced by Capt. Aisha Hughes, who recently took over Company B, 702nd BSB.

"It's definitely a stressful situation because you want to keep focused on the mission, but at the same time

rejoice," said Hughes.

"It's something a lot of us look forward to; to take command."

It still takes Soldiers time to warm up to the new command, said Spc. Antonio Sotelo, a mechanic in Hughes' company.

"It's hard to let the old commander go, but I guess once we get a new commander, we adjust to how they're going to lead us," said Sotelo.

At the end of the day, everyone in the companies work to the best of his or her abilities regardless of whether the commander has been in command a week or a year.

"You've always got to be confident when you get new command," said Collins. "If you're not confident or ... there's no trust, you can't really follow them."

You've always got to be confident when you get new command...If you're not confident or ...there's no trust, you can't really follow them."

-Sgt. Ericka Collins

said Dahl.

Soldiers in his company already recognize his knowledgeable leadership.

"He's not somebody that has never done (logistics) or been around Soldiers," said Sgt. Ericka Collins, an automated and logistics specialist with Co. A, 702nd BSB, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division. "He's actually into what we do."

Gaining a new commander in the middle of a deployment, however, comes with a few strings attached.

"We've got to try to uphold our old

RANGER RECRUITER RAIDS 4-2 OE

**Story by Pfc. Kimberly Hackbarth
4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.**

JOINT SECURITY STATION NASIR WA SALAM, Iraq – Once a Soldier deploys downrange, his military career is not put on a hiatus until he returns back to the States.

Opportunities to advance military careers find their way to Soldiers regardless of the situation.

Airborne liaison officer and recruiter, Sgt. 1st Class Paul Pahl, toured around 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division's operational environment and arrived at 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment headquarters here March 18 to educate Soldiers from every company in the battalion on the benefits and requirements of becoming a U.S. Army Ranger.

"It gives everyone an option to further their career so they don't feel like they're just stuck in Iraq or in Afghanistan," said Sgt. Troy Danahy, a team leader with Company C from Hampton, N.H. "Now that you're over here and you have some time to think about it, it's a good option to have."

A fellow 4th Bn., 9th Inf. Regt., 4th SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div. Soldier agreed.

"It's not every day that you get that opportunity, especially where we're at now," said Sgt. Nicholas Sala-

zar, a team leader with Company A from San Antonio. "I've always heard that becoming a Ranger and doing something special like that reflects what kind of individual you are and the drive and motivation that you have."

Pahl informed the Soldiers sitting in the conference room that if they wanted to attend Ranger school and possibly transfer to a Ranger battalion, they would need a lot of motivation to attain that goal.

Before even being considered for Ranger school, a Soldier must meet predetermined requirements including a score of 240 points or higher on an Army Physical Fitness Test, not being flagged or barred from reenlistment, and hold a general technical score of 107 or higher on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery.

Once a Soldier meets the requirements,

he attends the Ranger Assessment and Selection Program which is designed to assess and select candidates using various tasks and challenges.

Specialists and below attend RASP 1 and sergeants through sergeants first class and officers attend RASP 2.

Both groups must complete a 12-mile road march in three hours while carrying a 35-pound rucksack, a five-mile run in 40 minutes, score 80 percent on the Ranger First Responder test and trauma lanes, successfully execute land navigational exercises, and pass a psychological screening and an Army Physical Fitness Test.

Pahl warned noncommissioned officers who wanted to go to a Ranger battalion that they would have to work hard because of the attitudes of Soldiers who came in the military and went directly to Ranger school.

"You have to have the heart to excel above those who've been there since day one," said Pahl, a Bucyrus, Ohio native.

The warning didn't deter Staff Sgt. Emile Anderson, the Mortar Section sergeant and platoon sergeant of Headquarters Platoon, Company B.

"I've always had it in my mind that I'm going to beat that guy that's, like, 10 years younger than me or whatever the case may be, so



Sgt. 1st Class Paul Pahl (standing), the Airborne liaison and recruiter with 75th Ranger Regiment, describes the significance of being in a Ranger battalion to 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment Soldiers during a Ranger recruitment brief March 18.

it doesn't bother me," said Anderson, a Fort Washington, Md. native.

While most of the Soldiers who attended the brief said that going to Ranger school would benefit their careers, Spc. Brent Brabant, a scout and radio telephone operator with Headquarters and Headquarters Company said going through something as challenging as Ranger School was more personal than that.

"I think the Ranger option, to me, isn't just to further my progression in the military ...it's a progression of me as a human being," said Brabant, a Tampa, Fla. native. "You'd rather learn those lessons at a school than on the battlefield."

Following the brief, Pahl asked the roomful of hopefuls if they had any questions. No hands went into the air.

"At the end, we weren't bashful to ask questions," said Brabant; "Everything we wanted to ask, he answered (in his brief)."

Soldiers left the room with an option that most said they have wanted since they joined the military. Now, it's just a matter of them finding the right path to it.

Once they return home to the States, if the Soldiers choose to follow that path and the advice they received during their deployment and become Rangers, they'll go on to become members of the largest special operations combat elements.

New chaplain joins 4-2

Greetings Raiders!

I am Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Spencer Ellis Hardaway. I am with the 91st Chaplain Detachment out of Puerto Rico. No, I am not from Puerto Rico, and no, unfortunately, I do not speak Spanish. However, my chaplain assistant, Sgt. Hector Torres, is from Puerto Rico and speaks Spanish. Unfortunately, he is headed for United States Forces-Iraq.

I was born and raised in Cleveland. Any team coming out of Ohio, I am their fan, especially teams from my city.

I am a Reservist, but do not let that fool you. I spent six years stationed at Fort Bragg, N.C., with the 82nd Airborne Division, 2nd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 1st Squadron, 17th Cavalry Regiment, 18th Field Artillery Brigade, and the 46th Support Group. I spent a year in Korea in the 2nd Infantry Division with 702nd Maintenance Support Battalion. I serve as the senior pastor at Rock Hill Missionary Baptist Church, Asheville, N.C.

I am married to the former Anita Jean Bounds. We have been married just 33 years. We have three daughters, whose accomplishments we are very proud of. All three have graduated from college. We have one grand-daughter, Chelsea, and we absolutely adore and enjoy her presence. We are about to become grandparents a second time as our oldest daughter and her husband are expecting their first child. A boy!

We arrived in country Nov. 1, 2009 and attached to the 3rd Infantry Division in Tikrit, Contingency Operating Base Speicher. We conducted battlefield circulation that took us as far west to the Syrian border to Forward Operating Base Heider ministering to Military Transition Teams at the Port of Entry and back across to the far east of Iraq to Kirkush/Caldwell just miles from the Iranian Border.

The scripture that keeps me anchored is Proverbs 3:5-6 "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not to thine own understanding in all thy ways acknowledge him and he shall direct thy paths." I am excited and I look forward to serving as the brigade chaplain for 4th SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div. Raiders.

Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Spencer Hardaway



On the back cover:

TARMIYAH, Iraq – A Soldier with 1st Armored Division, United States Division-Center follows his military working dog across a small waterway during a weapons cache search with 2nd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, Mar 14.

Photo by Spc. Luisito Brooks, 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.



STRYKER BRIGADE...

...TO THE OBJECTIVE!!!

