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# Cav Country

Volume 1, Issue 1

"Telling the First Team's Story"

April 30, 2004

## Apache Pilots Remembered for their Heroism

By Spc. Andy Miller  
122nd MPAD

"Life's not so bad here. We get some mortars here and there, but they're not that effective," Chief Warrant Officer 2 Shane Colton said.

These words would be among his last. Both Colton and his crewmate, Chief Warrant Officer 3 Wesley "Chuck" Fortenberry of the 1st Battalion 227th Regiment, were killed when their AH-64D Apache came under attack on Easter Sunday as they provided crucial air support for a convoy moving through Baghdad. In an interview one day prior to the attack, Colton talked about his experience the first time he was in Iraq one year ago and how his current mission compared.

"We've got good flying and good maintenance," Colton said. "We're well suited for the mission here."

Colton and Fortenberry were well suited for the mission, and because of their heroism many Soldiers were saved.

"At the time, we were struggling with the logistical supply route," Brig. Gen. Jeff Hammond, the division's deputy commander for support operations, said. "We had a full convoy halted by an IED (improvised explosive device). Chiefs Fortenberry and Colton went to the rescue of the Army convoy.



By Spc. Andy Miller, 122nd MPAD

**Chief Warrant Officer 2 Shane Colton stands on his Apache helicopter one day before his fatal mission.**

"In the process of this heroic act, they engaged the enemy forces on the ground and saved the convoy.

Hammond said the troops lives were in the pilots hands.

"Had Fortenberry and Colton not turned around, we probably would have lost every Soldier in the convoy," he said.

In honor of these Soldiers, a memorial took place at a battalion aircraft hangar on Camp Cooke on April 13.

"Today's memorial service was all about honoring two of our American heroes who gave their lives," Lt. Col. Ronald Lewis, the 1-227 Battalion commander said following the ceremony. "Today was about saying thank you to them and making sure that everyone hears their story, knows their heroic acts and knows that what they did was right and proper. Like them, any one of us would respond to contact like that again tomorrow."

American ground forces moving through Iraqi streets are



By Spc. Andy Miller, 122nd MPAD

**Members of 1st Battalion 227th Regiment are led by Spc. David Boyd, an attack helicopter repair mechanic, to the front of the ceremony to pay their respects to Chief Warrant Officer 3 Chuck Fortenberry and Chief Warrant Officer 2 Shane Colton during a memorial service. The two pilots were killed in action on Easter Sunday.**

under constant threat of attack. It's a comfort for these Soldiers on the ground to know there are attack helicopters ready to help them at a moments notice.

"I had several members of the ground unit that they [Fortenberry and Colton] supported here today," Lewis said. "They said 'I just wanted to come by and say thank you.' They told me they were down to their last few rounds, and that our Soldiers saved their lives."

The Soldiers may never forget the sacrifices Fortenberry and

Colton made on Easter Sunday. The two pilots remain in the hearts of those who knew them best.

"The aviators that I work with have a sense of brotherhood that few will ever understand," Chief Warrant Officer 2 Justin Tyler, an AH-64D pilot said. "When one of our own falls, you have to be there to honor them. Our prayers are with their families. We fly, day to day, for them."

"These two Soldiers are a terrible, tragic loss that touched everyone here," Hammond said.

He said Soldiers at the service appeared inspired by the pilots, "inspired to do it [the mission] right," Hammond said. "It's what the two pilots would expect."

"Those men were admired, those men were loved by their peers and by the young people around them," Hammond said. "These two men, who lived to give ultimately, lost their lives to giving and paid the ultimate sacrifice."

► Compiled by reports from the *Killeen Daily Herald*.



By Pfc. Al Barrus, 122nd MPAD

**AAFES employee Don Lute sets blue trim around the empty shelves at the new PX.**

## New PX Will Offer More Choices to Soldiers

By Pfc. Al Barrus  
122nd MPAD

The Army and Air Force Exchange Service will open the doors to their new 30,000-square-foot Post Exchange (PX) May 10 in the Division Life Support Area of Camp Victory North.

According to David Schloss, the AAFES general manager for the Baghdad area, plans are underway to also develop a diverse food court. Right now, Burger King is the only confirmed food concession for the PX, but other restaurant chains are awaiting approval.

"We have come a long way since last

year, where we would just open boxes of Gatorade on the floor and have a cashier a tiny little room," he added.

The store at the Baghdad International Airport (BIAP) that closes April 30 has 7,000 square feet of selling space. The new PX is more than four times that size. The building's dimensions also include storage areas and offices, according to Jonathan Tokar, the general manager for all AAFES operations in Iraq.

Other concessions that tend to be around a PX won't be encased within the 30,000 square-foot building, AAFES officials said. Concession shops such as barber, beauty,

sewing and alterations, food concessions, and gift shops will be outside the structure.

An array of local vendors will also be found outside the new PX. The current plan is for all the vendors at BIAP to move to North Victory, Schloss said.

The staff of the BIAP PX, as well as the stock, will move operations to the Victory North exchange, but more stock will be moved in and more staff will be hired to accommodate the larger PX. Though the BIAP store doesn't close until April 30, the process of stocking the North Victory PX has already begun and will open a week prior to

Continued on Page 11

## Grieving Army Families Deserve Info First: Not From Nightly News

There is no mistaking the despair in the wailing sobs of a mother who has lost her only child. Families of military members currently participating in Operation Iraqi Freedom 2 live with this fear everyday.

The last thing a mother, or wife, wants to hear is that her son or husband has been killed in action. Worse yet is to get the information, not gently from a military chaplain or sympathetically from a company commander, but on the evening news.

As the horrific details of the incident are revealed, one question burns: How did the media get the notification before the families?

Revealing sensitive information over unsecured lines is not a violation of any law. The rules governing the release of information concerning our wounded and dead come from Department of Defense policy, not from our lawmakers. Media outlets aren't breaking any laws if they put our dead on the news first.

But where do they get that information in the first place?

Often, it's an e-mail sent home following a mission: "Honey, I'm OK, but my squad leader Sgt. John Doe died."

That e-mail gets forwarded to other family members, then friends, and the circle widens

### Editorial

with the click of a mouse. Soon, the wrong people have the information and a scoop for the evening news.

That e-mail home doesn't break any law. The family member hitting the forward button doesn't break any either, but it should violate every Soldier's sense of honor and duty to his comrades in arms.

The Army has a system in place to handle family notifications, and unless a Soldier is assigned this task, no information should be released without first going through the proper chain of authority.

Don't be the person who compromises the mission or causes unnecessary pain and suffering to family members back home.

Unscrupulous news organizations have, in the past, broadcast and posted images of American dead being drug through the streets of Mogadishu, Somalia or more recently, hanging from a bridge in Baghdad. It's not against the law. It's their First Amendment right to do these things.

But it's the right of every military family to expect better from their own. Think before you hit that "send" button.

# Stable Call

It's an honor for me to grace the pages of the inaugural edition of *Cav Country*. Many of our troopers are too young to know that *Cav Country*, like our division itself has a long and outstanding tradition.

This is an Army "field" newspaper. The last time it published regularly, it was selected as the best field edition in our Army: back in 1991. If you think back, that's the last time the First Team fought in this area of operation.

Today, we find ourselves on a new battlefield, fighting an enemy who is elusive and afraid to go toe-to-toe with us. We have taken over the security mission for the Iraqi capitol city, and we will prevail.

Yet, at the time of this writing, we have already lost 20 troopers in this fight. I've been to the memorial services, where it is impossible not to come away with a lump in your throat and a tear in your eye. Our young troopers have made the ultimate sacrifice for their country; for freedom; for us, their comrades in arms.

Our enemy may view these memorials as a sign of weakness.

CSM Richard Hernandez



CSM 1CD

I don't.

Just as the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001 brought America together, with a firm resolve and a strengthened will to win the war against terror, so too, will we become stronger from the sacrifices of our young troopers.

We will prevail. We will leave Iraq in better hands and in a better shape than how we found it.

I am very proud to be the command sergeant major of the First Team. Our families, and America as a whole should be proud of our service; of our sacrifice. We are Soldiers. It's a dangerous profession, but we have the training, knowledge and the will to succeed. We will find our enemy, and we will kill him.

We will complete the mission assigned to us. In doing so, we will continue to take care of each other, support each other

and continue to fight for what's right. It's what we do. We are America's First Team.

Each individual Soldier within this great division of ours is important. Each of us brings something special to this fight. Each of us can make a difference each and every day. Together, though, we are an unbeatable force for our enemy to fear.

Our mission here in Baghdad has only begun, yet I would be remiss if I didn't take the time to say 'thank you' to every trooper in this command - for your service and sacrifice.

I'd also like to say 'thank you' to the families and loved ones of our brave troopers. With your support, we are better able to accomplish our mission.

This newspaper is one tool for this command to speak to its Soldiers. I want this tool, though, to be a two-way street: I encourage Soldiers, and leaders at all levels to send letters to the editor, addressing issues that affect them. Help us to help you. That's why we're here.

We're a great team; it's our team; because we are the First Team!

# FIRST TEAM

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**Public Affairs Officer:**  
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**122 Mobile Public Affairs Detachment Commander:**  
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## Spur & The Moment

### How has Baghdad compared with your expectations?

Photos by Spc. Marie Whitney, 122nd MPAD

It's a lot better than I thought it would be. A lot better than what they prepared us for.



SPC Dao Nguyen, 312 MI BN

It's pretty much what I expected. It's the second time I've been over here. I was here for Desert Shield /Desert



SGT William Howard, 15 FSB

It was quiet when we first got here, but the last three or four days have been a real wake-up call. My team has already been in 12 or 13 fire-



SPC Patrick DeGeorge, 202 ADA

It's a lot better. We have a lot more than the people who were here before us had.



SPC Adrienne Annis, 312 MI BN

It's very nice here. The standards of living go up and up. Every day things get better.



SSG Suree Valenzuela, HHC 1CD

When we were in Kuwait, we were in full battle rattle all the time, but here it's a lot different.



PFC Derick Fields, 15 FSB

## EPLARS: More Than Just a Radio Technology Keeps 1st Cav. Div. Soldiers Connected

By Spc. Andy Miller  
122<sup>nd</sup> MPAD

Getting lost is never fun, but getting lost in Baghdad can be dangerous. With the help of 13<sup>th</sup> Signal Battalion's Enhanced Position Location Reporting System (EPLARS), going astray in Baghdad isn't very likely for Soldiers of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division.

Staff Sgt. Andre Milhouse, the EPLARS section sergeant with the 13<sup>th</sup> Signal Battalion, compared the EPLARS to a plugger (military global positioning system). The EPLARS, though, has the ability to also act as a tracking device and send text messages.

"It can hold and send large amounts of data," he said. "EPLARS can be used for text messaging, combat messaging and 9-Line MEDEVAC (medical evacuation procedures)."

The ability to transmit text messages throughout the battlefield can be invaluable to units conducting operations far away from Frequency Modulation (FM) signal and retransmission towers. The FM-based Single-Channel Ground/Air Radio System (SINGARS) is the Army standard voice communications system, but it has limitations.

SINGARS is a line-of-site communication system, meaning that distance or large objects like hills and buildings can interrupt the signal. With EPLARS, which is Ultra High Frequency (UHF)-based, text communications are still available for units that don't

have access to the SINGARS net. The UHF signal can travel up to 100 miles in optimum conditions, and isn't as prone to interference as FM.

"When units venture down into the city, sometimes they don't have the ability to keep up their FM communications," said Spc. Max Clifton, an EPLARS network control station operator. "But they are still able to talk to their group and to send messages through the EPLARS radio, so it's actually very valuable."

Not only can combat groups maintain communication with one another while on the battlefield, but they can also communicate back and forth with their command in the rear.

The EPLARS system can also serve as a tracking device, and an early warning system for troops in the field. For instance, if an improvised explosive device (IED) is found in an area of operations, a

message with its location is sent to the rear. The rear then inputs the location of the IED into the EPLARS system. Then, when a Soldier conducting field operations moves into the vicinity of that IED, the EPLARS will automatically send out an alarm, which audibly warns the soldier. The system will even provide Soldiers with the safest route out of the hazardous area.

New technology, like the EPLARS system, can give the 1<sup>st</sup> Cav. Div. the edge on any battlefield.

"We give the [Soldier on the] battlefield [a] real-time situational awareness," Milhouse said.

"We give the [Soldier] a real-time situation."

-SSG Andre Milhouse

13<sup>th</sup> Signal Battalion

## ► Farewell to Fallen Comrades in Arms



By Spc. Andy Miller, 122<sup>nd</sup> MPAD

(Above) A memorial at Camp Cooke honors the lives of Chief Warrant Officer 3 Chuck Fortenberry and Chief Warrant Officer 2 Shane Colton. (Below) Seven helmets sit atop M16A2 rifles at memorial ceremony for fallen Soldiers of 2-5 Cav. The seven troopers were killed in action April 4, while battling Muqtada al-Sadr's militia.



By Pfc. Erik LeDrew, 122<sup>nd</sup> MPAD

## Our Fallen Troops

- SFC Gregory Hicks
- SPC Jason Chappell
- SGT Randy Rosenberg
- SPC William Sturges
- PFC Christopher Hudson
- PFC William Strange
- SPC Robert Arsiaga
- SPC Ahmed Casson
- SGT Yihjyh Chen
- SPC Israel Garza
- SPC Stephen Hiller
- CPL Forest Jostes
- SPC Casey Cheehan
- SGT Gurardo
- SFC William Labadie
- SGT Felix Delgreco
- PFC Adolfo Carballo
- SPC Justin Johnson
- CW3 Wesley Fortenberry
- CW2 Shane Colton

To all of our fallen troopers; you are gone but not forgotten. We will continue the fight.

## Civil Affairs Cleans up Al Rashid Market

By Cpl. Bill Putnam  
122<sup>nd</sup> MPAD

AL RASHID DISTRICT, Baghdad - One of the long-term projects Maj. Robert Dixon has on his plate isn't too much of a stretch from his civilian job back in Tennessee. Eventually his latest project will turn into work for a local contractor helping the rampant unemployment rate in this district.

Dixon, a project planner in Company A, 489<sup>th</sup> Civil Affairs Battalion, is an environmental assessor back home. His job is to make sure major projects - like the district sewage system - don't pollute the environment.

Right now he's working to install a large sewage "lagoon" near the Al Rashid District market, not far from Camp Ferrin-Huggins, the home of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division's 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade



Combat Team.

In the meantime, something has to be done so the infrastructure doesn't fall down around the people, he said.

"These things are not major fixes; they're small fixes that help the community hang in there until the big things can be done," Dixon said.

Right now the main sewage line running through the market is broken and blocked. It floods and the ground around the market

is black, mushy mud that reeks horribly. A local fish farm adds to the muck by dumping almost 20,000 gallons of sewage into the area as well.

"It comes out of the manhole and spills out into the market," Dixon said.

The sewage main can't be fixed yet. But for \$11,000, a 40-foot by 60-foot lagoon will be built behind the market to handle the smelly overflow.

The new lagoon will lessen the sewage problem and also give shop owners and residents a clean market, Dixon added.

Once the planning and engineering is sorted out, the project will go to the weekly contractor's bidding conference on Camp Ferrin-Huggins. The chosen contractor will, in turn, hire people to complete the work, injecting more money into the local economy.



Photo from [www.freedomquilts.net](http://www.freedomquilts.net)

Betty Nielson (Center), founder of Freedom Quilts, with her husband Dennis and other volunteers, put the finishing touches on a quilt during a Quilt-a-thon at Fort Hood.

## Freedom Quilts Founder Visits Fallen Soldier's Families

► From the *Fort Hood Sentinel*

FORT HOOD, Texas- In the 1989 movie *Field of Dreams*, Shoeless Joe Jackson asks main character Ray Kinsella if the baseball diamond he has stepped onto is heaven and Kinsella replies "no, it's Iowa."

True, Iowa isn't heaven, but that doesn't mean angels don't occasionally emerge from the corn fields.

Betty Nielson is as close to an angel as a person can get, according to the thousands of families who have been touched by her work with Freedom Quilts. A resident of Fonda, Iowa, population 90, Nielson has dedicated her life to comforting the families of the victims of the September 11 attacks and the Soldiers killed in the War on Terrorism by providing them with a physical representation of a nation's love, a handmade quilt.

"I want to say that all the love that went into making this quilt, I felt," Denise De Angelis, who lost her husband Robert in the collapse of New York's World Trade Center and received one of Nielson's Freedom Quilts in the fall of 2002, wrote in a letter. "This quilt has been an instrument of healing for my deeply broken heart."

Nielson, who has helped distribute more than 4,800 quilts since she started the Freedom Quilt project two-and-a-half years ago, visited Fort Hood March 25 - 26 to join 39 Texas quilters in a quilt-a-thon to benefit the Freedom Quilt project and Operation Quilted Comfort.

"For many families, to receive one of these quilts is like [having] loving arms wrapped around them," Nielson said. "It is my life's work to comfort these families."

Welcoming quilters from as far away as Fort Worth, Texas, the two-day event produced 18 quilts, all of which will be distributed to families of Soldiers killed since September 11.

"We wanted to make as many quilts as possible but we hope we won't need to use any," quilt-a-thon co-organizer Valerie Taber said.

Lorraine Karl, a resident of Plano, Texas who made the two hour trip to Fort Hood after reading about the quilt-a-thon online, donated enough panels to finish three quilts.

"I don't have the freedom of the Internet, of the press, the ability to go anywhere I want anytime I want, without military to back that freedom up," Karl said. "We can't begin to repay the families these quilts will be going to for their sacrifice."

During a ceremony March 26, Nielson presented three Fort Hood widows with quilts to honor their fallen Soldiers. Linnie Blankenbecler and her daughter Jessica were on hand to accept a quilt in honor of Command Sgt. Maj. James Blankenbecler, 1st Battalion, 44th Air Defense Artillery, 4th Infantry Division, who was killed Oct. 1 outside of Samara, Iraq.

"Some of these quilts have tears in them but they all have a lot of prayers in them too,"

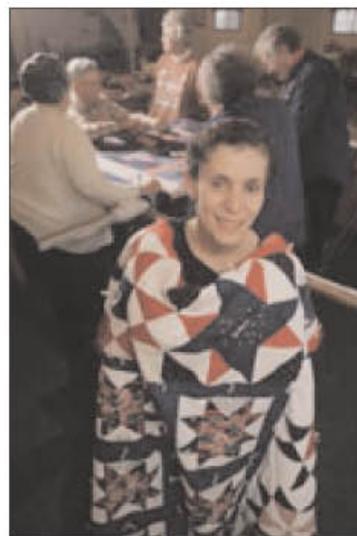


Photo from [www.freedomquilts.net](http://www.freedomquilts.net)

Betty Nielson wraps herself in a handmade quilt. Nielson and friends put love into every stitch as they prepare quilts for Soldiers' families.

Nielson said.

For Nielson, and her husband Dennis, the trip from Iowa to Texas and time away from pre-planting and machinery preparations is just a small sacrifice in consideration of the sacrifices Soldiers and families are making for the nation.

"These men and women are fighting to make sure that we keep our freedom, [to ensure] that no more terrorist acts happen again and they are worth every last ounce of our energy."

"Together, we can do it," said Nielson. "I don't want to leave a single Soldier's family behind." For more information on the project or to request a quilt for the family of a fallen Soldier, visit [www.freedomquilts.net](http://www.freedomquilts.net).

## Bush Visits Soldiers at Fort Hood

► From the *Killeen Daily Herald*

FORT HOOD, Texas- President Bush and his family stopped in on Sunday to spend a second Easter at this Central Texas post that has played a key role in his Iraq policy.

The first family also paid a quick visit to recovering 1st Cavalry Division troops and their families at Darnall Army Community Hospital and awarded Purple Hearts to 10 of them.

"Fort Hood has made a mighty contribution to freedom in Iraq, security in the country," Bush said. "I value my time with family members of those who have sacrificed on behalf of the country and today I ask for God's blessing for troops overseas."

Speaking from the home of the 4th Infantry, which captured ousted Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein, Bush was firm in his praise for the Fort Hood troops who are currently there, including the 18,000 from the 1st Cavalry, 13th Corps Support Command and III Corps.

"Our troops are taking care of business," Bush said. "They are doing a great job."

The normally small congregation at the 13th Corps Support Command's chapel found its pews filled with the post's top brass, White House staffers and media and Secret Service for the Episcopal Easter worship led by chaplain, Maj. David Scheider.

Bush said he could not predict if the current violence would ease in Iraq.

"It was a tough week last week and my prayers and thoughts are with those who pay the ultimate price for our security," Bush said. "Every day I pray there's less casualties, but I know what we're doing in Iraq is right."

Bush, the first lady and his parents went on to Darnall where they met with 11 soldiers who arrived Friday from Iraq after



White House Photo/Eric Draper

President George Bush presented Purple Heart medals to 10 1st Cav. Div. Soldiers at Darnall Army Community Hospital April 11. Bush congratulates Pfc. Ismael Torres after the presentation.

being wounded during a fierce firefight April 4 in Sadr City, a Baghdad suburb. The clash, which at the time was the worst of the post-war era, killed seven of the division's soldiers and wounded 41. Another 1st Cavalry Soldier was killed April 6 in Ashula.

The week's losses bring to at least 63 the number of Fort Hood troops lost in Iraq since Fort Hood began its involvement there in January 2003. Another two area civilians have been killed in Iraq and a warrant officer also died last year while deployed to Kuwait.

Leaving Darnall, Bush shook the hand of Col. Bernard DeKoning, the hospital's commander. He did not comment further before his motorcade returned to III Corps' helicopter pad. From there, his helicopter entourage took off for the 50-mile return flight north to his ranch in Crawford.

"These are brave troops and they are doing an outstanding job for their country, said McClellan, as he briefed reporters before the departure.

Bush has made three trips to Fort Hood. His Easter visit last year came a day after two 1st Cavalry aviators were returned to the post after spending 21 days in captivity after their Apache helicopter gunship went down during the U.S.-led push into Baghdad.

"Our troops are taking care of business."

- President George Bush



By Spc. Bryan Kinkade, 1st Cavalry Division PAO

**Spc. John Snider, a carpentry/masonry specialist with the 203<sup>rd</sup> Engineers, saws down a piece of lumber to the right size during the building of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division Chapel. The Chapel will seat more than 200.**

## Division Chapel Comes to Life

By Spc. Bryan Kinkade  
1st Cavalry Division PAO

Hammers and table saws echoed through the empty frame of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division Chapel. Pieces of lumber were thrown into a pile after being cut and wires were being run through the rafters.

"These Soldiers are hungry for services," said 1<sup>st</sup> Cav. Div. Chaplain (Lt. Col.) David Moran.

Soldiers from 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon, Company A, 203<sup>rd</sup> Engineers, Missouri National Guard, put their carpentry and masonry skills to the test, building this chapel from the ground up.

"When I got here a little over four weeks ago, it was a level concrete pad," Moran said.

The structure will be ready to its full potential by April 15, and will accommodate more than 200 seats. Services will include Contemporary Protestant, Catholic Mass and Lutheran.

"We've been at a steady pace and every day we make progress," said carpenter, Staff Sgt. Clifford Bailey, a squad leader with 2<sup>nd</sup> platoon. "We're

"It's going to be a great building."

SPC John Snider  
203<sup>rd</sup> ENG

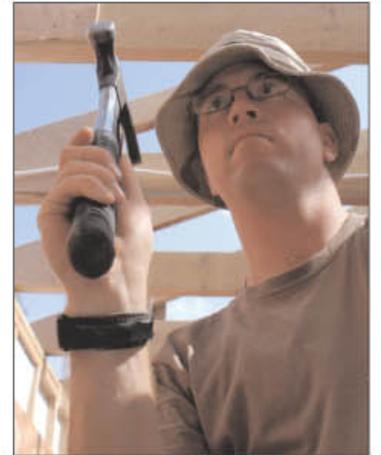
well ahead of schedule and we've had no problems with the building materials."

"This building would not have been started by now, but they wanted a real project they could look back on and know it's taking care of the Soldiers spiritual needs," Moran said.

Even though the building isn't complete yet, the chaplains haven't let that get in the way of their services.

"We used a large cardboard box as a make-shift altar," said Deputy Division Chaplain (Maj.) Grant Johnson. "We also used a laptop so people could read the songs, and we gathered in a circle for prayer and worship."

The 203<sup>rd</sup> Engineers have built many other structures throughout the Iraq area, since their June 2003 deployment, to include live-fire search and



By Spc. Bryan Kinkade  
1st Cavalry Division PAO

**Spc. Eric Schuckmann, a carpentry/masonry specialist with the 203<sup>rd</sup> Engineers, slams a nail into the new Division Chapel's frame. The structure will accommodate more than 200 people.**

seizure training buildings, show-ers, a water tower and living quarters, all at Butler Range.

"It's going to be a great building," said carpenter/mason, Spc. John Snider. "We've got a lot of people that haven't done this in the civilian world, so they're learning."

## IEDs and Vehicle Damage Won't Keep 1-8 Cav Down

By Cpl. Bill Putnam  
122nd MPAD

CAMP FERRIN-HUGGINS- April 2 will probably be a day Spc. Timothy Briggs never forgets.

During a late morning patrol, Briggs and his squad mates from Company A, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 8<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment, were heading east of their base camp when their up-armored Humvee was hit by an Improvised Explosive Device (IED).

Riding in the gun turret, Briggs took two pieces of shrapnel in his right arm. His hearing, like everyone else's in the vehicle was jarred as well.

Briggs, a Little Rock, Ark. native and an Abrams tank crewman, is happy to be alive. Manning the Humvee's turret, Briggs' vehicle crossed a bridge and moved approximately 500 meters when it was hit.

The next thing he knew, he heard a big explosion, was surrounded by dust and his ears were ringing.

"I couldn't see anything after that, so I dropped back down into the vehicle," he said. Even then he didn't know he was hit, and the crew didn't

know how badly the vehicle was damaged.

They drove another 200 meters and stopped to assess the situation. It was there while pulling security that Briggs realized he was hit.

"I felt something running down my arm and saw that it was blood," he said.

After towing the vehicle to a more secure location, Briggs was evacuated to a combat support hospital, treated and returned to duty the next day. He said the shrapnel is still in his arm and his ears still ring.

But the vehicle took the worst of it. The bomb caused extensive damage to the Humvee. The radiator was shredded, the two front tires were blown up, the side-view mirrors and windshield were shattered and the hood was pockmarked with shrapnel.

Amazingly, despite the damage, the mechanics of 1-8 Cav. and Company C, 515<sup>th</sup> FSB, repaired the stricken vehicle in six hours and had it back on the road the next day.

As it was being towed back in to the battalion's motor pool, Sgt. Joshua T. Shaw, a mechanic in Charlie Company, 515<sup>th</sup> FSB, saw the damage.

He said to himself, "The game is real for us over here."

Everything Shaw had been told to expect about Iraq, IEDs and wounded Soldiers, during his train-up time at Fort Hood was proving to be true.

"It brought it a little closer to home that way," Shaw said.

Out of all that damage, Shaw said, the radiator was the most time consuming. It took about two hours to replace it. Several parts surrounding it had to be removed before the radiator could be taken out.

There's a lot more work to do on an up-armored Humvee than a standard one.

"There are a lot of added parts," Staff Sgt. David Landry said. Mechanics have to work around and through more parts in an up-armored Humvee than a regular one, the Beaumont, Texas native explained. Even the front end of an up-armored Humvee is built differently, he added.

Shaw said the repair of Briggs' vehicle is a record so far.

"I guess we're going to try and set a new one," Shaw said.

After the repairs are done, the mechanics will run the vehicle for an hour to test for leaks



By Cpl. Bill Putnam, 122nd MPAD

**Sgt. Charles Kennedy, Spc. Timothy Briggs and Staff Sgt. Wendell Freeman talk about the 100 pound improvised explosive device that wounded Briggs and damaged the up-armored Humvee behind them.**

and to make sure the new parts work, Landry said. Then it's sent out on a road test.

"We don't want these guys going out in something we fixed and find out it wasn't fixed," Landry said.

The Soldiers patrolling the streets of Baghdad appreciate their mechanics' attention to detail. Briggs said he was impressed when he found out the vehicle was back on the road.

"If you would've seen it, it

was really messed up," Briggs said. "You've got to love those up-armoreds."

Two days after the IED wounded him and severely damaged his vehicle Briggs maintained a sense of humor about it.

"I'm going to take a little bit of Iraq home with me," he said. "My wife's going to love that."

# Home on



Photos By Pfc. Al Barrus, 122nd MPAD

**Air Force Capt. John Stevenson (left) of the 9th Expeditionary Air Support Operations Squadron attached to 1st Cavalry Division enjoys the warm afternoon sun and a chat with his airmen Staff Sgt. Carl Hill and Senior Airman Mitchell Lewis (right) on a home-made porch in front of the housing trailers.**

**By Pfc. Al Barrus  
122nd MPAD**

1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division Soldiers may spend their days patrolling on dangerous streets with loaded weapons and thick armor protecting them from hostile forces. They are focused on the mission for hours in the hot sun. Later in the day, they cross back “inside the wire.”

A feeling of safety and security washes over them as they clear weapons and can finally remove their weighty armor. They are back; safe; home.

Many division troops live on Camp Victory North, but every day as they try to find ways to make themselves more comfortable in their free time, they come closer to calling this place home.

“I have been here since January, and I was really surprised when I first got here,” said Pfc. Ronald G. Greene, a fueler in D Co. 15th Forward Support Battalion. “We have AC (air conditioners), trailers, electricity, a PX (post exchange) and new stuff keeps popping up all the time.”

Veterans of past deployments note that this war zone is the coziest they have ever seen. Spc. Keith Campbell of C Co., 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment echoed that sentiment.

“I have done three rotations in Bosnia and every time I went there it got a little bit better,” he said. “But it was never this good.”

However, it takes more than cool air and a roof to keep the Soldiers entertained.

“I worked at the PX for a little while and got a good deal on a 29-inch TV,” Greene said. “On my free time, if I’m not working out at the gym or whatever, I just chill out and watch movies and drink near-beers. I’m happy.”

Gyms are not readily available to everyone yet, and many troops agree that it sometimes is a battle to get in a good workout. Equipment space is still limited and there aren’t always enough weights to go around.

“[A lot of gyms] have a roster, and you can’t go in if you’re not on it,” Greene said. “I’m a fueler, and I fill up their gym generator for them, but I can’t use their



**Pfc. Ronald G. Greene, a fueler for D Co. 15th Forward Support Battalion enjoys a movie played on his 29 inch TV and Play Station 2 he bought at the PX.**

## Spur The Moment

**What did you bring  
to remind you of  
home?**

Photos By Staff Sgt. Tony Sailer

[I brought] pictures of my wife, Lynda, and my son Payton.



**SPC Brent Barnhouse,  
1-5 Cav.**

I have a bunch of car magazines and pictures of my friends and family.



**Sr. Amn. Alonzo Lewis,  
732 ECE**

I keep some pictures in a photo album and I also have a bear angel my mom gave me for good luck.



**2LT Jeannette Molina,  
15th PSI**

# the Range

gym. That is kind of messed up.”

Living conditions aren't perfect, and never will be. But Soldiers recognize they have it better now than those who preceded them.

“I got here Saturday and I wasn't too surprised,” said 1st Lt. Michelle Chesser of the 329th Postal Platoon. “I knew people who were here for the first rotation who told me about what they had it like and what to expect.”

Even so, Chesser said one of her chief complaints is the sprawling land between amenities and the long walk it takes to get anywhere.

“The chow hall is decent, but it's such a long walk,” she said. “The shuttles help when you can catch them. There's not much in place right now, but I know it's still improving.”

Things are improving, but some troops keep occupied improving their own areas while they wait for better things to come.

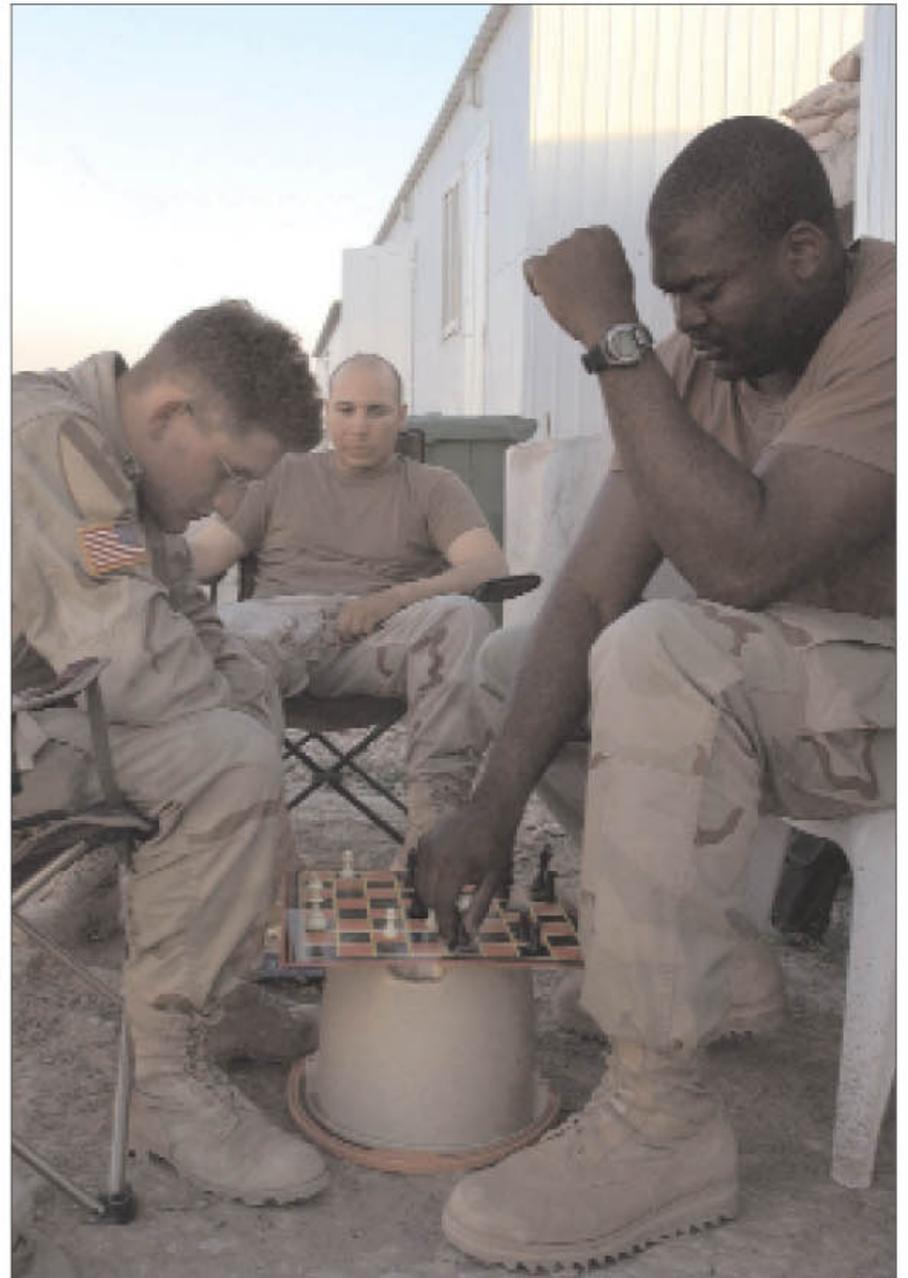
“When we first got here, we spent a couple hours ... scrounging around for some lumber, and we built this deck in front of our trailer,” Air Force Capt. Brian C. Nicolosi of the 9th Expeditionary Air Support Operations Squadron said proudly.

While his deck adds to his comfort level, Nicolosi also knows that there are present dangers, so he also uses his time to upgrade the safety of his living quarters.

“Recently what I have been doing is getting up first thing in the morning ... and just filling and stacking some sandbags,” he said. “I figure after a couple of weeks, I'll have my whole trailer sandbagged around.”

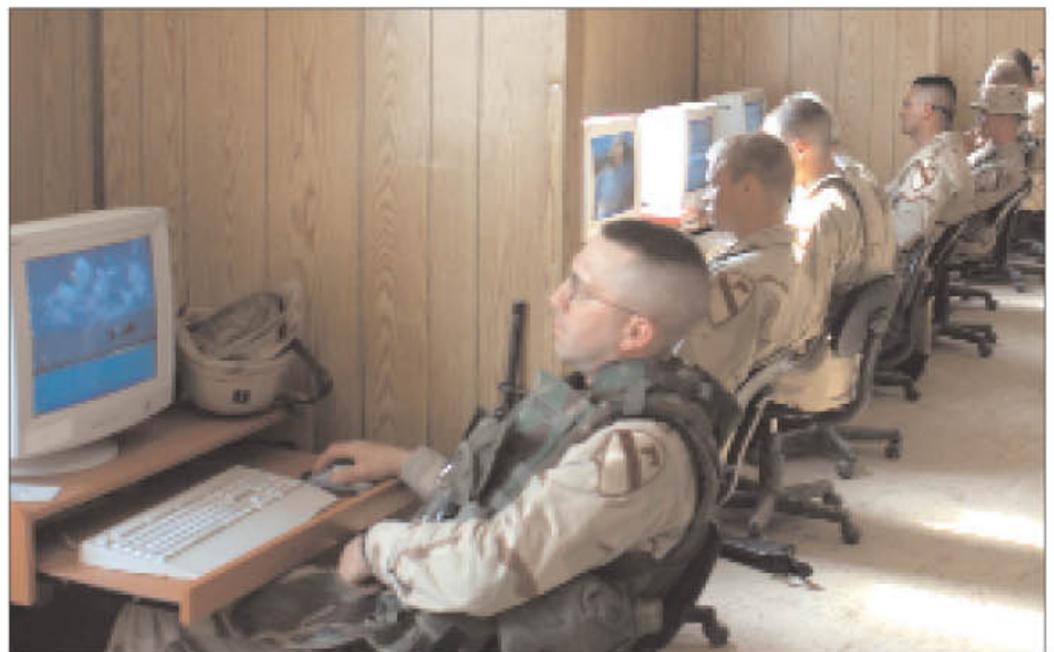
Camp living conditions improve every day for Soldiers living on Camp Victory and Camp Black Jack. Though they are little things, they are the things that bring home an inch closer and 2nd Brigade Combat Team's top enlisted member, Command Sgt. Major Neil Ciotola knows their importance.

“I do everything I can to, just for a minute, [to] take peoples minds off the things they have to do here every day,” Ciotola said. “They deserve it, and I'm obligated to give it to them. We're not even halfway home yet.”



Photos By Pfc. Al Barrus, 122nd MPAD

**Pvt. Blake Spencer and Spc. Justin B. Onwordi, both medics in 2-12 Cavalry, play chess on a checkers board placed on top of a spool while 2-12 medic Spc. Michael T. Loaoenzane watches.**



**Second BCT Soldiers enjoy the new found pleasure of the 91st Engineer's Internet Café. Cafés for all other 2nd BCT battalions are in the making.**

I have my Bible, race-car magazines and pictures of my wife, Tamika.



**CPT Dandrell Pernel,  
13 SIG BN**

I brought some photos of my family and a collection of Texas Country music.



**1LT Paul Stambaugh,  
353rd ENG**

Oh, a lot of stuff. Pictures, books, my husband, Clint's, favorite t-shirt and a blanket from my grandma.



**PFC Jenna Clark,  
15th Finance BN**

I have pictures of my 6-month-old baby boy, Aaron, and my two other kids Rafael and Sergio. Also some pictures of my wife, Mellissa.



**MSG Angel Gonzalez,  
HHC 5 BCT**

[I brought] a picture of my son Ian.



**SFC Glenn Nichols,  
1-21 FA**



By Sgt. Dan Purcell, 122nd MPAD

**1st Cavalry Division Soldiers line up for their cash from finance specialists of the 15th Finance Battalion at Camp Victory North. Soldiers can cash personal checks for up to \$200 per week while deployed.**

## \$how Me the Money: Pay Issues Made Easier by 15<sup>th</sup> FB

By Sgt. Dan Purcell,  
122<sup>nd</sup> MPAD

Theater-wide, getting paid has just become easier thanks to the efforts of the 15<sup>th</sup> Finance Battalion (FB).

The unit opened its doors on Camp Victory North to assist Soldiers of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division with their financial needs.

"Right now, we are helping Soldiers on a limited basis until we can get connected to the internet," explained Staff Sgt. Victoria Asher, finance non-commissioned officer-in-charge. "Soldiers can get \$350.00 a month in casual pay, we can cash personal checks for up to \$200.00 a week, and we also handle the Savings Deposit Program."

Asher said the biggest pay problem Soldiers encounter is not receiving their deployment-relat-

### Camp Victory North

#### Finance Hours

9 a.m. - 5p.m.

Monday - Saturday

### Camp Black Jack

#### Finance hours:

9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Monday - Saturday

**For other office hours  
contact main office**

ed benefits on time, especially hostile fire pay.

"This is largely because their deployment time wasn't calculated correctly, but we can help them get it worked out," Asher explained.

Other pay problems Soldiers may have incurred prior to entering Iraq can be dealt with, but

Asher emphasizes that these Soldiers must bring all applicable documents to resolve their issues.

Additionally, the 15<sup>th</sup> FB has set up Financial Support Teams (FST) throughout Baghdad, making their services more convenient for Soldiers to receive. These teams can be found at Camp Victory South, Camps Black Jack and Cuervo and Junction City.

The current finance office is only temporary. Asher said the foundation for a new facility has just been laid. She said it will be located across from the post office.

"We are excited to be here," 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Sarah Giardina, chief of dispersing, said. "This is not a cashless society yet, and many Soldiers prefer having cash on hand rather than using their debit or credit cards all the time."

## Transporters a Driving Force for OIF-II

By Pfc. Erik LeDrew  
122<sup>nd</sup> MPAD

Transportation Soldiers may never know where they will be or what they will be hauling from one mission to the next. The load could be several hundred pounds or several hundred tons, depending upon who wants what where.

"I'm sure I'll see every little nook and cranny of this place before I'm through here," said Spc. Jordan Scanlan, a Greensboro, N.C. native. "We haul anything and everything to anywhere and everywhere in Iraq."

Just over ten months ago, Scanlan enlisted in the Army Reserves. Now, not even a year later, he finds himself a member of a "forward detachment" with the 227<sup>th</sup> Transportation Co., out of Albemarle, N.C. His unit is almost constantly convoying personnel, equipment and everything else from Kuwait to Iraq supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"Lately, we've also been helping the 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division move their stuff down to Kuwait as their tour here wraps up," the 23-year-old added.

"Since so many of us came from one of the 81<sup>st</sup> [Regional Readiness Commands] and from other states, the only chance we've had to really get to know each other was while we were mobilizing," Scanlan said.

Scanlan's unit mobilized out of Fort. Eustis, Va.

"My unit's mobilization only took about four and a half weeks," he said. "We flew out of Langley Air Force Base on the 13 of March, right as the sun was going down."

Ever since their plane touched down in Kuwait, Scanlan's unit has been hard at work.

"We drove up to the Kuwait-Iraq border, the same night we arrived in Kuwait, and we've been convoying stuff around ever since," Scanlan said. "We really hit the ground running."

Despite being here just under a month, Scanlan's unit has already been hit by improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and had contact with insurgent forces.

"We've had IEDs explode in front of and behind our vehicles, and we've reacted to small arms fire," he said. "Luckily we

haven't had any injuries yet."

Even though he now finds himself in a hostile environment, military service was a natural fit for Scanlan. It runs in the family.

"My Dad was a staff sergeant in the Army Reserves out of New York in the 1960s. He worked in communications," Scanlan said. "And my grandfather was a captain in the Air Force during World War II. He was a meteorologist, studying weather for B-52s during missions."

"So family tradition definitely played a part in my decision to enlist," added Scanlan. "The lynch-pin that got me to sign up for the Army was the college money."

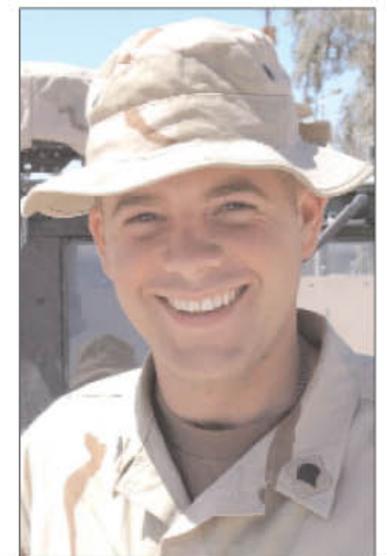
Although Scanlan attended college at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) off and on after he graduated high school in 1998, he intends to complete his degree when he returns home.

"When I get back home, I'm going to go back to college at the UNCG," he predicted. "I was majoring in International Business and working toward a minor in Spanish, because eventually I'd like to get a job with a

"We really hit the ground running."

-Spc. Jordan Scanlan

227<sup>th</sup>  
Transportation Co.



resort construction company and be some sort of resort manager outside the U.S."

Scanlan added that while he's also considering joining the Reserve Officer Training Corps at UNCG, he still has many missions to complete here, and it's not going to be easy.

"We've got pretty difficult missions over here, the long distances, the high-risks and the short notices," Scanlan said. "Whatever happens though, we're always able to keep the vehicles moving, and that's all it really takes to get the job done."

A typical mission for the transportation specialist can last anywhere from eight to twelve days and cover hundreds of miles. All that roadwork doesn't leave much time for rest and relaxation.

"We're kind of like transients: we float into a place, stay there for a day or two, and then move on to do another mission," Scanlan said with a chuckle. "We usually just pull out our cots and sleep right in the staging area of the motor pool at whatever camp our mission takes us to."

## WATTS Going On?

### Voltage Conversion Can be Shocking

By Sgt. Merrion LaSonde  
122nd MPAD

The same scenario has played itself out too many times. A Soldier takes his brand new stereo/CD player out of the box; visions of friends gathering in his trailer to listen to "tunes" dance through his head. The stereo is plugged into the wall using the power adapter he bought. He turns it on, and – "pop"...the new stereo is fried because he failed to read the directions and flip the conversion switch from 110 to 220 watts.

Power conversion of electronic equipment and appliances from the United States to European made products in Iraq has been a major problem for personnel since arriving in country.

"My buddy fried his TV when we were down in Kuwait," said Air Force Capt. Brian Nicolosi, 9<sup>th</sup> Expeditionary Air Support Operations Squadron. "He had a little transformer but he didn't read the warning label on it that said, 'don't use with TV's, VCR's, etc...' It went 'poof' and the tent filled up with white smoke."

The list of losses goes on. People have lost gaming stations, small and large appliances as well as expensive computer equipment, all for the lack of reading warning labels or basic instructions.

"Computers have a switch," said Sgt. 1st Class Dianette Oyola Morales, NCOIC, Communication and Electronics, 312<sup>th</sup> Military Intelligence Battalion, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division "If it says it will handle 110 to 220, the correct selection has to be made with the switch to be safe. Desk-top computers can usually be fixed if the wrong selection was made at the time it was plugged in, but laptops are harder to repair."

Oyola Morales said computers made after 1990 are usually equipped with power converters.

"The older the computer, the more problems people face," she said.

Another thing to keep in mind is power converters are not power conditioners. "A power converter is called a step-up and step-down converter or a transformer,"

Oyola Morales said. "It transforms 110 to 220. A voltage conditioner limits the voltage running to the equipment preventing fluctuation. The power conditioners hold the power."

Oyola Morales and her crew put an

electrical current meter in the wall and watched while the power fluctuated from 229 volts to 245 volts. "It is a big fluctuation in just a couple of seconds," she said.

Besides using battery operated equipment, another choice is to purchase a Universal Power Source box.

"A UPS is a power conditioner, but you have to check to see if they are capable of 220," Oyola Morales said. "The small travel power converter packs are strictly for small heating elements such as hair dryers, curling irons and coffee pots; not electronic equipment."

Additionally, Oyola Morales urged Soldiers to monitor extension cord thickness. If you plug a 110 cord or appliance into a 220 outlet, you will fry it.

"The thicker the cord, the more power capacity," she said. "If you plug a thin extension cord of low wattage into a higher wattage piece of equipment, the cord will begin to curl up because the wires encased in the cord are overheating. That means that extension cord is not rated for that level of amperage."

Oyola Morales warns that heating elements draw more amperage. Some small outlet converters that can be purchased have a fuse built in, but they can only handle so much amperage.

"Heaters draw 15 amps," Oyola Morales said. "Some converters can only handle 13 amps. If you plug a 15 amp heater into a 13 amp converter, the fuse will not blow up."

It will, however, catch fire, she said. The best lesson to be learned here is to read the warning labels.

Oyola Morales also warned that power in Iraq is not grounded. "Electricity will travel the easiest path and the ground acts like a sponge, soaking up excess power. If the power is not grounded; it will travel to your piece of equipment and fry it. People are cutting the ground prong off of US extension cords because they don't fit." The ground prong is the round one at the top of the triangle on the end of a three-prong plug. Cutting that ground prong off will eventually fry sensitive, digital equipment.

The bottom line with power conversion is read all the instructions and warning labels before you plug anything in the wall or a surge protector. A little precaution at first will save hundreds of dollars in "fried" equipment in the end.

Graphic by  
Spc. Marie Whitney  
122nd MPAD

110 Voltage: Standard for U.S. outlets

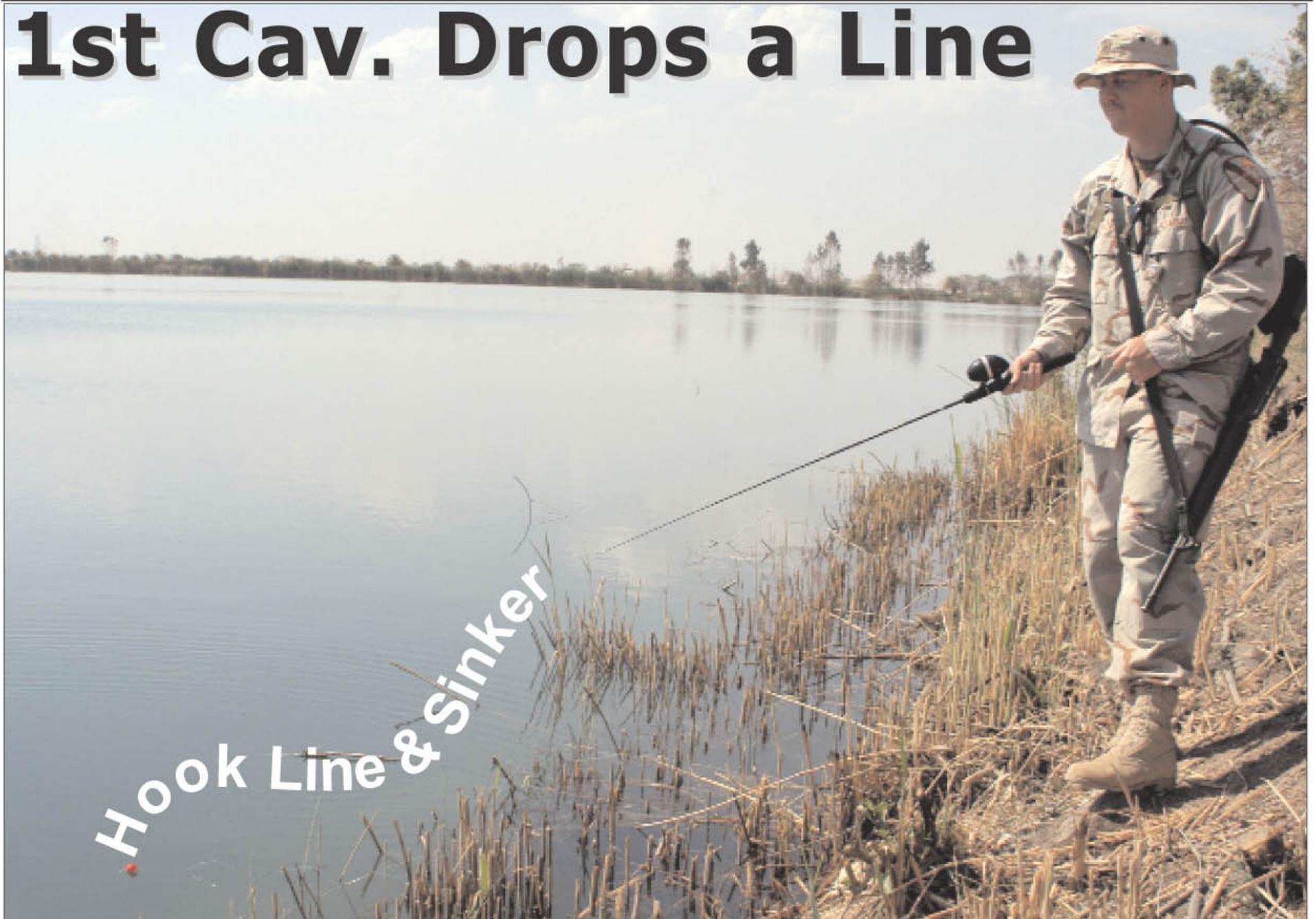
220 Voltage: Standard for outlets in Europe and Iraq

Power Conditioners: Limits the voltage to electronics and prevents fluctuation of power

Power Converter (also called a step-up, step-down or transformer) : Transforms 110 to 220 volts

Always check instructions and warning labels before plugging electronics into outlets.

## 1st Cav. Drops a Line



**(Above) Sgt. Chris DePrater fishes during his free time at Camp Victory North on a lake that was formerly used by Saddam Hussein. (Below) DePrater holds up a recently caught carp. He has caught three different types of fish so far. DePrater said they usually end up throwing the fish back into the lake.**

Photos by Spc. Bryan Kinkade, 1st Cavalry Division PAO



By Spc. Bryan Kinkade  
1st Cavalry Division PAO

"It's hard trying to figure out what they want," Sgt. Chris DePrater said, as he watched fish swim past his hook and bait in the shallow edge of the lake, not biting.

Using hot dogs, corn, bread, or whatever he can get, DePrater, a 29-year-old switching-systems operator with the 13th Signal Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, spends his time throwing hooks and bait in a lake on Camp Victory North.

Since the beginning of March, DePrater has caught more than 30 fish in the lake. But he and his friends have only caught three different types.

"We've caught some carp, bass, and no one has been able to figure out what the third one is," he said. "I also caught a turtle once, that was pretty weird."

DePrater said he usually throws the fish back in the lake, but sometimes he will give them to the Kellogg-Brown and Root contractors so they can have a fish barbecue.

After he arrived to Baghdad, his wife sent

him a cheap fishing pole so he could enjoy his hobby. While he was fishing, his reel wouldn't wind back up, so it made it difficult to bring the fish in.

"I made an order to Bass Master Catalog and got a new pole," DePrater said with excitement.

DePrater has been in the military for 10 years and has spent the last three with the First Team. Since he is a military brat, he has seen many lakes.

"My dad was in the Navy and we traveled around a lot," DePrater said. "We lived [around the world]."

DePrater once won Biggest Bass at a local base fishing tournament in 1993. He wants to continue to enter competitions whenever he can. He even sends photos of the fish he catches to fishing magazines.

But most of all, DePrater looks forward to fishing when he goes back home to Valley View, Texas, where his parents live off of Ray Roberts Lake.

"It's very relaxing to be able to get away," DePrater said.



By Spc. Andy Miller, 122nd MPAD

**Civil affairs team leader Capt. Paul McBride interacts with a local Iraqi contractor at FOB Thunder. McBride's civil affairs team is responsible for conducting civil affairs missions in the Abu Ghraib and Agar Quf districts of Baghdad.**

## CA Missions Vital

By Spc. Andy Miller  
122nd MPAD

FORWARD OPERATING BASE THUNDER— On any given day Capt. Paul McBride, a civil affairs team leader with the 425<sup>th</sup> Civil Affairs Battalion, can be found “outside the wire” working with local Iraqis. There are projects to oversee, weekly Government Information Council meetings to attend and other quick-fire missions to support the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division, as needed. On each and every one of these days, McBride sees his mission as a vital ingredient in the overall mix of activity intended to build a better Iraq.

“The bottom line, I think, as a civil affairs team is to help give people hope,” McBride said. “I thought about it a long time about what we do here, and the bottom line is that we give them hope for the present, and hope for the future.”

“They’ve had 30 years of despair,” he continued. “Presently, [Iraqis] are seeing warfare through radical elements in their own country deprive them [from] their future and deprive them of hope. We want to make sure they’ve got a future for themselves, and for their children.”

As a civil affairs team leader attached to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 12<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment, McBride is responsible for working with

“[The Iraqis] really have the future in their own hands.”

—CPT Paul McBride  
425 Civil Affairs

projects in the Abu Ghraib and Agar Quf areas of Baghdad. He and his team of eight act as an interface between the local civilians from these areas and the 2-12 Cav, which has overall responsibility for that area of operations.

Currently, McBride’s team is busy with projects as varied as refurbishing a youth center, making road repairs and providing water to outlying communities. The projects usually begin to get off the ground during weekly meetings that take place at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Thunder. Here, McBride meets with local contractors and Nahiyas (rural local advisory councils) to determine their priorities. When a common ground is found between the Iraqis and 2-12 Cav, bids are drawn up for the contracts.

Though the team is currently very active in facilitating these projects, McBride’s hope is that

the Iraqis will eventually take their future into their own hands. In his role as an advisor, McBride is also hoping to teach Iraqis about democracy.

“Part of my job is to actively assist them and mentor them in how to get things done,” he said. “We teach them how to make the decisions, what decisions need to be made, and how to make them.”

After 30 years under a dictatorial regime, many Iraqis are afraid to speak openly on the issues that are important to them, McBride noted. They’ve learned that they’d put themselves or their families in danger if they tried to get something done on their own. Now they are in a position where they have to make a plan to fix their problems, and they have to back it with action, he said.

“You know they really have the future in their own hands,” he said. “There is a vast, quiet majority that wants a peaceful, strong Iraq and a smooth transition, and expects that America will be a part of it.”

The projects prepared by McBride’s team cover a relatively small area. Abu Ghraib and Agar Quf are only two of many communities in Baghdad, a city with over 5 million residents. Still, McBride and his team believe the work they do in these communities will prove an important piece in the larger puzzle: rebuilding Iraq.

## New PX Will Open May 10 on Camp Victory North

Continued from Page 1

the BIAP store closing.

“This store’s stock will have total access to our European stock because this is a sustained area versus a contingency,” Tokar said.

Bulkier items, such as furniture, will be in a different part of the store, separated from the smaller, more commonly seen inventory items like food, hygiene products and compact discs. The store is made of two large tent-like structures that resemble BIAP’s Bob Hope Dining Facility.

“We are really looking forward to opening this store,” Schloss said. “We are putting in the look that you would find at your PX back in the states. We’re just trying to make it as much like home as possible, and we have literally hundreds of thousands of

“You guys carry rifles and we carry soap.”

Jonathan Tokar  
General Manager, AAFES Iraq



By Pfc. Al Barrus, 122nd MPAD

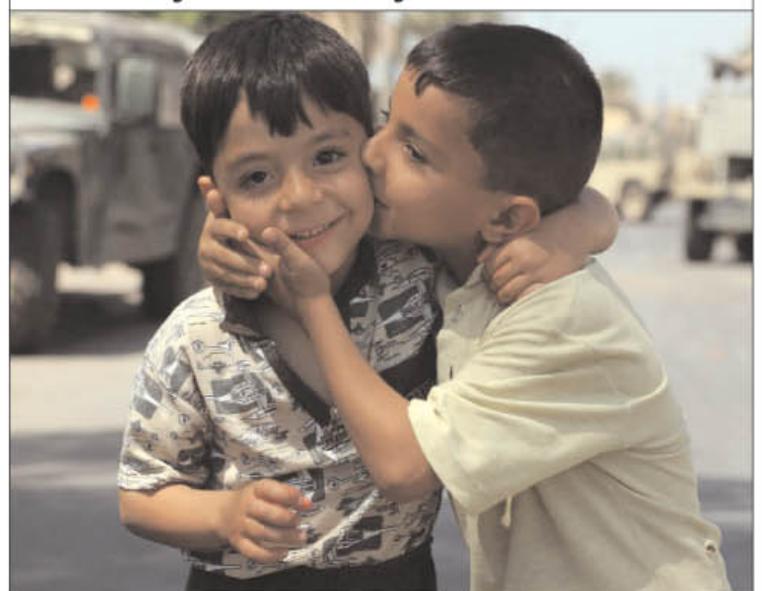
**The new 30,000-square-foot Camp Victory North PX that opens May 10 will feature two separate areas. The back area will house bulk items such as furniture.**

dollars worth of merchandise on the way.”

“I just want to say that our main goal for coming out here is to support our troops,” Tokar said, echoing the AAFES corporate slogan of ‘We Go Where You Go.’

“We’re really happy to serve along side you,” he added. “You guys carry rifles, and we carry soap.”

### ▶ Beauty is in the eye of the beholder



By Cpl. Benjamin Cossel, 122nd MPAD

**BAGHDAD, Iraq - Little boys play outside 14th of July School during a backpack donation presentation on March 28. The boys and their class mates were given book bags and school supplies.**

## A First of Many Columns: (Unless I get Fired for This One)

I was driving home from work after another long day of pre-deployment preparation back in early March, listening to National Public Radio's "All Things Considered," when I heard Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist Ellen Goodman of *The Boston Globe* talk about writing an award-winning column.

Goodman provided an anecdote during her broadcast interview. One day, she said, her young daughter had a friend over to the house to play. Ellen was in her study banging away at a computer for her next syndicated column. The playmate asked Goodman's daughter, "What exactly does your Mom *do* for a living?"

The answer: "She gets paid to give everyone her opinion."

Well, that's what this column will do, too, though I'm not a Pulitzer Prize-winning author, nor will I cover the social ills of American culture as Ellen Goodman does with such flair.

This is a sports column.

Since leaving home, I totally missed March Madness. Maybe

### Commentary

you did, too. Just to fill you in: the University of Connecticut won both the men and women's NCAA Basketball Championships. Diana Taurasi is UCONN's best player, male or female, even though the National Basketball Association won't draft her.

More recently, San Francisco Giant slugger Barry Bonds tied and surpassed his godfather, hall-of-fame center fielder Willie Mays, as the third-most prolific home run hitter of all time.

Bonds is a unique individual. Most baseball writers hate him. His hometown fans love him, and so do the fans in every other major league city because of his habit of choking in the play-offs.

Pete Rose should be in the hall of fame. He's not the most morally upstanding individual in the history of the game, but neither was the Babe (booze/babes) or Ty Cobb (bigot). Rose should be reinstated from his lifetime ban, entered into the Hall of Fame as a player, and then told

MSG Dave  
Larsen



Sports Buff

that he can never work in baseball because he bet on baseball as the manager of the Cincinnati Reds. Besides, he earned his place in Cooperstown as a player, not a coach.

It *is* baseball season, and I feel honor-bound to pick my favorites to win the whole shebang come October (or November ... or whenever the World Series finally ends these days).

First, I can tell you who **WON'T** win: my homies, the Milwaukee Brewers! You know, the team that Seattle wouldn't support in the early '70s?

I'm running out of time, so here goes: the New York Yankees win it all. The Chicago Cubs win the National League

pennant, and then become loveable losers again in the fall classic. They haven't won a World Series since 1906. I predict they go an even 100 years until they win it all again.

Hopefully this column is opinionated enough for you. My boss has told me that I can't write a sports column without mentioning Seattle (for the CG to read - did it, sir!) and boxing, because he used to be a boxer and promoter.

OK, here goes: the current state of professional boxing stinks. I wouldn't give any pay-per-view \$20 to see most of the stiff promoters pass off as title contenders now.

I'm pretty unimpressed with the sport these days (sir!).

I (we) encourage your opinions. Send your cards, letters and fan mail to: [david.j.larsen@us.army.mil](mailto:david.j.larsen@us.army.mil). We will always consider printing letters to the editor, or letters to this column. Stay tuned. (I told you I was no Pulitzer Prize winner!).



### Major League Baseball Standings as of 04/18/04

#### American League

##### East Division

|           | W | L | Pct  | GB  |
|-----------|---|---|------|-----|
| Baltimore | 7 | 4 | .636 | -   |
| Boston    | 6 | 5 | .545 | 1   |
| New York  | 6 | 6 | .500 | 1.5 |
| Tampa Bay | 5 | 6 | .455 | 2   |
| Toronto   | 3 | 9 | .250 | 4.5 |

##### Central Division

|             | W | L | Pct  | GB  |
|-------------|---|---|------|-----|
| Minnesota   | 8 | 4 | .667 | -   |
| Chicago     | 8 | 4 | .667 | -   |
| Detroit     | 7 | 5 | .583 | 1   |
| Cleveland   | 5 | 8 | .385 | 3.5 |
| Kansas City | 4 | 8 | .333 | 4   |

##### West Division

|         | W | L | Pct  | GB  |
|---------|---|---|------|-----|
| Oakland | 7 | 4 | .636 | -   |
| Anaheim | 7 | 5 | .583 | .5  |
| Texas   | 6 | 7 | .462 | 2   |
| Seattle | 4 | 8 | .333 | 3.5 |

#### National League

##### East Division

|              | W | L  | Pct  | GB  |
|--------------|---|----|------|-----|
| Florida      | 8 | 4  | .667 | -   |
| Atlanta      | 7 | 5  | .583 | 1   |
| Philadelphia | 5 | 6  | .455 | 1.5 |
| New York     | 5 | 7  | .417 | 3   |
| Montreal     | 2 | 10 | .167 | 6   |

##### Central Division

|            | W | L | Pct  | GB  |
|------------|---|---|------|-----|
| Houston    | 9 | 4 | .692 | -   |
| Cincinnati | 7 | 4 | .636 | 1   |
| Pittsburgh | 7 | 5 | .583 | 1.5 |
| Chicago    | 6 | 6 | .500 | 2.5 |
| St. Louis  | 6 | 7 | .462 | 3   |
| Milwaukee  | 6 | 8 | .429 | 3.5 |

##### West Division

|               | W | L | Pct  | GB |
|---------------|---|---|------|----|
| Los Angeles   | 9 | 3 | .750 | -  |
| San Diego     | 6 | 6 | .500 | 3  |
| Colorado      | 5 | 7 | .455 | 4  |
| San Francisco | 5 | 7 | .417 | 4  |
| Arizona       | 4 | 8 | .333 | 5  |

**Glossary:** **W:** Wins, **L:** Losses, **PCT:** Winning percentages, **GB:** Games back,



(Above) Spc. Lamika Mitchell shoots the basketball at the hoop while Pvt. Shawntay Williams tries to block her shot.

(Right) Spc. Jason Wright, Spc. Lamika Mitchell, and Pvt. Shawntay Williams all from 15th FSB play a little B-Ball on their time off. The Soldiers make sure to get into some basketball before it is time to don all their protective gear for the night.

