



Ironhorse Soldiers of 1BCT keep their metal monsters rolling with wrench, wit and teamwork.
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Engineer Troopers build bridge from jail to community for former detainees of Abu Ghraib.

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Local athletes compete on gridiron for title in flag-football tournament.

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Cav Country



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"Telling the First Team's Story"

October 16, 2004

86th Dive Team Demolishes 35-foot Boat in Tigris River

Sixteen pounds of plastic explosives detonate in the middle of the Tigris River to remove a semi-submerged boat from the Abu Nuwas Parkway in Baghdad Sept. 26. Soldiers of the 86th Dive Team from Fort Eustis, Va., set the charge, assisting 1st Cavalry Division engineers in their restoration efforts in the park. "We were going to try and lift up the entire boat, but that would be too difficult because of the size, so we decided to just flatten it," said 1st Lt. Eric Marshall, the 86th Dive Team officer in charge. "No one knows where the boat came from or how it got there." After the first detonation, divers had to place another 10 pounds of explosives on parts of the boat that were not destroyed by the first explosion.

See story, Pages 8,9



By Spc. Al Barrus, 122nd MPAD



By Cpl. Benjamin Cossel, 122nd MPAD

Lt. Gen. H. Steven Blum fires one round in a twelve-round fire mission as Soldiers from Arkansas' Battery C, 1st Battalion of the 206th Field Artillery Regiment, 39th Brigade Combat Team prepare to load another round into a 105mm Howitzer artillery piece. Blum visited with Soldiers of the 39th BCT at their Forward Operating Base of Camp Taji, Iraq Sept. 29.

National Guard Bureau Chief Visits Taji

Cpl. Benjamin Cossel
122nd MPAD

CAMP TAJI, Iraq-- With just a few months left until units currently deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom II begin redeployment to home stations, planners and logisticians with the National Guard Bureau are facing challenges not seen since the end of World War II.

Addressing issues ranging from the comfort of individual Soldiers to concerns of redeployment, Lt. Gen. H. Steven Blum, Chief of the National Guard Bureau spent the day visiting Camp Taji, Sept. 29 talking to commanders and Soldiers of the Arkansas National Guards' 39th Brigade Combat Team attached to the 1st Cavalry Division.

"With over three National Guard Brigades and various detachments now serving in theater, the largest National Guard deployment since World War II," explained Maj. Andreas de Kunffy, the 39th's information officer, "the issues and problems of how those units will redeploy to home station is of major concern."

De Kunffy went on to explain that models that exist for active duty units, whereby a unit returns home, has 30 days of receiving of equipment, maintenance and other issues and then begins block leave potentially would not work for a National Guard Brigades unless

changes are made.

"Once a unit is de-mobilized, they are no longer on federal orders and return to their one weekend a month status," noted the Fort Smith, Ark resident. "This issue is going to have to be addressed in order for a National Guard Brigade size element to properly receive, account for, and submit any paperwork needed for all the equipment that deployed with us [the 39th BCT]."

During a briefing attended by Blum as well as Command Sgt. Maj. John J. Leonard, Jr., Command Sgt. Maj. of the National Guard Bureau, commanders and staff officers of the 39th BCT addressed such concerns as well as offering potential solutions. While answers to the many questions raised are still in the planning stages, Blum noted that the suggestions taken from his visit with the 39th BCT and other National Guard brigades currently deployed would be taken back to Arlington, Va., headquarters of the National Guard Bureau.

As the issue of units returning to home station weighted heavily in Blum's concerns, the primary reason for Blum's trip was to visit with Soldiers of the camp and listen to concerns and problems they faced.

"Getting out here on the ground and seeing first hand what the troops are experiencing is extremely important," noted Blum

as he walked through the 39th Support Battalion's maintenance section examining armor attachments Soldiers there made.

"What's this over here?!" said an excited Blum as he noticed a homemade go cart sitting off in a corner of the welding yard. Laughs and chuckles were heard as Blum took up his spot behind the driver's seat as the creator of the vehicle, Staff Sgt. Gerald Birdsong of Conway, Ark. with the 39th Support Battalion was found and brought before Blum.

Sheepishly, Birdsong explained that the vehicle was made from salvaged or custom made parts he had found or collected.

"So why aren't you driving this thing around the camp," asked Blum to which Birdsong replied.

"Haven't been able to make brakes for it yet, sir."

"Sounds like my kind of car," Blum quipped.

As they talked to Soldiers, both Blum and Leonard asked if there was anything they could do to help. Soldiers gave voice to issues ranging from the granting of new, secondary Military Occupational Specialties (MOS) because of the job training to challenges faced with shortages of parts needed.

"It's really great that the general is able to get out here like this and visit with the troops," said Birdsong. "He seems genuinely concerned with the issues we are facing."

Directive Guides Political Comments

As the November elections approach and the candidates debate important national issues, the political climate will inevitably heat up. Soldiers are among those with strong convictions and opinions and have the right to voice them, so long as they do so under certain conditions.

I am sure you have heard your fellow troopers backing one candidate or another and in so doing, make comments in support of or against certain individuals. While opinions are encouraged, the use of contemptuous words towards a public official is strictly prohibited by title 10 of the United States Code, section 888.

Saying that I don't agree with so-and-so's stance on immigration reform or term limits is one thing. Saying they are idiots or communists is another. There is a fine line we must walk when entering into discourse with others or bantering about things 'a-politique'. As representatives of the Army, we are guided and restricted by what we can and can't say in these discussions or in other political activities.

According to DoD Directive 1344.10, we Soldiers, and all other military service members, have certain rights and restrictions on our behavior regarding political support and activities. The spirit and intent of the directive prohibits activity that may be viewed as directly or indirectly associating the Department of Defense with partisan politics, but it does not preclude personal participation in local nonpartisan political activities, so long as: we are not in uniform; we do not use government property or resources; and it does not interfere with our military duties. The key factor in this is the nonpartisan nature of our involvement.

The directive further outlines that Soldiers are permitted to: register, vote and express personal opinions; encourage other military members to exercise voting rights; join a political club, and attend political meetings and rallies as a spectator when not in uniform; make monetary contributions to

Commentary

SFC Tony Sailer



Editor

a political organization; sign petitions for specific legislative action or place candidate's name on the ballot; write letters to the editor expressing personal views; and display bumper stickers on private vehicles.

The directive also delineates certain political activities that Soldiers are prohibited from. A military member may not: use official authority to influence or interfere with the political process; be a candidate for civil office; participate in partisan political campaigns, speeches, articles, TV or radio discussions; serve in official capacity of or sponsor a partisan political club; conduct political opinion surveys; use contemptuous words towards a public official (again, in accordance with 10 U.S.C. § 888); march or ride in partisan parades; participate in organized efforts to transport voters to polls; promote political dinners or fundraising events; attend partisan events as official representative of the Armed Forces; display large signs, banners or posters on private vehicles.

Again, note that the term 'partisan' in these guidelines refers to aligning yourself with a specific political party. These guidelines are not meant to stop us from voicing our opinions, but they are a reminder to use some sense when making your feelings and opinions known. I, for one, will continue to support those who lead us, debate those with whom I disagree and vote so my voice is heard.

If you have further questions about political activities, you can contact the JAG PAO or your unit Voting Assistance officer.

Pegasus 9 Sends: "Change"

Change. It's occurring all around us and is a part of our military culture. It is what defines the United States Army and American society in general. It stresses us out, leaves us confused and is the excuse we use when our performance falls short of expectations.

The United States Army is an evolutionary institution. There is not (contrary to popular belief) an "Old Army" and a "New Army." There are distorted interpretations of the past, but the Army is still the Army.

Change. The 2nd Brigade Combat Team is confronted with it as I type this. Change. Every soldier in the division, ... the Army at large ... must confront it and contend with it on a daily basis.

Our Soldiers face numerous unknowns here in Iraq and back on the "Home Front" on a daily basis. From the Rules of Engagement to Reintegration Training, Soldiers are exposed to constantly evolving Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTPs).

Change. Yup, we acknowledge it, so why do I bring it up? Change, as I mentioned earlier, is an unknown. Many (not just in the Army) fear the unknown. Our deployed Soldiers, and their families have questions related to redeployment, ETS, PCS, NCOES, promotions, retention, leave and pass policies, pay entitlements, tour lengths, Unit of Action reorganizations, Stop Loss and Stop Move, military education, home station barracks and realignment.

The list goes on and on and on. Change. We know it's out there, so why mention it? There are two simple reasons.

CSM Neil Ciatola



Division Command Sgt. Maj.

First of all, someone somewhere has the answer. Secondly, our Soldiers have questions.

Are you talking to your Soldiers? I mean really talking to them. Throwing out information in formation is not "talking to Soldiers." Do you have a firm grasp of the issues that concern your troops? If so what are you (we) doing to allay their fears/concerns?

If you're the supervisor of Soldiers with questions what are you doing to get them the answers they deserve?

Over my 28 years in the Army, I have developed concerns over two types of non-commissioned officers. The first types are those who wear chevrons and think they are beyond reproach. The second are sergeants who think they must have all the answers.

What NCOs need to know, from my foxhole is this: nobody is perfect, and no one has all the answers. I don't have all the answers, either, but I have the phone numbers for the people who do.

Change. If you're a leader, talk to your Soldiers, now and always. Empower them with the knowledge available. In the end, if we don't have an answer to give them, we can always take comfort in the knowledge that we face the unknown together.

Together, we can manage change. "First Team!"

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Spur & The Moment

Photos by Sgt. Dan Purcell, 122nd MPAD

"What would you do to improve the quality of camp life?"

"More entertainment for the Soldiers, and more MWR facilities."



Maj. Keith Holliday
C Co., 210 FSB
Camp Black Jack

"I would say better transportation, more buses for the units."



Sgt. Daniel Coburn
2nd Bn., 2nd Marines
Camp Striker

"I would say to hold more concerts here and more fun days so that people can come in and hang out."



Sgt. Jennifer Butka
1st Cav. Div. Band
Camp Liberty

"Earlier transportation hours for the shuttle buses."



2nd Lt. Christina Hays
C Co., 210 FSB
Camp Black Jack

"It's hard to say because they have on-going projects to improve our living conditions... It's not home, but it's a pretty decent place; maybe better internet access."



Spc. Jason Elliot
Apache Troop, 1-7 Cav.
Camp Falcon

General: With Peace Comes Progress for Baghdad



By Staff Sgt. Susan German, 122nd MPAD

Brig. Gen. Jeffery Hammond, assistant division commander for the 1st Cavalry Division takes questions from members of the Iraqi press corps during a press conference at Camp Al Tahreer. Hammond spoke with more than 30 media members about the current security situation in Baghdad and the hope for peace and progress in the Iraqi capital.

By Master Sgt. Dave Larsen
1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD-- Just 72 hours removed from a series of car bomb attacks in the Iraqi capital, where many of the dead and injured were children, the 1st Cavalry Division's assistant division commander, Brig. Gen. Jeffery Hammond met with members of the Iraqi press corps Oct. 2 at Camp Al Tahreer to discuss the current violence, and the security situation in the city.

"The enemy ... he's getting desperate," Hammond told more than 30 members of the Iraqi press corps. "He's killing Iraqis. He's killing your children."

Hammond told the assembled media members that seeing images of children killed by a car bomb at a sewage plant opening ceremony was deeply disturbing to him, personally, as a father of two. He told the media members that the security situation in Baghdad can improve, and improve quickly, with the help of the general population.

"Security is not just the role of the Soldier. Security's not just the responsibility

of the police, the Iraqi National Guard ... the Iraqi Soldiers," Hammond said. "Security is everyone's responsibility. I know that when an attack occurs, when a rocket is fired, someone sees this. Someone knows who this person is. Part of their security job is to report this is occurring ... [to] help us identify the enemy."

Hammond stressed that the primary focus of his division is still the reconstruction of the Iraqi capital, but said that security concerns have hampered these efforts.

He told the Iraqi press corps that given time, and cooperation of the local populace, every district of the Iraqi capital - even troubled eastern Baghdad - will flourish.

"Give us peace in Sadr City for 90 days," Hammond said, "and we'll have all those roads repaved, projects moving on, and many, many people working."

Hammond noted that elsewhere in Baghdad, the 1st Cavalry Division has made remarkable progress restoring essential services, such as clean water, electricity, sewage treatment and bulk trash removal.

1BCT Mechanic Earns Two Purple Hearts in One Week

By Cpl. Benjamin Cossel
122nd MPAD

CAMP HOPE, Baghdad-- Lightning never strikes twice, or so the story goes, but in the case of Sgt. Dewey Gibson the lightning was a mortar round and the story was wrong.

When he got back from the combat support hospital (CSH) after taking wounds to the inner thigh from a mortar round, Sgt. Dewey Gibson counted his lucky stars that the wounds he received were not serious.

"Considering how high up on my inner thigh that shrapnel went," he commented with a chuckle, "it could have been a lot worse."

Gibson, a mechanic with Company C, 115th Forward Support Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team of the 1st Cavalry Division returned to duty less than 24-hours later. He spent just three days away from his unit after his first injury: shrapnel from yet another mortar round explosion.

After receiving wounds taken from mortar shrapnel, Gibson has the distinction of being awarded two Purple Hearts, with injuries occurring within a week of each other.

Recounting his story, Gibson begins with June 4, the night of the first mortar round to leave its mark on his body.

"I was out in the motor pool performing QA/QC (quality assurance/quality control) on some of the vehicles that had been brought in," said the Morgan City, La. native. "Then I heard that all too familiar thump of a mortar being launched and I just kind of froze. I

sat there for a few seconds wondering where it was going to land, about a second later as I heard the explosion and felt the pain in my leg, there was no more wondering where that round was going to go."

Just fifteen minutes prior to the round impacting, Dewey had had a conversation with his team chief, Sgt. 1st Class Stephony Lacy.

"I had mentioned to Gibson that I had a bad feeling about that night, and I wanted him to go ahead and lock everything up and come inside," the team chief said. "I hadn't gotten much further than the door of the motor pool, and I heard the impact, and then I heard Sgt. Gibson had been hit."

Immediately ducking inside to the motor pool, Soldiers who were with Gibson at the time he was hit performed first aid and got him to the battalion's aid station where he was then evacuated by helicopter to the CSH, located within the International Zone.

"That was the only round to fall on the FOB that day," Gibson commented, "and it found its way to me."

After returning to duty, Gibson found himself in the familiar situation of performing QA/QC on the day of June 7.

"I decided on my first day back to duty I was going to put myself a little bit closer to a building so this time if I heard that thump," said the Army veteran of seventeen years, "I could run to safety."

Unfortunately for Gibson, there would be no sound this time and no time to run to safety.

"Just all of a sudden there was that infernal boom again and I felt

pain all over my body. I threw my flashlight and clipboard down, said a few choice words," he noted, a grin sprawling across his face, "and walked back into the maintenance bay and the guys started patching me up again."

This time, his wounds would prove more serious. Shrapnel had peppered Gibson from his legs up to his head; again he was evacuated to the CSH, his second stay, a little longer than the first.

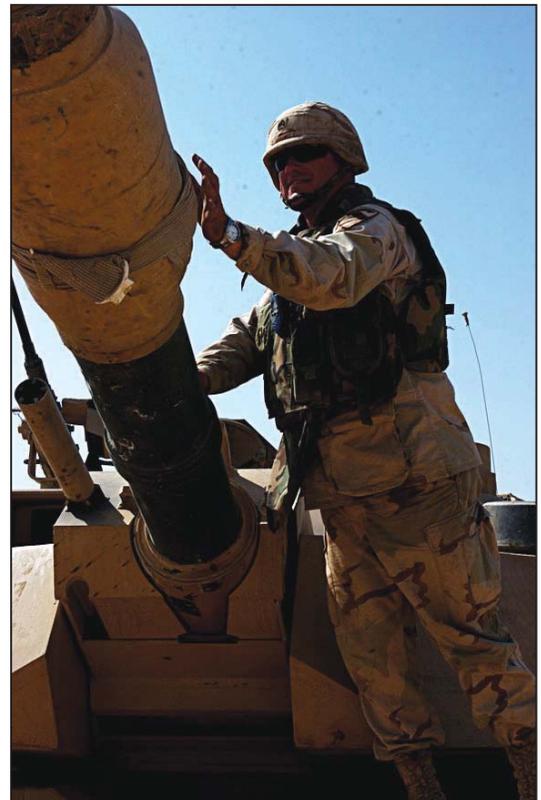
"I absolutely could not believe it," Lacy said. "We (Gibson and Lacy) had just been joking about me needing to put on my gear to walk to the latrine and I had told Gibson that he was the mortar magnet and needed to put his gear on. I get back, and they tell me the guy has been hit again. I just couldn't believe it."

For many of the Soldiers working in the motor section, Gibson has become something of an inspiration for them.

"Every single Soldier he works with has nothing but respect and admiration for him," noted Sgt. 1st Class Kenneth Henry, Gibson's platoon sergeant. "They see what he's gone through and see him right back out there working in the same spots those rounds got him and they know they can go out there and do it if he can."

With more than 800 rounds impacting on Camp Hope (formerly known as Camp Eagle) since the 1st BCT's arrival in early April, many Soldiers, perhaps trying to overcome their own fears, have spoken to Gibson about his experience and how he continues on.

"I just tell them when they ask me," he says in his slow, southern



By Cpl. Benjamin Cossel, 122nd MPAD

Indicating where a round struck the M1A1 Abrams tank he was working on, Sgt. Dewey Gibson said the "Fear of mortar rounds coming in is really never something you get over. You just sort of have to grit your teeth and go out and there and get your job done." Gibson, a mechanic with Company C, 115th Forward Support Battalion, has received two Purple Heart Medals since coming to Iraq in April.

drawl, "that there really isn't anything they can do about it and that their fears are completely normal. Really, the only way to get over that fear is to understand we have an important job to do ... to grit your teeth and just get out there and do it."

Ironhorse

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Who to Go to When a Tank Goes Down

By Spc. Andy Miller
122nd MPAD

CAMP RUSTAMIYAH, Baghdad-- Widely regarded as the world's premier battle tank, the 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment's M1A2 Systems Enhancement Package (SEP) Abrams are a vital part of the 1st Cavalry Division's mission in eastern Baghdad.

Their tanks fought on the front lines during the Muqtada Militia uprising last April, and today they are used to conduct improvised explosive device (IED) sweeps on some of the most dangerous routes in Iraq.

When an Abrams Tank goes down for repairs or maintenance, the tank crew works together with tank maintenance to get it back on mission as soon as possible.

"Our main focus is to make sure all our tanks are up," 1st Sgt. Luis Freyre, of Company A, 2-8 Cav., said. "[When one goes down, the] priority is to get the tank up as quick as possible."

Frequent missions and the extreme temperatures of Baghdad take their toll on the Abrams, said

(Right) Spc. Jaime Mastache, an Abrams tank mechanic with Aces Company, 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, moves a new turbine motor so that it can be prepared for installation. The turbine motor is the same type that is used in aircraft, and can propel a 70-ton tank to speeds higher than 40 mph.

Staff Sgt. Kendall Titus, the maintenance supervisor for the 'Aces' combat repair team. The Soldiers on Titus's team are specially trained to work on Abrams tanks. Part of the team works all night long to make sure a tank that needs repairs is ready for the next day's mission.

"The guys do good maintenance, and we've got a great maintenance team, but you're fighting the elements here, too," Sgt. 1st Class Daniel Miller, an Aces platoon sergeant with 16 years of tank experience, said. "We're putting a lot of miles on our vehicles, and at the same time with the excessive heat, it's a tank, it runs hot anyway, and



we're in 120 to 130 degree temperatures. You're going to start to see some thermal problems."

Considering the extreme conditions, Titus doesn't think his crew makes an abnormal amount of repairs. They expected the tanks to get a lot of usage in Baghdad, so they were well prepared for the mission here. Still, when a tank goes down, it's a big deal for the tankers and the maintenance team.

(Left) Staff Sgt. George Grullon, a tank commander for 2-8th Cav., 1st Cav. Div., inspects a brand new turbine motor that will replace the one in Ali Baba, his tank. Grullon's four-man crew worked with a crew of M1A2 Abrams tank maintainers and repairers to replace the motor. The next morning Ali Baba was ready to go back out on a mission.

"When it goes down, it feels like part of you," Staff Sgt. George Grullon, an Aces tank commander, said. "It's like being hurt, that's why we take it seriously. We try to bring it back up as soon as possible. That way we can continue on with our mission."

Being part of a tank crew is like being part of a family, Grullon said, who shares a tradition of tanking with his brother and grandfather. The family-like camaraderie that tankers share extends to the maintenance crew Soldiers who help keep the tanks running, Miller said.

"Most tank crews are genuinely concerned about their tanks and they give us a lot of help," Titus said. "It takes two hands to clap. To make that sound you have to have two hands, the crew is one hand; the maintenance team is the other hand. We come together and try to keep the product out there."



Sgt. Thursha Maragh, an Abrams tank mechanic with Aces Co., 2-8 Cav., works to prepare a turbine motor for installation. When an Abrams tank goes down, Maragh's crew works through the night with the Abrams crew to ensure the tank will be mission-ready the next day.



Photos by Spc. Andy Miller, 122nd MPAD

En Guard: 115th FSB NCOs Pull Guard Duty Next to Lower-Enlisted Soldiers

By Spc. Erik LeDrew
122nd MPAD

CAMP RUSTAMIYAH, Baghdad-- Sitting in a guard tower day-in and day-out pulling guard duty can be enough to burn a Soldier out, and the non-commissioned officers of the Communications section, Headquarters and Distribution Company (HDC), 115th Forward Support Battalion (FSB), understand this.

"We have our whole [section] doing guard duty, not just the lower-enlisted," said El Paso, Texas native Staff Sgt. Manuel Marin, the section supervisor. "We're one team."

Of the 12 Soldiers in Marin's section that do guard duty at Camp Rustamiyah (formerly Camp Cuervo), only five are junior-enlisted and the rest are NCOs.

"I believe we're all Soldiers and we

all have the same mission," added Warner Robins, Ga. native Staff Sgt. Dominic Davis.

When they first arrived here in April, however, sharing guard duty was not something the section practiced.

"When we first got here the NCOs had higher priority missions," said Pfc. Mark Thomas, a section member hailing from New Orleans. "The NCOs had more experience in this field than the rest of us so they were the ones setting up the communications equipment for the camp while the rest of us did guard duty."

According to Marin, the NCOs began sharing the load with his lower-enlisted Soldiers after their second month in Iraq.98ikj

"After we had completed installing internet and phone lines around the camp and had settled in, we started helping out our Soldiers," he said.

"Now that everybody's trained up, we're all sharing [guard duty]," Thomas added.

According to Sgt. Aaron Favors, Commo Section, HDC, 115th FSB and an Albany, Ga. native, each Soldier in the section does a week of guard duty every month.

"In addition to sharing tower guard," said Sgt. Aaron Favors, a section sergeant from Albany, Ga., "we also trade off guarding the groups of local Iraqis that come to work on the base."

Although once in a while one of them may have to pull an extra shift or two, depending upon their section's normal workload, Favors maintains that spreading the guard duty out is the fairest way to do it.

"Why keep one Soldier doing guard duty out there for months?" Davis asked. "If everybody does it, then we can all have some down time."



By Spc. Erik LeDrew, 122nd MPAD

Sgt. Aaron Favors, Commo Section, Headquarters and Distribution Company, 115th Forward Support Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cav. Div., serves a guard shift in one of Camp Cuervo's guard towers.

Medic Says it all in Three Languages

By Sgt. Dan Purcell
122nd MPAD

CAMP LIBERTY, Baghdad-- The conversation moves effortlessly from Sheik to Soldier as Spc. Ahmad Mohamad skillfully interprets their concerns, questions and answers.

Mohamad, a 29-year-old medic from Puerto Rico, is assigned to the 2nd Battalion 12th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom II... and is fluent in three languages, which include English, Spanish and Arabic.

Born in Puerto Rico, Mohamad enjoys both a Spanish and Arabic heritage.

"My father is Palestinian and my mother is Spanish," Mohamad explained. "When I was two years old my father decided to move our family to Palestine because he always believed that we should learn new cultures and languages when we can."

Moving was easy, being so young made adapting easier. It was very exciting living over there and a very good experience learning a lot about the typical Arabs' life and customs, how they think and the little nuances in how they deal with each other, Mohamad said.

"I think my father was right... My childhood was really amazing because during the early '80s things were still quiet over there. There were no troubles, Israelis and Palestinians used to hang out together," Mohamad continued. "But, about a year before I returned to Puerto Rico the Intifada started. It became more difficult to study because the schools were closing, so my parents felt it wasn't best for me to stay and decided to return home."

Now fluent in the Arabic language and customs, Mohamed returned to his native land, at the age of 14, where he graduated from both high school and college.

"My major in college was Physical



By Sgt. Dan Purcell, 122nd MPAD

Spc. Ahmad Mohamad (right), a medic with 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, uses his interpreting skills to help a local sheik express his concerns to Capt. Joe Heaton, civil military operations liaison officer, also with the 2-12 Cav.

Chemistry," Mohamad explained. "I received a scholarship from the (Dr.) Ronald McNair Foundation. I was one of 20 students the foundation selects every year from the United States and Puerto Rico. It was a two-year scholarship that basically provides some financial help and other assistance in preparing students for their careers. Part of the program included preparing a project of my choice to be presented before a board of foundation members. My project was on the production of synthetic cells...the project now sits in my college library."

With just two classes shy of obtaining his degree, Mohamad received an offer to attend a medical school in Mexico where he spent the next six years of his life.

"In Mexico I finished my four years of medical college and got my diploma, but I didn't finish my internship because it took all my time and in Mexico you don't get paid while in training. So between long hours in training and study I had no way to support my family, I dropped the internship and returned home to work for my brother who took over my father's business," Mohamad detailed the hardships.

After spending about five months helping his brother, Mohamad realized that he wasn't cut out to be a businessman.

"Then one day I passed an Army recruiter and decided to see what he had to offer...I was always interested in the Army, especially, the training and discipline," Mohamad said. "I think I was too excited to

join because I never looked at the contract...and the next thing I know I'm on a plane heading for Fort Benning, Ga. I chose to be a medic because I wanted to stay in the medical field and I thought at some point I would be able to finish getting my medical license."

Upon completion of basic training, Mohamad was assigned to the ICD at Fort Hood, Texas and then deployed with his unit to Iraq.

Currently, Mohamad can be found working at Camp Hawk, home of the 303rd Iraqi National Guard (ING) Battalion where he manages to put all his skills to work.

"Here I continue to work as a medic...Usually the ING and American Soldiers come to me when they have a medical problem or condition, even people from the local community come for consults," explained Mohamad.

"I am also assigned to help interpret because I am fluent in Arabic. Part of my job includes screening the Iraqi interpreters to make sure someone doesn't try to trick us and infiltrate our mission here during the hiring process. As a result, we were able to detect these people at the beginning and now we have a pretty tight group of employees," Mohamad said.

In addition to working with the Iraqi interpreters, Mohamad also serves as a liaison between his command, local sheiks and the media.

"Working as an interpreter is great," he said, "especially in this environment because it helps the time go by faster and it is a good distraction, but it doesn't give me much time off."

When I'm not working I'm on call anytime of the day or night, so I don't do much else.

My future goal is to finish my internship and get my medical license in America, maybe even becoming a commissioned medical doctor," Mohamad concluded.

Soldiers Deliver Garbage Trucks to Al Mansour District

By Spc. Al Barrus
122nd MPAD

BAGHDAD-- When the people of Al Mansour complained about their trash problem, the Soldiers stationed in that neighborhood of Baghdad found them a solution.

As a part of the effort to improve the quality of life in the Al Mansour district, the Soldiers of the 425th Civil Affairs Battalion attached to 3rd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment of the 1st Cavalry Division's 2nd Brigade Combat Team, presented 10 garbage trucks to the local community recently.

The project for the trucks was developed by Sgt. William Allen of the 425th Civil Affairs



By Spc. Al Barrus, 122nd MPAD

Iraqi truck drivers inspect their new trash trucks, presented to the Al Mansour community. A civil affairs team attached to the 3rd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment delivered ten trucks to the community. Iraqi district communities in Abu Ghraib and Kadhamiyah will also get ten trucks each in the coming weeks. Each truck costs \$5,500, and is expected to create jobs for the local populace as well as clean up the city's streets.

Battalion in April, and chased the trucks at the price of \$5,500 each. approved by brigade civil affairs. A local contractor pur-

"Today we're just looking

at the trucks making sure they look in good condition," Allen said. "These are used trucks, but these were reconditioned so they will be good to go. We are checking them out making sure the beds rise."

These 10 trucks will be used exclusively in Al Mansour, Allen said. He added that 10 more trucks each will soon be delivered to the communities in Abu Ghraib and Kadhamiyah.

Because garbage is a big problem in these areas, plans are in the making to get even more trucks, Allen said.

"Trash pick up is important because we want the area to look better," the Los Angeles native said. "When we first got here people were complaining

because their neighborhoods looked so bad with trash and rubble everywhere. Everything was getting dumped and left there."

This project is also part of a larger objective to improve the essential services of the areas in the 'Red Dragon' area of operations, and in turn help the economy grow.

"We're getting a lot of public works started, mainly with the trash as well as the sewer and the electricity," Allen said. "For example, in this project we will need employment for drivers, operators and guys who dump the trash. What we are trying to do is get people from the local area to stimulate the economy with job opportunities."

Water Treatment Station Renovated in Al Rashid

By Spc. Jan Critchfield
122nd MPAD

BAGHDAD-- Work to renovate the Al Rashid water treatment station in the Zaphernia district began recently as a part of Multi-national force efforts to rebuild and renovate essential infrastructure and improve quality of life for residents.

"This is the plant that provides fresh drinking water to the people of Zaphernia," said Lt. Col. Brian Dosa, commander of the 8th Engineer Battalion. "About 250,000 people get their drinking water from this plant."

Drawing water from the Tigris River, which geographically divides Baghdad and provides life-sustaining water to its residents, the water treatment plant has survived nearly 50 years of use. Recent looting gutted the electrical components of the plant, seriously affecting the quality and quantity of fresh water supplied to the people of Zaphernia.

"The plant is old," Dosa said. "Over the years there have been projects to maintain it and rehabil-

itate it, but it is sadly in need of more work to improve the quantity of the water and the quality of the water."

He said the current project addresses immediate problems, but plans to do more once funding becomes available.

Labor and materials to fix various pumps and electrical systems around the plant over the next two months will total \$140,000. The money comes from funds allocated to Iraq's infrastructure needs by the U. S. government.

The need for the renovations was identified through the 8th Engineer Battalion's work with local Iraqi leadership. Baghdad-based engineers worked with the plant's director to complete an initial survey for the project's scope and cost.

"Just as in other areas of Baghdad, we are trying to improve the essential services for the people; sewer systems, drinking water, electricity, and trash collection," Dosa said. "This is just one example of how we're improving the quality of life."



Photos by Spc. Jan Critchfield, 122nd MPAD

(Above) The 1st Cav. Div.'s 8th Eng. Bn. commander Lt. Col. Brian Dosa (second from right) enjoys lunch with Iraqi leaders of the Zaphernia district of Baghdad and fellow Soldiers during a gathering celebrating a bilateral project to renovate the water treatment plant.

(Left) An Al Rashid water station employee operates a pump that supplies fresh drinking water to the people of Baghdad's Zaphernia district. A project to renovate the plant will improve the quality and quantity of water that the plant can supply to over 250,000 customers.



From Cook to Unit Admin Clerk, Soldier Takes Care of Troops

By Sgt. John Queen
3rd BCT Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE UNION II, Baghdad-- When Soldiers of Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 153rd Infantry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, need a go-to man for any of their personnel needs, they know where to turn: Cpl. Jeffrey Bloom.

"I keep track of all the unit's personnel," said Bloom, a 21-year-old native of Benton, Ark. "Any issues the Soldiers may have, they come to me first before they go anywhere else."

A military cook by trade, Bloom has been working as the unit's multi-functional clerk and commander's driver since their call to active duty in October 2003.

"Back at home station, I was trying to get out of the cook section," he said. "I didn't like

being a cook at all."

So in a move that appeased both Bloom and his command, he was made the unit's administrator.

"I like doing this," Bloom said. "I didn't know anything about this job when I first started. It took a lot of learning. I learned most of it at Fort Hood before we deployed over here."

As the unit's administrative clerk, Bloom deals with many of the Soldiers' personal issues, from pay problems to schools to leave.

"Leave is a big issue right now. Tracking personnel, making sure we know when they go on leave, where everyone is and when they're coming back," said Bloom.

Starting early in the morning, Bloom begins his workday with a command meeting that encompasses everything happening on Forward Operating Base Union II, formerly called Warrior, in Baghdad and any issues

concerning the Soldiers of his company. Once the meeting is over, he jumps into any number of daily tasks he has scheduled for the day.

"They could be really anything," Bloom said. "My commander loves PowerPoint presentations. I've built one for just about anything you can think of now."

"We do a lot of PowerPoint presentations," said Capt. Ricky Pettigrew, Headquarters Company commander. "Cpl. Bloom is very computer literate and being the FOB mayor I'm required to give presentations to brigade or division for everything from where we're going to build a new project to where all the port-o-johns are located on the FOB."

Pettigrew can't say enough good things about Bloom.

"He's up a hard worker," Pettigrew said. "He steps up to the ball plate, he instills all the

traits and honor we look for in all our Soldiers. He definitely excels in everything he does. He's a very intelligent bright young man."

Once the Soldiers from 1-153 INF return to Arkansas, he hopes to attend the Primary Leadership Development Course and maybe have the opportunity to go to Air Assault School.

According to Bloom, before deploying to Iraq, he felt that the United States had no business being there.

"After being here and seeing the people and how they're living and everything, I think we're doing a lot of good for them," he said. "We kind of need to be here."

Though Bloom doesn't think he'll ever view Baghdad as a vacation destination in the future he would like to come back on a later deployment to see how much more the country has improved.



By Sgt. John Queen, 3rd BCT Public Affairs

In the harsh weather conditions of Iraq, maintenance is key to keeping equipment up and running. Here, Spc. Edmund Casebeer, a mechanic from the 1st Cavalry Division's Delta Company, 215th Forward Support Battalion, uses a pneumatic impact-wrench to loosen the nuts on a Humvee's rear half-shaft during the vehicle's services at Greywolf Forward Operating Base in central Baghdad.

Complacency

- Don't become a safety statistic by becoming complacent.
- Perform all tasks to standard.
- Don't take shortcuts.
- When performing an unfamiliar task, ask your leadership for guidance.
- Remain vigilant and report any suspicious activities you see.

**FORCE PROTECTION, FORCE PROTECTION,
FORCE PROTECTION.**

39th Soldiers' Village Visit Spreads Smiles

Cpl. Benjamin Cossel
122nd MPAD

BAGHDAD, Iraq - The throng of children clamored for anything the Soldiers could give them; the noise reached a fevered pitch. Sitting atop the Humvee, the Soldier scanned over the mass of faces and outstretched arms, looking for one. Spotting her in the back of the crowd, he jumped down from the turret, he made his way through the sea of children to the back of the crowd, holding out a tiny stuffed animal. The little girl reached up and took it from the Soldier, her eyes sparkled as she clutched the toy to her chest, a smile that could melt a glacier spread across her face.

Visiting the village of Al Shab in Baghdad's Adhamiyah district, Soldiers of the 39th Brigade Combat Team delivered toys, clothes, and school supplies to spread good will and bring some relief to residents in this, one of Adhamiyah's most destitute regions, Sept 28. One of the oldest districts in Baghdad, the Sunni stronghold of Adhamiyah, was favored by Saddam Hussein, thus money flowed into the area and the region flourished, but not so for the people living on the outskirts of the district.

"The residents of this area are some of the poorest in what is considered a reasonably well-to-do district," explained Maj. Gordon McCoy, an assistant civil military affairs (S-5) officer for the brigade. "So, we're out here today to try and bring relief in small ways, with clothing and shoes and even some basic first aid items."

The rows of houses are an island surrounded on all sides by what is the de facto landfill for the region. In the rear of this



Photos by Cpl. Benjamin Cossel, 122nd MPAD

Sgt. 1st Class Aubrey Thomas of Little Rock, Ark., with the 39th Brigade Combat Team's civil military affairs section, sorts through boxes of toys and clothing to distribute to kids of the Al Shab village.

island stands a sewage treatment plant that engineers with the 39th's S-5 Soldiers are currently working to bring on-line. Until the work on the plant is complete, untreated sewage snakes a river through the landscape, its inescapable odor mixing with that of the burning garbage.

"You can just look around you and see what these people live in and are surrounded by," said the Forrest City, Ark. resident pointing to the mountains of burning refuse as he stepped over raw sewage to get to the back of his vehicle. "This is actually the sec-

ond time we've come to this area since we arrived in country. The first time, we were met with apprehension, but folks really warmed up to us when they realized we were here to help."

McCoy went on to explain that in addition to toys and school supplies, the day's mission included delivering basic first aid items.

"When last we were here, many of the children we saw had some pretty bad cuts along their legs and feet. Given what they walk through, the potential for infection is

extremely high. So as we give out the toys and such to the children, we've also gathered up some shoes to give them and items such as anti-microbial ointments, bandages and bottles of hydrogen peroxide to give to the mothers and fathers who come out with their children."

As the trunks popped open revealing boxes and boxes of treasure, residents crowded around the Soldiers eager to take something home. Soldiers worked diligently to maintain order and control to ensure that each person who approached them received something.

"Basically we're trying to bring a glimmer of sunshine to an otherwise desolate environment," noted McCoy. "And with that, we can hopefully have an effect on how the people of this area view Multi-National Forces. If we give them another view of Multi-National Forces, perhaps they won't be so easy to convince when anti-Iraqi Forces try to spread their propaganda and convince them to do us [Multi-National Forces] harm."

In addition to the goodwill fostered in the hearts of the Iraqi people, Soldiers acting as escort security for the delivery left the experience with a warm feeling.

"These are the type of missions you really like to do," explained Cpl. James Rice, of Stuttgart, Ark., working with Company A of the 39th BCT's 39th Support Battalion. "Too often you hear about Soldiers getting hurt and all the bombings and everything going on around you. It's easy to get disheartened and forget why we are here. You see the look in those kids eyes and the moms and dads thanking you for what you are doing and it makes it all worth it."

Taji Strong Man Competition Sponsored by 4th BCT Soldiers

By Sgt. Dan Purcell
122nd MPAD

CAMP TAJI, Iraq-- Their goals, like their weight and ages, varied as 37 Soldiers competed in the first 'Strong Man' weight lifting competition September 30 at the 1st Cavalry Division's northernmost base camp (formerly known as Camp Cooke).

The event was sponsored by Sgt. 1st

Class Lorenzo Billups, 2nd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment (AVN), and Sgt. Eric Preus, 126th Aviation Detachment, Massachusetts National Guard, both part of the 4th Brigade Combat Team.

Billups said the competition took over two months of planning and preparation to pull it all together and was open to both men and women willing to flex their muscles, many of whom were amateurs and had

just started lifting weights in preparation for this event.

"Basically, the competition centered on three lifts on the bench press," he said. "For the men, scoring was based on an aggregate of three successful lifts where we took the combined weight and subtracted the individual's body weight for a total number of points. The women didn't have to weigh in because their scores were based on the combined weight of three successful lifts."

During the competition, participants cheered for each other, as did a growing number of Soldiers who were at the gym just to work out. Reaching or exceeding personal goals drove each participant.

"The competition included seven women and 30 men, ranging in ages from 18 to 47," Preus said. "The event went really well and everyone did great. I'm really happy that all those who attended came out to do their personal best and that's what this was all about."

For Billups and Preus, getting the Strong Man competition started took a lot of time and effort.

"I took a 12-year break from weightlifting and didn't start again until after we got here in April," Billups said. "Within two months I had met my goal of [lifting] 465 pounds. It was during this time I started formulating the idea for the competition because I started thinking that

here we are isolated from our homes, and even though the mission is always first...we still had a lot of people coming to the gym to work out and stay, so I thought this event would be good to get people focused on something other than just work."

"I got involved when (Sgt. 1st Class) Billups and I started talking about putting something together," Preus recalled. "So, I started coordinating with some people at Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) and Kellogg, Brown and Root (KBR) to get some t-shirts and prizes for the event."

Due to the success of the Strong Man competition, Billups and Preus are planning to hold another event ... with slightly different events.

"We plan on having another event in December and expand on what we did here. There will be three events to include the bench press, the squats and, if I can get the real estate, there will be a Humvee and LMTV push," Billups grinned.

All the participants in the Strong Man competition will receive T-shirts commemorating the event.

In the women's division, Sgt. Sherilyn Dabis, 2-227th Aviation, took first place with a combined score of 400 points. In the men's division, Staff Sgt. John Quaye, 1st Battalion, 23rd Stryker Brigade took first place with an aggregate score of 753 points.



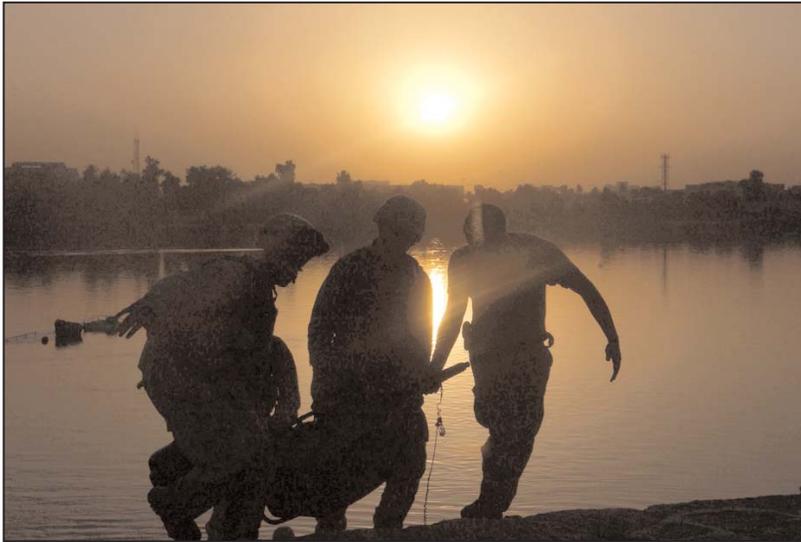
Photos by Sgt. Dan Purcell, 122nd MPAD

Soldiers, spectators and participants gather at the gym in preparation for the first Strong Man Competition held at Camp Taji Sept. 30.

86th Dive Team Soldiers Make a Difference



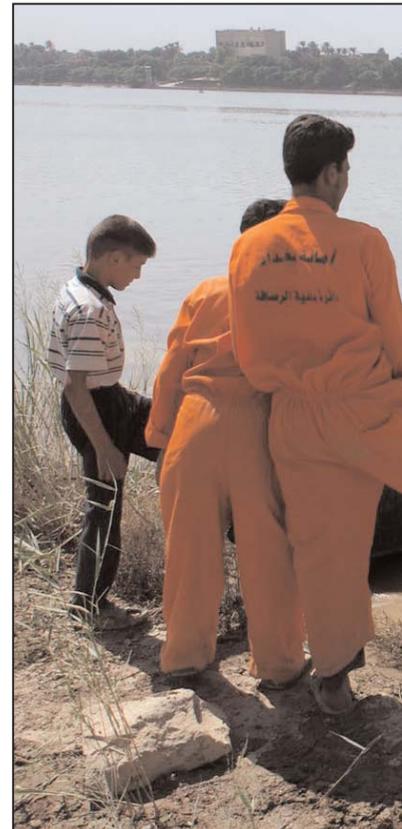
(Left) Local Iraqi children spend some time playing in the water of the Tigris River, waiting for the divers to finish placing demolitions on the semi-submerged boat. (Right) Spc. Ron Tupacz of the 86th Dive Team inflates his Zodiac boat which will be used when the Soldiers move out to set explosives on a semi-submerged boat in the Tigris River. (Below) Divers bring their boat back to shore, after rigging the submerged boat with explosives for the second time, and calling it a day as the sun sets.



Photos by Spc. Al Barrus, 122nd MPAD

(Above) Tupacz (at left) and Spc. Jeff Johnson, both of the 86th Dive Team, rig a boat with explosives that was partially submerged under the waters of the Tigris River. After the Soldiers finished setting the explosives and returned to shore, the boat was detonated, sending a cloud of smoke and debris over 150 feet into the air.

(Right) Tupacz and Spc. Tyler Dodd get some help from some Iraqi park workers as they load their Zodiac boat with demolitions before heading out to the partially sunken boat to rig it up prior to detonation. Cleaning up the boat was part of an effort to clean up the Abu Nuwas Park.



e a Big Splash at Abu Nuwas Park

By Spc. Al Barrus
122nd MPAD

BAGHDAD-- Soldiers of the 86th Dive Team demolished a boat that was partially sunken in the waters of the Tigris River at the Abu Nuwas Park in central Baghdad recently.

The 35-foot tugboat's exposed superstructure and cabin were an eyesore for the park, which is undergoing renovations by the 1st Cavalry Division, said 1st Lt. Jenny Jo Hartney, an operations officer in the 1st Cav. Div. Engineer Brigade.

"While we were at the park, I

saw this eyesore and, being a diver myself, I really wanted to tackle this," said Hartney, who coordinated the demolition project.

After the mission was approved by higher command, the 86th Dive Team, based out of Fort Eustis, Va., was called in for the job. It gave the divers the chance to practice their demolition skills using plastic explosives.

"We were going to try and lift up the entire boat, but that would be too difficult because of the size, so we decided to just flatten it," said 1st Lt. Eric Marshall, the 86th Dive Team officer in charge.

"No one knows where the boat came from or how it got there. No one cares either, so we get to blow it up."

The seven-man team conducted reconnaissance of the site as well as a test shot on the submerged boat, using two pounds of plastic explosives, to get a feel for what kind of structure they were dealing with two days before the operation.

The day of the event called for more preparations. Soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, 162nd Infantry Regiment, 39th Brigade Combat Team, provided security at the site and helped spread the word to

the local security forces so they would expect the explosion.

"Today we are using 14 pounds of the explosives to cut away the wheel house that's jutting out, and a one-pound charge to knock it over, all in one shot," Marshall said.

With everything "a go", six divers loaded up their raft with explosives, sandbags and the wire needed to rig their target. When the rigging was complete, the divers moved back 300 meters from the blast site to detonate. A group of spectators, both Soldiers and Iraqi children watched with ears plugged.

First came a great splash, followed by a thunderous boom and subtle shockwave. The blast exceeded everyone's expectations, pushing the bulk of the boat's cabin roughly 150 feet into the air. Boisterous cheers and applause followed, as the debris rained from the sky.

"The plume went higher than we expected," Marshall said afterwards. "We assumed it would be a nice cutting charge that

would just slice through the metal but it had a lot more explosive reaction than we thought, but no one got hurt. It shot that wheel house up a good 150 feet, but we liked it; that's why we are engineers."

It was the highlight of the day, but not the end. As expected, other portions of the sunken craft still remained above the water line, and another detonation was needed.

"After the first detonation there was the section in the front and the one in the back that were sticking out, as well as some railings," Hartney said.

The divers pressed on and put another 10 pounds of explosives in the areas needed. It was a smaller explosion on the river as the sun began to set.

"There is some debris still sticking out, but we can just go out ... and pull it apart on a different day," she said. "I think it went excellent. [There were] no injuries to personnel or equipment. It accomplished what we needed."

(Left) While the 353rd Engineer Group sets up a cordon around the area around the edge of the water closest to the submerged boat, the Soldiers of the 86th Dive Team move to the shore to prepare to rig the boat with explosives. Explosives had to be used on the boat two times in a row in order to totally destroy it.

(Bottom Right) Plastic explosives are detonated, sending smoke and debris up into the air.



5th BCT Helps to Open Community Center

By Cpl. Bill Putnam
122nd MPAD

AL RASHID, Baghdad-- A new community center in Al Rashid was officially opened recently, at a palace complex once owned by Saddam Hussein

Hosted by a private bank, the opening included a dinner and tour of the refurbished community center.

The center's main features are a women's center and an indoor pool.

"The pool will be open seven days a week, with men and women each getting two days apiece to enjoy it and families the other three days," Capt. Jason Morgan, 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment said.

The community center also has a reception hall for weddings and parties and classrooms that will provide computer and Internet training for both children and adults.

"What makes the complex unique is how it was funded," said Capt. Dan Ramos, a civil-military project officer for 1-8 Cav. "The tank battalion spent almost \$300,000 on the two large buildings, which will house the women's center and eventually a restaurant."

The Iraqi Interim

Government, the United States and a private bank partnered together to not only reinvest in the center but to make it a center piece for investment in the Al Rashid community said Morgan.

According to Morgan, a private Iraqi bank, Baraka Bank, stepped forward through a local citizen to fund the community center's remodeling.

"The bank spent a lot of money on landscaping, remodeling some of the smaller buildings on the site and installing lighting throughout the center," Morgan said. "And, they hosted the grand opening party."

Baraka bank worked with the German-based Deutsche Bank, who wants to spend almost \$26 million in the area, Morgan said.

"Deutsche will go through Baraka for the investing, which is a common thing in international investing," he explained. "A larger, foreign bank will typically work with a smaller, local bank to invest in an area."

Baraka plans to build an apartment complex in the area large enough to house 1,000 people, Morgan said. More homes, schools and private business will also be built, he said.

"This local investing is important," Morgan said. "Because it's by Iraqis for Iraqis. It also shows



By Cpl. Bill Putnam, 122nd MPAD

Col. Stephen Lanza, commander of 5th Brigade Combat Team, laughs at a joke during the tour of the community center's opening recently.

that companies are feeling more secure about investing in [this] sector because they wouldn't put up money if the sector wasn't secure."

Because it's under-developed, the area is primed for investment

and rebuilding, Morgan said.

"Most of it belonged to the Hussein family and consists of date palm tree groves," he said.

Since the topple of Hussein, the land has been handed over to the Iraqi Interim Government and

the governor of Baghdad is very excited about how much interest the area has garnered.

"He was very excited about any investment coming into the region," Morgan said. "It's a sign of economic improvement."

The Wrong 'Ink' May Disqualify IP Candidates



By Cpl. Bill Putnam, 122nd MPAD

1st Lt. Jerry Koltz, a platoon leader with the 545th Military Police Company, and an Iraqi policeman confer about an Iraqi police candidate's tattoos at an IP recruiting drive. Some kinds of tattoos, like those applied in prison or in certain segments of the Hussein regime's military, can disqualify a candidate from attending the police academies in Baghdad or Jordan. The 1st Cavalry Division's 5th Brigade Combat Team recruited 704 candidates, six of whom were women, for these police academies.



DRIVING

Sometimes you can't predict every hazard, like the road collapsing under your vehicle. But you can ALWAYS take the time to buckle up and wear your Kevlar. If you do, you might walk away from an accident uninjured.

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10th Mtn. Soldiers Corral Cattle in Iraq

By Pfc. Matthew McLaughlin
10th Mtn. Div. PAO

CAMP LIBERTY, Baghdad-- Soldiers attached to the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Commandos), worked like cowboys as they rounded up livestock for life-saving medicine in Iraq.

Soldiers from the 345th Tactical Psychological Operations (PSYOPS) Detachment, Dallas, Texas, and 425th Civil Affairs Battalion, Santa Barbara, Calif., worked with Iraqi veterinarians to provide vaccinations and other shots for Iraqi livestock in 2nd Battalion 14th Infantry Regiment's area of responsibility recently.

Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 509th Infantry Regiment provided security while the PSYOPS and Civil Affairs Soldiers worked.

Almost 400 sheep and 90 cows were treated with various medicines that will protect them from endemic diseases. The shots will provide healthier livestock for farmers and also help relations between the Iraqi people and coalition forces, said Spc. Ben Danielowski, 345th PSYOPS.

"Animals are prized possessions to these people," he said. "Many of them can't afford the shots. Whenever we come into an area and give shots, they love it. It shows that we are here to help."



By Pfc. Matthew McLaughlin, 10th Mtn. Div. Public Affairs
Capt. Marc Chung, 425th Civil Affairs Detachment, holds a goat down while an Iraqi veterinarian prepares to give a shot to prevent diseases.

The shots provide protection against diseases such as foot and mouth disease, parasites and other diseases, which are a major problem in Iraq, said Maj. Sam Barringer, 425th CA veterinarian.

"All animals have parasites," he said. "The shots we give will aid parasitic control from six to eight months. Vaccines will pre-

vent diseases that could wipe out entire herds."

Barringer was quick to note that Coalition Forces are not there to take over veterinary services, but rather to support Iraqi veterinarians in their effort to better their community.

"We're here to train them," he said. "These are their clients. We

don't want it to seem like we're taking over their livelihood. "When we leave the area, the vets on the ground will be able to handle it without us."

One Iraqi veterinarian said Coalition Forces provided medicine that have been scarce to the area.

"Before the war, there was a

lack of medical supplies," he said. "After the war, there is a lot more medicine. We still need equipment that we don't have, however."

The vet said they provide similar services to the community, including semi-annual shots, artificial insemination, and other veterinary services. But they lack the tools to go house to house without Coalition assistance. Barringer said the success of the program can be measured by the increasing number of sheep and cattle Iraqis present to receive medicine.

"They keep bringing more and more animals," he said. "They want us to spend more time. We could do this every day for two months and still wouldn't get the entire area."

Danielowski said treating animals will create healthier accommodations for the Iraqi people. This will bolster relations between the community and Coalition Forces.

"Without these shots, the animals can catch diseases," he said. "Their meat won't be as healthy as it should be. Keeping the animals healthy will in turn make the Iraqi people healthy. We're trying to help the people with their animals, while at the same time helping increase positive relations between Soldiers and Iraqis."

"Our target audience is receptive to the places we go," he said. "We don't go in with barrels drawn. We bring gifts and novelty items."

PSYOPS Soldier Doubles as Physical Therapist

By Pfc. Matthew McLaughlin
10th Mtn. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP LIBERTY, Baghdad-- When not creating better relations between Multi-National Forces and the Iraqi community, Capt. Brett Parish, from the Dallas-based 345th Tactical Psychological Operations (PSYOPS) Detachment, volunteers his time and skills as a physical therapist for the 210th Forward Support Battalion (FSB).

Parish is a physical therapist in his civilian life. He enlisted as an active duty Soldier when he was 17 and transferred to the Army Reserve after his initial enlistment was complete. He graduated from the University of Texas with a master's of science degree with physical therapy as his specialty.

Parish is currently serving in Baghdad while his unit is attached to the 2nd Brigade Combat Team (Commandos), 10th Mountain Division.

Soldiers at 210th FSB's medical tent were excited to hear Parish would volunteer his time every Sunday morning for four hours, said Sgt. David Annable, from the 210th FSB.

Parish said he set aside his personal time for the FSB because he wanted to work with Soldiers.

"I saw there was a need," Parish said. "We have Soldiers working in extreme conditions who need a physical therapist. It also gives me a way to keep my skills up. I offered to volunteer my time on Sunday mornings. I see four to six patients any given hour."

Having their own physical therapist is a tremendous asset to Soldiers and units alike, Annable said.

"When Soldiers deploy, their pain doesn't

go away," he said. "Having a physical therapist here is beneficial to their health and to mission accomplishment."

Units usually don't deploy with a physical therapist. Soldiers can get help for their pains, but it can be time consuming and tedious.

"If someone comes to us with chronic ailments and we can't heal them, they have to go to (Baghdad International Airport) and get on a bus to the Green zone to see an orthopedic surgeon," Annable said. "Parish gives Soldiers the help they need without the inconvenience."

Physical therapy is different from other medical fields because therapists try to find the root of the problem and stop it, Parish said. Prescribing painkillers will numb the pain, but it won't stop what he calls a "pain merry-go-round" of recurring symptoms.

"The difference between me and a regular doctor is a doctor is looking for symptoms," he said. "I'm looking for the cause of the problem. I address the cause of the discomfort, not treat the symptom."

Treatment can include strength and muscle-memory training. This can help Soldiers deal with the pressure of carrying heavy loads or recover from a twisted ankle, Parish said.

"The longer Soldiers are on patrol, the more aches and pains they get," he said. "Most people come in with back pain. The knees, ankles and shoulders are a close tie for second. I give them stretches and exercises. They usually hold the stretches for one minute, and I also give them exercises with rubber band resistance."

Spc. Mariana Abrew, from the 210th FSB, said Parish's advice is very beneficial to her and other Soldiers.

"I wish he was with us from the begin-



By Pfc. Matthew McLaughlin, 10th Mtn. Div. Public Affairs
Capt. Brett Parish, 345th Tactical Psychological Operations Detachment, checks a patient's foot during a break from his PSYOPS missions. Parish, a physical therapist in his civilian life, volunteers his time with the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division.

ning," she said. "He gave me exercises to do to make me stronger. I had a physical therapist at Fort Drum, but this is the first time I got to see [one] here."

Many people in pain usually just want someone to care, Parish said. He enjoys listening to people's problems and helping them solve their physical problems.

"People want to be listened to," he said.

"They also want to be helped. I love what I do. It is rewarding to see people get better and have their quality of life improve."

Parish said he was glad to be of service and is happy he had the chance to help fellow Soldiers, as well as the Iraqi community.

"It's been fun. I enjoyed it," he said. "When I go back home I can say that I helped people."



By Sgt. Dan Purcell, 122nd MPAD

91st Engineers Facilitate Release of Iraqi Detainees

By Sgt. Dan Purcell
122nd MPAD

BAGHDAD-- Around 200 former prisoners from Abu-Ghraib prison stepped off of buses to a welcome committee of local sheiks and members of the Iraqi media. The former prisoners, charged with various crimes, were part of the detainee release program that was facilitated by the 91st Engineer Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division.

As each former prisoner disembarked the bus, their identification was verified and each was met

Staff Sgt. Orlando Torres, 91st Engineer Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division checks a recently released detainee's identification card against a master list. The engineers facilitated the recent release while local sheiks welcomed the parolees back into their respective communities.

by a sheik or sheiks from their communities who play a pivotal part in the lives of the Iraqi people.

"The sheiks are here to welcome them back into the community and to act as guarantors that certify these individuals will not commit future crimes against the Iraqi people or the Multi-National Forces," Lt. Col. Christopher Martin, 91st Eng. Bn., commander said.

In addition to their heartfelt homecoming, each detainee was given \$25 to help get them started.

"After they've been identified and greeted by the sheiks, they then walk out the gate where they are met by members of their family. The whole process takes about an hour," Capt. Marc Chung, 425th Civil Affairs Battalion team leader said.

Following the detainee release the sheiks and the media attended a press conference with Lt. Col. Martin.

"There is a perception amongst

the sheiks and the Iraqis that we are arresting innocent people, and it is something that they tend to focus on," Martin said. "The point we have to make is that they are not innocent people but people who have had their files reviewed by Iraqi judges who have decided that they have spent enough time in jail based on the crime they committed."

According to Martin the Iraqis don't have a formal court system that sentences a person to jail for a specific period of time, like the U.S. does. Here, a prisoner's file is reviewed periodically by a board of judges who make sure that the individual does not serve more time than the level of crime he committed and the law allows.

"We are here to facilitate the handing over of these men to the sheiks so they can be reintegrated into their respective communities, and to show that we have been working with the sheiks all along," Martin said.

Corps Commander Recognizes 1st Cav. Div. Troopers for their Heroism

By Spc. Erik LeDrew
122nd MPAD

BAGHDAD-- Two Soldiers with the 1st Cavalry Division's "Task Force Lancer" 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment (2-5 Cav.) received the Silver Star Medal in a Sept. 30 ceremony at Camp Hope.

Sgt. 1st Class Jerry Swope, a platoon sergeant with Company C, 2-5 Cav., and Staff Sgt. Robert Miltenberger, a dismounted squad leader with 2-5 Cav.'s Company A, were presented their medals by Lt. Gen. Thomas Metz, commanding general of Multi-National Corps-Iraq, for "exceptional valor in combat during Operation Lancer Fury."

Operation Lancer Fury occurred April 4 through 9 in Baghdad's Shi'ite slum "Sadr City." The operation was a response to the first violent insurgency by rebel Shi'ite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr's militia.

Swope distinguished himself in "fierce urban combat" on Route Delta in Sadr City after his platoon encountered a deliberate ambush set by the militia near the slum's Sadr Bureau April 4.

"The day turned ugly real quick," Swope, a Richmond, Va. native said. "We just tried to stay alive and get out of there."

During the ambush, Swope organized a hasty defense while exposed to enemy fire and personally engaged enemy positions for more than five minutes of sustained contact.

When his platoon made the call to abandon their Humvees and set-up hasty

fighting positions, Swope remained at the vehicles so he could maintain radio contact with his battalion headquarters and request reinforcements.

Swope remained in the vehicle by himself for over two hours, under enemy fire while the rest of his platoon took cover in nearby hasty-fighting positions. He was able to maintain radio contact with the battalion during this time, which allowed his platoon to be located by aerial assets, and their eventual extraction by a group of armored vehicles.

"We were so glad when those vehicles came to help us and get us out of there," he said. "I just took all my guys and got out of there as quickly as we could."

While en route back to Camp Eagle, one of his platoon's surviving vehicles got stuck on an enemy obstacle. Without hesitating, Swope dismounted from his own vehicle and assisted with its recovery under intense enemy fire, saving the lives of the three Soldiers inside.

The following morning, Swope volunteered to command a Bradley Fighting Vehicle and joined an ad hoc platoon in securing the Al-Thawra Iraqi Police (IP) Station in Sadr City.

For the next two days, Swope controlled the elements maintaining the outer-cordon around the IP Station, which was composed of two Abrams tanks and two Bradley Fighting Vehicles. The fields of fire he designated for his Soldiers enabled them to engage and destroy the countless enemies attempting to engage them day and night.



By Spc. Erik LeDrew, 122nd MPAD

Sgt. 1st Class Jerry Swope (left center), Company C, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, and Staff Sgt. Robert Miltenberger (right center), Company A, 2-5 Cav., are presented their Silver Star Medals by Multi-National Corps-Iraq Commanding General Lt. Gen. Thomas Metz (center), Ironhorse Brigade Commander Col. Robert Abrams (far left), and Task Force Lancer Commander Lt. Col. Gary Volesky (far right). The Sept. 30 ceremony, in which Bronze Stars, Army Commendation Medals and Purple Hearts were also presented to Soldiers with 2-5 Cav., was held at Camp Hope in eastern Baghdad.

Swope was in command of the security force of the Al-Afreeden IP Station when he called-in air-support to neutralize a group of enemy rocket-propelled grenade gunners April 8. Because of the precision of Swope's coordinates, the RPG gunners were destroyed and collateral damage was kept to a minimum.

Miltenberger distinguished himself for "valorous achievement" in combat, also on April 4.

After engaging the enemy in Sadr City, he directed his squad in precise

and lethal fire against Muqtada militia attackers. Miltenberger himself engaged several enemies while performing critical medical care on the wounded Soldiers in his squad.

In addition to the two Silver Stars awarded at the ceremony, six Bronze Stars, 16 Army Commendation Medals with Valor-device, and 20 Purple Hearts were awarded to Soldiers with 2-5 Cav. for Operation Lancer Fury and other operations that Task Force Lancer has undertaken since then.

First Women in Iraqi Army Honored at Conference

By Spc. Marie Whitney
122nd MPAD

"We can gain no lasting peace if we approach it with mistrust or with fear. We can gain it only if we proceed with the understanding, the confidence and the courage which flow from conviction."

-Franklin D. Roosevelt, Fourth Inaugural Address, Jan. 20, 1945

INTERNATIONAL ZONE, Baghdad-- Twenty-five women sat on white plastic lawn chairs in a small park area next to the U.S. Embassy building, not far from a swimming pool. The women quietly chatted in the midday heat while drinking bottled water out of a large blue bucket filled to the top with chunks of ice.

But these were no ordinary women. These were 25 of the first 88 women to join the ranks of the New Iraqi Army.

They awaited the arrival of the congressmen, military officials, and other guests set to attend a Sept. 26 conference; a conference held in their honor.

Also taking part in the conference was a small group of women from the 1st Cavalry Division's Headquarters Company. Every First Team Soldier volunteered to be a part of the event.

"I am very excited to get to go on this mission. We get to meet the females of the New Iraqi Army. It's great because they are the first ones [to serve in the army]" said



By Sgt. Dawn Handley, 1st Cav. Div.

The first females of the New Iraqi Army listen to a speech at the conference that took place in their honor at the Embassy building in the International Zone, Sept. 26. During the conference, there was also a documentary shown about the women, followed by a luncheon with American female Soldiers from the 1st Cavalry Division.

Sgt. Dawn Handley, one of the HHC Soldiers who attended the conference.

The conference started with some of the congressmen and military officials giving speeches, telling the Iraqi Soldiers how proud they are of the courage the women have displayed and the historical importance of what they are doing.

After the speeches, the whole group walked over to the Embassy building to watch a documentary called "Journey of Courage: Women in the New Iraqi Army," displaying the sacrifices and the changes made by these women in their pursuit of serving their country.

This video, which was written, filmed and produced by

Kristen Hickman, a film producer from the U.S. Department of State, was the Iraqi Soldiers' answer to a documentary on the history of women in the U.S. military they were shown during a conference put on by the U.S. Army in June 2004.

This new video documented the time the women spent in Jordan taking part in an 8-week

basic training program put on by the Jordanian army with the help of the U.S. Army. The film showed footage of the women going through all of the training along with their thoughts and feelings on serving in the military and what they learned from their time together.

Once the video was over, the group returned to the poolside park for lunch. Under the cover of an umbrella-shaped tree, American and Iraqi female Soldiers ate together from a large buffet of Iraqi food while conversing with each other with the help of translators.

The occasion was wrapped up with Hickman giving a speech to the group of women, thanking them for their dedication to their country and their people.

"Even though what you have begun is valiant, remember that it will not be an easy task," Hickman said. "But I think that if anyone can do it, it would be you, because it takes a special type of person to be able to handle what you had undertaken."

While individual courage of the Iraqi military women has seen them make history in their country, a common bond keeps their focus on the future.

"When we first came together, we had many differences," said one. "But the one thing we have in common is the will and determination to work hand in hand as a team."

Muslims Fast as Month-long Observance of Ramadan Begins

By Sgt. 1st Class Tony Sailer
122nd MPAD

To voluntarily go without food, water, or even a morning cup of coffee, all day, each day for a month, most people would choose not to. But for millions of Muslims, that is exactly what they will do. As the month of Ramadan starts, Soldiers are reminded to show respect to Muslims who are observing this, their most holy month.

During the next month, Muslims will be fasting from sunrise to sunset every day. This fasting requires Muslims to abstain from drinking, eating, smoking, and any other type of indulgence or sin, including obscene words.

As the sun sets each day, Muslims will be called to prayer followed by a meal with friends and family. The two important daily meals during Ramadan are: Iftar, or the Breaking of the Fast, which takes place at sunset after the Maghrib call to prayer, and Suhur, which takes place shortly before

sunrise. It is common for Muslims to take Iftar with company every night of the month. At these gatherings of food and drink some will serve dishes that are reserved exclusively for Ramadan.

Another significant time during Ramadan occurs near the end of the month. "Laylat al-Qadr" (the Night of Destiny) is believed to fall somewhere within the last ten days of Ramadan. Many believe that it falls on the eve of the 27th of Ramadan, but scholar's opinions differ. Laylat al-Qadr is believed to be the night on which the angel Gabriel first visited Muhammad with the first revelation of the Qur'an. During this, considered to be the holiest day of Ramadan, a Muslim's prayers and piety will generally increase. It is common for Muslims to stay up all that night praying in hopes that all their sins will be erased.

The month of Ramadan is one of the Haram months, during which fighting is prohibited unless a war is ongoing or one is initiated against one's people. This however

does not mean that fighting will stop in Iraq during Ramadan. If anything, it is more likely to increase.

Religious fervor is at its peak during the month of Ramadan. During the long hours between dawn and sunset, fasting Muslims are likely to be exhausted, dehydrated or hungry and many may also be suffering from nicotine withdrawal and thus easily provoked. Because of these stresses, it is common for fasting Muslims to easily take offense at real or imagined provocation. It is also common for an entire group to take offense at a provocation directed toward a single person, however deserved - be aware that tempers could be short.

According to Islamic law, any pious act made during this month is worth much more in the final reckoning than the same act made at any other time. The gates of heaven are believed to be open, and the gates to Hell will be closed. It is believed that a special gate called the Rayan Gate will be

opened for those who have spent all their life fasting during Ramadan.

During the sunset call to prayer, some charitable-minded citizens will be on the streets offering dates and water to persons still on the road. Similar action taken by Soldiers should be well received. Small packages of dates and cold water will be sufficient. However, Soldiers may have to offer these tokens rather than wait to be asked.

During Ramadan, coalition forces are urged to abstain from drinking, eating, and smoking in front of the population. Such displays might be taken as a sign of disrespect.

Females should be chastely covered, though veils are not necessary. Try to abstain from all provocative behavior, including public displays of affection for the other gender. Even the slightest display of affection might be perceived as provoking lust from the males of the population.

At the end of Ramadan, the

sighting of the crescent moon signals the beginning of the next month of Shawal, and the beginning of the three-day 'Id-al-Fitr, or Holiday of the Breaking of the Fast. Muslims enjoy being able to eat and drink during the day again.

Most local business comes to a complete halt during these three days as Muslims visit their relatives where they may give gifts of money and clothing to the children of the extended family and the children of friends. There is also more of a tendency to forgive friends and family of quarrels and arguments.

During the three days of 'Id-al-Fitr, gifts of money to the children is not a bad idea. The amount should not be too much. Preferably it should be given to the child in the presence of the parents. Chocolates and other small symbolic gifts are likely to be well received.

Ramadan is an integral part of a Muslim's life and as this holy time is observed Soldiers are asked to remember to respect their customs and traditions.

Playing for Gridiron Bragging Rights

By Staff Sgt. Susan German
122nd MPAD

CAMP BLACK JACK, Baghdad-- The stakes were high and pride was on the line as warriors faced off on Camp Black Jack's dusty athletic field.

They came to play; laying down their weapons, but not their rivalries or their friendships. Strategies were planned out in advance. Their mission was to earn bragging rights and a trophy.

Sixteen teams participated in the Military Flag Football League playoffs sponsored by local Morale, Wellfare and Recreation offices, Oct. 4-5. Eighteen teams started the season on Labor Day (Sept. 6); ten teams played in the morning league and eight teams in the afternoon league. The majority of teams were comprised of military personnel, males and females. There were 307 players in all.

Playoffs were conducted for both leagues, with the winners and runners-up facing each other for the championship



Coldsteel player, 1st Sgt. Harrey Brown, C Battery, 2-15 Field Artillery Regiment, splits the Sabers' defense during a playoff game.

and third place games. In the morning league, 15th Finance Battalion's Silver Eagles beat the 13th Signal Battalion's Big Crooks 37-0 to advance to the finals against the previously undefeated 15th Forward Support Battalion's Gamblers. The Gamblers beat Steel City, comprised of members of the 28th Signal Battalion, from Pennsylvania, and 711th Signal from Alabama, 21-14 in overtime.

During the regular season the the Gamblers handed the their only loss, but were defeated by the Silver Eagles in their final encounter 28-7.

The 91st Engineer Battalion's Sabers beat the 95th Military Police Battalion's Superstars 34-6, to play C Battery, 2-15th Field Artillery Regiment's Coldsteel, who they beat 44-21, for the afternoon league championship. Coldsteel beat the Commandos from HHC 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division 37-7.

In the end, it was the Silver Eagles, morning league champions, facing the afternoon league champions, the Sabers. The teams have been playing each other for the past three years; at Fort Hood and in off-post tournaments back in Texas. The Silver Eagles won this particular meeting 28-14. The Gamblers beat Coldsteel 21-16 for third place honors.

Four of the best football teams at Fort Hood were deployed to Iraq, according to 1st Sgt. Kenneth Patrick, Beast Company, 91st Engineer Battalion, co-captain, cornerback and wide receiver for the Sabers. His team's next goal will be to challenge the team that wins Fort Hood's post cham-



Photos by Staff Sgt. Susan German, 122nd MPAD

Following their morning league championship game, the 15th Forward Support Battalion's Gamblers and the 15th Finance Battalion's Silver Eagles exchange handshakes. The Silver Eagles went on to win the final game, the Gamblers took home 3rd place honors.

pionship in December, after they return from Iraq.

Zeb Alexander, MWR technician, 1st Cavalry Division MWR, was involved with the development of the league. Planning started in late July, team captains met and signups were conducted. Games were played on the weekends and accommodated Soldier's missions. MWR personnel in black and white striped shirts served as referees and line judges. "It's been fun working with military guys that can get competitive and actually care about winning and losing," Alexander said.

Each team wore distinctive uniforms, some wore their military physical fitness uniforms, while others wore specially designed team jerseys or shorts. Before each game there were the usual, and some unusual, football rituals; including pre-game chanting, pounding on metallic posters and music. Trash talking was not permitted, although that rule was difficult to enforce at times; football and trash talking tend to go hand in hand.

By the time the final game was played, there were fans on the sidelines, as well as players and coaches from other teams cheering on their previous opponents and friends.

Eagles coach Sgt. 1st Class Frederick Smith Jr., detachment sergeant, 15th Finance Bn., explained that his role as coach involved being more of a director than coach. "Because of the level of talent on this team, I'm just giving them some inspiration, some words of wisdom at times when they get kinda full of it and over their heads," Smith said.

Following their "Super Bowl" victory, the Silver Eagles were presented the first, and last, Camp Victory trophy, because the camp's name has changed to Liberty. They each signed a game ball that will be placed on display. Coach Smith met with the same fate as other "Super Bowl" coaches when several of his players lifted a cooler and dumped its contents on his back.

Although Tuesday's games brought an end to the football season, MWR personnel are busy planning upcoming events. "Next we're doing soccer, and the prize for winning the championship is a humungous trophy and \$1,000. A company out of Kuwait is sponsoring the trophy and prize money," Alexander said. Teams will consist of ten players and they'll play on the football field, which is to be renamed "Soldier Field," like the field in Chicago.

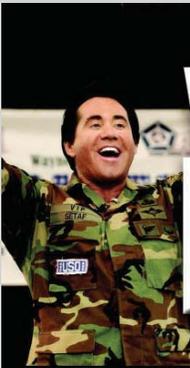


Sabers' wide receiver Sgt. Jeremy Keefe, 2-12 Cav, attached to the 91st Engineer Battalion, goes up for a pass in the end zone.

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In Recognition

October 16, 2004

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Memorial Honors Fallen 2-5 Cav. Comrades

Cpl. Benjamin Cossel
122nd MPAD

CAMP HOPE, Baghdad-- On the night of Sept. 7 one of the many mortars to impact on FOB Eagle took the life of Spc. Marco Ross from Memphis, Tenn., Company A, "Titans", 115th Forward Support Company, 2nd Battalion 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division. Pfc. Ryan McCauley of Louisville, Texas was out on patrol with his platoon; 3rd Platoon, Company A, "Warriors", 2-5 Cav, 1st BCT, 1st CD, on the evening of Sept 5 when he was shot and fatally wounded while engaging members of Muqtada's Militia.

Soldiers of the 2-5 Cav. paid their final respects to two of their fallen brothers during a memorial service, here, Sept 9.

The memorial service began promptly at 9:30 with Capt. (Chaplain) Ramón Pena, battalion chaplain, 2-5 Cav., opening the ceremony with an invocation where he asked for guidance and patience at this, a time of a need.

"Give us the understanding that we need at this time in our lives, guide us to be sensitive to each other at all times," the chaplain asked. "Make us aware of our fellow man as each of us struggles with the problems in our lives."

As Pena concluded and returned to his seat, Sgt. Michael Benavidez, Company A, 115th

FSB, 2-5 Cav. walked to the podium, addressed the gathered battalion and spoke of Ross' gentleness and easy smile.

"He always had a smile on his face and nothing really seemed to get him down," said Benavidez.

Ross was also noted for his studiousness both professionally and to his future endeavors.

"I remember when Ross joined the unit fresh out of AIT (advanced individual training) back in January of 2003. He was a bright soldier, always wanting to go beyond his basic MOS (military occupational specialty) 19F, petroleum specialist, which is why he rose through the ranks so quickly. Whenever he had a free moment you would find his nose buried in a real estate book. That's what he wanted to do when he got out." a crack breaking his voice, Benavidez concluded, "Spc. Ross will be truly missed by his platoon family and by his family."

"I first met Pfc. McCauley while I was in Korea," said Sgt. Steven Costello, 3rd Platoon, Company A, 2-5 Cav., "I asked him how old he was to which he replied 'Sgt., I'm only nineteen years old.'"

"I asked which unit he was in to which he proudly replied:

'Manchu!'

"1-9 or 2-9 I asked him."

'1-9 infantry, the only true

Manchu there is'

"As I observed the soda he was drinking and after talking to

his friends later, I learned PFC McCauley was there that night to make sure his drinking buddies got home safe. In that short conversation I concluded that McCauley was a Soldier of loyalty, not only to his friends but to his unit."

Costello then went on to explain his surprise when on the day of Aug 24 he walked into the company office and saw McCauley standing there, getting in-processed to the company.

"After talking to him, I learned not only was he coming to my platoon but had been assigned the squad automatic weapon gunner in my platoon."

As the last words of the benediction were spoken, seven rifles were raised in the air and the command to fire was given three times. Taps sounded, followed by a bagpipe rendition of Amazing Grace. Distinguished guests of the ceremony, one-by-one, approached the memorial and offered a final salute to the fallen warriors.

"Some people will look at these two Soldiers and focus on what dreams went unfulfilled or opportunities were lost by two with so much ahead of them," said Lt. Col. Gary Volesky, commander, 2-5 Cav. "I prefer to look at what they left us. Two men proud of the unit they were in, who could be counted on to do their duty without being told, Soldiers being there for their buddies. What great examples for the rest of us to follow."



By Cpl. Benjamin Cossel, 122nd MPAD

Soldiers of 2-5 Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division paid their final respects to Spc. Marco Ross, Company A, 115th Forward Support Company and Pfc. Ryan McCauley, Company A, 2-5 Cav during a ceremony at Camp Eagle Sept 9.



By Spc. Al Barrus, 122nd MPAD

Col. Michael Formica, commander of the 1st Cavalry Division's 2nd Brigade Combat Team, pins Staff Sgt. Keith Gates, a tank commander in Company B, 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment, with a Bronze Star with V Device. Gates and his platoon leader, 1st Lt. Murugan Palani, were awarded the decoration Sept. 22 at Camp Black Jack in Baghdad. The two Soldiers were recognized for valorous actions while under enemy fire during combat operations in Abu Graib in April. Thirteen other Soldiers were awarded Purple Heart Medals, and troops from the 425th Civil Affairs Battalion, attached to the cavalry, received their Combat Spurs at the ceremony.

Our Fallen Troops

Sgt. Skipper Soram

Spc. David Johnson

Spc. Rodney Jones

Sgt. Jack Hennessy

Sgt. Christopher Potts

Sgt. Russell Collier



"Hero" Brings Jet Li Back to American Screens

More than 2 years passed from the time Miramax Studios purchased the distribution rights to the incredible Chinese martial arts film "Hero," to the time of its American release in August, and while it is a shame it took so long for American eyes to see this film, the wait was well worth it.

"Hero" is set in ancient China, more than two-thousand years ago, during a time when the nation was divided among six warring kingdoms. The most powerful kingdom was ruled by Emperor Qin, who would go on to found the Qin Dynasty--China's first--and unify the country under one rule.

He has lived his life going from one assassination attempt to the next, but the only people that ever came close to succeeding were three expert assassins named Sky, Broken Sword, and Falling Snow, all loyal to Qin's nemesis, Zhao.

The movie begins as Emperor Qin grants an audience to a peasant called Nameless (played by martial arts virtuoso Jet Li), who witnesses say has single-handedly killed all three of the assassins. Nameless brings their broken weapons as further proof.

LeDrew's Reviews

SPC Erik LeDrew



Movie Critic

The emperor is curious. How could one simple man kill three warriors who at one point fought off his entire army?

And so Nameless recounts his tales for the emperor, telling how he used not only his superior skills in martial arts but also in deception to carry out a plan to kill these three rebels.

Simple enough, right? Wrong. This film's first act is merely a prelude to the different ways director Zhang Yimou effortlessly spins his tale, going from Nameless' stories to the emperor's interpretation of them to what really happened when Nameless fought the three assassins.

Much like Akira Kurosawa's 1954 classic film Rashomon, in which we see a murder from the different points of view of those that

were involved, we see these duels in three different ways.

The ingenious novelty Yimou uses to distinguish between each interpretation of the fights is by essentially color-coding them, starting with black-and-white and going through red, white, blue, green and, finally, a multi-colored view at the end.

Although "Hero" will draw comparisons to "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon," their similarities are mainly superficial. Aside from taking place in ancient China, both films use "wire-fu" to give the fights a mythical feeling, both have haunting soundtracks, and in both, the cinematography is flat-out gorgeous.

The similarities stop there, however, for while "Crouching Tiger" is without a doubt a great film, "Hero" leaves it in the dust.

This film looks and feels like an epic, but it never loses sight of the intimate. The fight scenes are intense and often jaw-dropping, such as one that literally takes place on top of and above a lake, but filled with emotion at the same time. Director of Photography Thomas Doyle's cinematography

here is so gorgeous that it makes "Crouching Tiger" look bland (and that film took home an Academy Award for Cinematography). And Composer/Conductor Tan Dun's score is absolutely mesmerizing.

And a fight scene that takes place in the rain is probably the best use of sound design in any film that has come out this year.

While "Hero" isn't making "Crouching Tiger"-type box office, it's still doing better than any of Jet

Li's recent films. Plus having come out in that film, too many people probably looked at "Hero"'s advertising and thought it looked too similar. But rest assured, "Hero" is by far the superior film.

After seeing "Crouching Tiger" for the first time, I said something along the lines of, "Man, that was awesome." But after seeing "Hero" for the first time, I didn't say anything. I just hit the Play button again.



Photo courtesy of Miramax

Jet Li as Nameless in the new Miramax film "Hero".

Lions Loyalist, Cheese-Head Square Off in Week 5

Before we get down to some pigskin picks, I'd be remiss if I didn't at least touch on the playoffs in Major League Baseball. I didn't bother picking the winners of each division when I started this column April 30. I went straight for the jugular, predicting that the New York Yankees would win the American League pennant (now, there's a stretch!) and that the Chicago Cubs would take the senior circuit crown.

Well, as I write this the Yankees were shutout in their home opener against the Twins, and the Cubs ... well, they didn't make it into the dance. But, Cub fans take heart: I also predicted that your beloved Bruins would WIN the World Series ... in 2006, exactly 100 years since they did it the last time.

So far, I'm usually right half the time. Which brings me to football action.



Sgt. Maj. James Ross

Looking back at NFL weeks three and four: Dolphins fan Sgt. Maj. John Pratt and I TIED in our ability to pick winners. We both did terribly. In week three, we predicted correctly 9 out of 14 games (not bad!), but both tumbled to 7-7 in week four.

There are no bragging rights to be had in the column this week, and I'm back to flipping a coin to pick a winner.

Joining me for weeks five and six is Sgt. Maj. James Ross, the operations sergeant major for the 4th Battalion, 5th Air Defense Artillery Regiment. The Battle Creek, Mich. native is a life-long Detroit Lions fan who said that his five-foot-one, 110-pound frame in high school wasn't made for football, so his gridiron career ended in the peewee leagues.

He said the Lions are an up-and-coming franchise.

Trigger Pull

MSG David Larsen



Sports Buff

"I like the Joey Harrington-to-Roy Williams combination on offense," Ross said. "And their defense? It's one of the top three or four in the league!"

We'll see, as our favorite teams go head-to-head this week.

San Diego at Atlanta
The sergeant major goes straight in with his upset of the week, picking the Chargers on the road. Michael Vick and crew look TOO good to fall to San Diego.

Houston at Tennessee
We both like the Titans at home, but in preseason this game looked like a no-brainer. Now, it's a toss-up.

Carolina at Philadelphia
What happened to the Panthers? They won't win in Philly this week, either. Is time running out on their reign as champs of the NFC? You bet!

San Francisco at NY Jets
I'll take the 49ers (and would take points, too, if this wasn't

straight-up pickin!). Ross likes the Jets in the Meadowlands.

Seattle at New England
New England is nearly unbeatable at home. Seattle appears to be the class of the NFC. Even so, we both take the Pats at home.

Kansas City at Jacksonville
For one last time, I'll take the Chiefs. Maybe they'll stop being a disappointment. Ross, smartly, takes the home team.

Green Bay at Detroit
"I don't think anybody is scared of Green Bay," Ross announced. "If we stop Ahman Green, this will be a blow out!"

Ross, emphatically, takes his Lions at home. I don't. Go Pack!

Cincinnati at Cleveland
Two mediocre teams square off in a mostly meaningless game. Hmmm. Ross likes the Browns at home. I flipped a coin (again) and it came up Bengals.

Washington at Chicago
We both take Joe Gibbs' crew over Da Bears at home.

Miami at Buffalo
As I write this, Ricky Williams told the Dolphins he wants to play again! (I guess he couldn't afford to pay back the \$8.6 million in bonuses and incentive pays!) Whether he plays again or not, I'm taking the

Fish. Ross takes the Bills at home.

Denver at Oakland
Against my better judgment, (the coin flip), I take the Raiders. Ross takes the visiting Broncos.

Pittsburgh at Dallas
Again, I take the home team, while the sergeant major likes the visiting Steelers.

Minnesota at New Orleans
For two fans of opposing NFC North Division teams, this may look strange in print: Ross and I both like the Vikes in the Big Easy.

(MNF) Tampa Bay at St. Louis

I'll bet when ABC was lining up games for Monday Night Football, they took a look at this match-up and said, "Wow! Gotta have it!"

Looking at the game now, it has all the makings of a snooze fest. Neither team has performed up to its billing. Ross and I both take the Rams over the struggling Bucs.

Next issue, I'm getting a guest prognosticator from Camp Falcon/Al-Saqr (formerly Ferrin-Huggins). If you want to line yourself up and take me on in the funny papers, e-mail me at david.j.larsen@1cd.army.mil. Go Packers!

