



# Ironhorse Desert News

## Operation Iraqi Freedom



6 July 2003

*“Steadfast & Loyal”*

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By 4<sup>th</sup> ID PAO

Baqubah, Iraq— Brigade combat teams of the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division conducted a series of simultaneous, coordinated raids in the early morning hours of June 29, signaling the start of Operation Sidewinder. It is the third in a series of operations, which began with Peninsula Strike and Desert Scorpion.

MG Raymond Odierno, Commander of 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division and Task Force Ironhorse, said the operations have focused on an area in central Iraq along the Tigris River from Bayji to Baghdad. A number of paramilitary forces suspected of conducting recent attacks on coalition forces are believed to be located within the 70-mile area.

“Our goal is to destroy or neutralize subversive elements who are trying to disrupt coalition efforts and target former high level regime leadership, Wahabi terrorists, potential WMD sites and weapons caches,” Odierno said.

Operation Sidewinder employed combined arms operations with overwhelming firepower to accomplish the objective. Within a four-day period, Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs) conducted over 60 pre-dawn raids leading to hundreds of arrests. Many of those detained were high-ranking members of Saddam’s Ba’ath Party and Fedayeen leaders. The sweeps also turned up weapons, ammunition, military equipment, documents and other contraband items.

Operation Sidewinder sends a strong and clear message about the resolve of coalition forces to root out the old regime and make Iraq safe for its citizens.



An Abrams tank, seen through a camera’s night vision device, waits in the early dawn during a recent raid.



Poised and ready to move in. Scenes like this played out across the Task Force Ironhorse area of operations during operations aimed at rooting out Saddam loyalists.



Soldiers prepare ammunition seized during by coalition forces for disposal.



Soldiers move into position during a raid on a farmhouse.

# Task Force News



Left: SSG Scott Johnson, A. Company, 148<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion, examines sandal tracks near a swamp. Johnson is part of the Quick Reaction Force on FOB Ironhorse.

Above: SPC Rebecca Vande Hay, (L) and PVT Fatimah Leday, both assigned to the 104<sup>th</sup> Military Intelligence Company, look for infiltrators.

By MSG Dave Johnson

TIKRIT, Iraq -- Night falls and soldiers lay restless, covered in perspiration on their cots from the extreme heat. Late into the night, just as soldiers approach sleep's oasis, they're awakened by a loud blast. It's time for SSG Scott Johnson to launch the Camp Ironhorse Quick Reactionary Force into action.

Quick is the operative word for the nocturnal Johnson, an Ohio National Guard soldier from A Company, 148<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion. Not only must he assemble his team and move to the impact area within five minutes, but he must also prepare them during nightly rapid-fire training sessions.

The QRF soldiers come from a myriad of jobs within the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, and perform the job for one week. "I take what they give me," said Johnson. "Then I work with them and mold them into a team." Because the QRF soldiers are only on duty for a short time, turnover is constant, retraining continual. Johnson trains everyone and will not send any soldier out unprepared.

"Some soldiers report in a little bit apprehensive, so I work with them longer," said Johnson. "They may be from support or administrative jobs and aren't used to dealing with opposition forces."

Others arrive ready to rock and roll. Johnson recalled one such soldier from a few weeks prior. "One young specialist showed up with a SAW (Squad-Assisted Weapon) and 500 rounds. She was ready to lock and cock. I wish I could get her permanently assigned to the squad."

The overwhelming majority of soldiers come with a strong tactical background because of the training they received before they deployed to Iraq.

"Our unit trained us thoroughly before we deployed," said PVT Fatimah Leday, a signal specialist with the 104<sup>th</sup> Military Intelligence Company. "When I came on the QRF, all that training came in handy."

Johnson's teaching of infantry squad tactics and training reinforces what they were taught. "SSG Johnson trains us for everything we might see out here," said SPC Rebecca L. Vande Hey, a mechanic with the 104<sup>th</sup>. "His training program is pretty accurate." The agenda prepares soldiers for the three-phase QRF detail.

Each shift consists of the guard towers, slow reaction force (SRF) and the QRF. Phase one is perimeter guard.

"Soldiers in each tower are the eyes that see everything that goes on outside the compound," Johnson said.

Soldiers remain vigilant while on duty and report mortar rounds and rocket-propelled grenades fired at the compound. They also report Iraqis trying to infiltrate the complex.

"Usually," said Johnson, "we'll see guys trying to scale the walls, crawl through the swamp or just hang around looking at us. We take everything serious - it could be a guy preparing to conduct a hit-and-run."

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# Task Force News

## QRF, FROM PAGE 2

"Something goes on here every night," said Johnson. "Every single night," he exclaimed. "No exceptions. These soldiers out here are under the gun, and they perform admirably." When a soldier calls in that he has seen movement outside his guard tower, the QRF portion kicks in.

"Five minutes," said Johnson. "We have five minutes to get our gear on and get to the location where the trouble is."

Soldiers use squad tactics when the QRF looks for an assailant inside the compound. Vande Hey recalled her adrenaline rush one night when the QRF was put into action. "We loaded into the Humvee," she said, "then went to the building to look for a man carrying a black bag. When we cleared the building, all we found was a dog."

"My squad is my weapon," said Johnson. "When you train your squad right, that's the best weapon you can have out here."

Johnson stresses teamwork that focuses on safety. No members of the QRF have been injured under his tutelage. The team also patrols the compound a couple times per week. "Patrolling the compound gives us a presence so they know we're here," said Johnson.

The QRF performs many fast-paced force protection measures, but soldiers also have scheduled down time. Between the guard tower shifts and the fast-paced action of the QRF, is a slow time that allows the members to relax a little bit. During SRF, soldiers can do laundry or read a book before they return to the accelerated QRF segment.

Under the watchful eyes of the QRF, soldiers at FOB Ironhorse are being protected throughout the night.



*By Task Force Ironhorse PAO*

MEH-ZEM, IRAQ - It started with an offer of tea and ended with a gesture of trust between new friends.

A group of combat engineers from 223<sup>rd</sup> Engineer Battalion had tea with Sheik Khalid Amin, the local mayor of Meh-Zem, a small village on the outskirts of Tikrit. After tea, they began talking about the area's health care needs.

"What we need here is a local clinic so that our villagers can seek treatment for their medical needs," said the Sheik through an interpreter. "We have no one trained locally in basic health care and our main concern is getting treatment to the children in this area."

The group learned that approximately 120 families living in Meh-Zem didn't have access to a health care clinic to meet even their basic medical needs. That's when they saw an opportunity to return the hospitality of their host. The soldiers did what soldiers do best; they took immediate and decisive action.

"As a gesture of good will today we treated around twenty people, mostly children with eye infections," said 1LT John Paul, a Physicians Assistant with the 223<sup>rd</sup> Engineer Battalion.

"As we are transitioning from combat operations to security operations, it is essential to assess the local health care system, so that we can help the Iraqi people to help themselves," said Paul. The best way to provide medical care is to help train local Iraqis in basic health care techniques such as preventive medicine, according to Paul. To accomplish this Paul plans to start teaching basic health care and preventive medicine to the locals so that they will be able to set up a health clinic.

The soldiers efforts' were rewarded by smiles of thanks and by their host—and friend.

"It is a beautiful thing for you to come here and treat the children," said the local mayor, Sheik Khalid Amin.



*Left:* 1LT John Paul, a physician's assistant assigned to 223<sup>rd</sup> Engineer Battalion, examines a child from the village of Meh-Zem, Iraq.

# Task Force News

by PFC Jason Phillips

Ad-Duluiyah is a small town about 60 miles north of Baghdad. It has one main street lined by vendor stands, butcher shops, stores and run down cafés. Small residential neighborhoods made up of modest dwellings surround the main street. It doesn't seem like a town that would be the center of anything.

In early June, Ad-Duluiyah was the center of Operation Peninsula Strike. The 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, along with several attached units, spearheaded the operation which led to the arrest of hundreds of individuals suspected of being Ba'ath party loyalists or paramilitary members.

Soldiers of the 64<sup>th</sup> Military Police Company, along with elements from the 411<sup>th</sup> and 401<sup>st</sup> MP Companies, were the first soldiers to enter the town when Operation Peninsula Strike began and they met with fierce small arms fire, mortar attacks and RPGs. When the operation concluded, most of the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division elements departed the town, but the 64<sup>th</sup> MP Company stayed behind.

Since June 4, soldiers of the 64<sup>th</sup> MP Company have been conducting joint patrols Ad-Duluiyah with local police. The MPs who were met less than a month ago with viscous fire, are now greeted by townspeople with smiles and cheers.

The goal of the joint patrols are aimed at establishing the authority and credibility of the local police, and at providing a safe environment for the citizens, said CPT Juan Nava, commander, 64<sup>th</sup> MP Company. Establishing a good relationship with local police was the first step of their success in Ad-Duluiyah, he said.

"Initially, they were very afraid, because Operation Peninsula Strike was very shocking," said Nava. "But we've established a good relationship with police because of our common backgrounds as police officers. We've showed them that we're working towards a common goal – to make a safe and secure environment in the town."

Showing their human side has been an important part of building trust between the MPs and local police, said Nava. "We tell them that we're people, that we have families and would like to be home with them," he said. "I show them pictures of my sons and my wife and they can relate to that and see that I'm not an evil infidel – I'm a person," Nava said.

Soldiers of the 64<sup>th</sup> Military Police Company conduct day and night patrols on foot and in vehicles with the local police. It has been important to establish a regular law enforcement routine for the police, said SSG Craig Arnold, military police officer, 64<sup>th</sup> MP Company.

"Sometimes they need a little prodding to get out there and patrol," he said. "It looks like they haven't worked in awhile, or that somebody else did their work for them." Somebody else did do their work for them under Saddam Hussein's regime. The Iraqi Army and security forces, such as the Fedayeen Saddam, provided iron-fisted law enforcement in Ad-Duluiyah, making the police force virtually useless, according to Nava. Now that Hussein's regime has fallen, law enforcement is in the hands of the local police.

"We have given them a lot of responsibility and authority," said Nava. "We're showing them how to conduct law enforcement patrols, and showing them how to serve their people and make the safety and security of the town their top priority." Working along side the local police has also helped to establish trust with the local people, he said.

"Our MPs are receiving a more positive response in town," said Nava. "People see us walking with the police, not leading them, not pushing them along, but along side them. The trust that this has established has opened communication that really has helped."

The MPs on patrol have noticed the changing attitudes of people on the streets and feel good about the impact they are having in the town.

"When we first got here, people looked at us like 'What are you doing here?'" said PFC. Beonka Brooks, military police officer, 64<sup>th</sup> MP Company. "Now they see us and smile, speak to us and give us the thumbs up. Everyday they seem to be happier to see us," Brooks said.



SPC Joshua Gareis, 64<sup>th</sup>MP Co., walks a joint patrol with an Iraqi police officer, while a local businessman (center) tags along.



Two local policemen listen as SPC Joshua Gareis, 64<sup>th</sup> MP Co., explains how to begin an accident scene investigation.

# Unit Spot Light

## 4<sup>th</sup> ID Motor Pool

By SPC Joseph Norton

TIKRIT, Iraq – It's the middle of the afternoon and another scorching day at in Tikrit, Iraq. A soldier jumps into a Humvee and drives to the supply area to pick up rations.

Less than a mile down the road there's a problem; the engine sputters and dies and the soldier's mission comes to a halt.



PFC Charles Mitchell changes a tire. Mitchell is a mechanic assigned to the 4<sup>th</sup> ID Motor Pool.



SPC Daniel Smith operates a tow truck. Smith and the other 4<sup>th</sup> ID Motor Pool mechanics work hard to keep vehicles running smoothly.

That's when the mechanical experts at the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division Motor Pool come in. Their job is to find out what happened, make the repairs and get the soldier back on mission.

"We support the whole 4<sup>th</sup> ID right here," said PFC Charles Mitchell, 4<sup>th</sup> ID motor pool mechanic. "There are other motor pools, but we pull the work load for Camp Ironhorse. Any vehicle that's come in, we've fixed and sent back on its way."

The mechanics at the 4<sup>th</sup> ID Motor Pool repair everything from a flat tire to an overheated engine. They also keep the fuel point equipped and running at all times, so soldiers can get fuel whenever they need it.

The most common problem the mechanics face in Iraq has to do with tires. The environment in Iraq has a big impact on tires and vehicles.

"The tires are wearing down real fast," said Spc. Rachel Stephens, motor pool mechanic.

Mechanic SPC Daniel Smith, agreed with Stephens, "The sand, heat, and pavement just wear out the tires real fast."

SSG Timothy Conger is the NCOIC of the fuel point. He said the terrain also presents a challenge to vehicles. Conger said the mechanics have had to change out braking spindles because soldiers drive over rocks which can ricochet from the tires and hit a brake caliper."

"The heat doesn't help any on the engine, neither does all the sand blowing around," said Conger. "We've had to deal with engines blowing head gaskets because the engines get hot and sand clogs up the air filters."

SGT Michael Boge, a generator shop NCO, concurred with Conger. "A big problem we see is with the air filters, because all the dust and dirt gets through the air filter and into the engines. Also, the heat out here boils the oil, and the engines overheat," Boge said.

The mechanics advise operators to do a thorough PMCS, or Preventive Maintenance Checks and Services, at least twice a week. They also suggest having a dedicated driver for each vehicle. This gives one person "ownership" of the vehicle and usually means a well-maintained vehicle, since the driver has a long-term "investment" in it. The mechanics also encourage operators to check with the motor pool regularly to see if parts have arrived.

The mechanics work hard, but are proud of what they do and are ready to stay here for as long as their country needs them.

"As long as we get MRE's and water, we can hold up until they tell us we can go home," said Conger. Boge agreed, saying, "We can stay out here indefinitely. As long as we have parts, we can function as long as needed."

While working and living together during a deployment can be a challenge, the mechanics downplay any hardships they've faced.

"We've really come together; we've really bonded, gotten to know each other a lot better," said SGT Maritza. Hunt. "We're closer than we were. We work well together; we have good teamwork."

That sense of teamwork and a "can do" attitude make the motor pool an invaluable asset to the task force. Whenever a vehicle needs repair, the motor pool staff is always ready to do what ever it takes to get it operational again—that sometimes includes using a bit of creativity.

"We might have to use a little bit of duct tape, or even a coat hanger to make something work, just to get it back here so we can fix it. It may take a few days because we have to wait to get parts, but these troops work hard," said Conger.

It's that hard work and professionalism demonstrated daily by the soldiers of the HHC 4ID motor pool that keep Ironhorse vehicles up and running.

# Task Force News



By MSG Debra Bingham

TIKRIT, IRAQ- Military and civilians deployed as part of Task Force Ironhorse in Tikrit, Iraq, celebrated the 4th of July in Saddam's former backyard.

A backyard filled with palaces, lakes and fig trees, but with a distinctly American "feel" on this day as revelers did their best to make it seem a bit more like home.

Some spent the day taking part in a variety of sports competitions like basketball, volleyball, and horseshoes, while others took a break from the 100-degree temperatures by splashing around in one of the palace's indoor pools. Others stood on the reed-lined banks on a man-made lake, casting a fishing line into the water.

Volunteered manned a half dozen barbeque grills and cooked steaks, wurst, pork chops and the traditional hotdogs and hamburgers throughout the day. For dessert soldiers dined on cake baked in Baghdad. The cake was iced with a slightly misspelled, but well-intended wish, for a "Happy Force of July."

The celebration topped off with an evening concert performed by "Prime Movers," a group made up of soldiers from the 4th ID band. They stirred the crowd with a variety of popular and traditional favorites, and got concert-goers on their feet with Lee Greenwood's "I'm Proud to be an American."

Midway through the concert, F-15 fighter jets flying at about 1000 feet lit up the skies with blazing afterburners, dropping a "firework" display of flares.

During the concert intermission, the audience enjoyed a version of the TV show "American Idol," with three of the division's SGMs serving as judges. The competition included several singers, a comedy act and a dance routine. When all the votes were tallied, CPL Joe Hernandez, from Fort Hood's 230<sup>th</sup> Finance Group, garnered the rousing support of the crowd and a nod from the judges. Hernandez played acoustical guitar and sang a heartfelt "I Only Want to be With You."

As the crowd of about 500 gathered up their weapons, helmets and other gear and headed to their cots, a crescent moon illuminated the night with shadows of fig trees. For a few hours the desert seemed like home.



*Clockwise from top:*

- A cake wishes all "Congratulations for Force of July"
- SGT Keshia Barnes (l) and SSG Laquita Basnight sing and SGT Jasan Seip plays guitar during the concert.
- MG Raymond Odierno, Cdr 4ID, chats with SFC Tyrone Hurdle, 411<sup>th</sup> MP Co., who is cooking steaks.
- CPL Hernandez, 230<sup>th</sup> Finance Bn, wins "American Idol" talent competition.
- Soldiers enjoy a game of volleyball at the Soldiers' Inn R & R Center
- A proud father and a patriot, SPC Lazerick Gaither, 223<sup>rd</sup> Eng Bn, enjoys the concert.

**IRAQ**-- Saddam Hussein is alive and "among Iraqis" and will direct more attacks on Americans, according to an audiotape purported to contain the voice of the deposed Iraqi leader that aired Friday on Arab satellite network Al Jazeera. The tape has not yet been authenticated. On the tape, Saddam claims he gave up power but refuses to submit to U.S. threats. "I am still present in Iraq along with a group of (former Iraqi) leaders," says the voice on the tape. The voice also says the message was recorded June 14, and that he is with a "comrade" in Iraq. The CIA is reviewing the tape, a U.S. intelligence official said Friday. "We can't confirm its authenticity," the official said. "It's not clear when it was done

**BLANTYRE, Malawi** — At least 200 Muslims protested in the streets of Malawi's capital Saturday, threatening to disrupt next year's elections if five suspected Al Qaeda militants taken from the country by the United States are not returned.

#### **NBA Draft:**

1. Cleveland Cavaliers – LeBron James (6'8"), St. Mary/St. Vincent H.S. (Ohio)
2. Detroit Pistons (via Memphis) – Darko Milicic (7'), Serbia
3. Denver Nuggets – Carmelo Anthony (6'7"), Syracuse (Fr.)
4. Toronto Raptors – Chris Bosh (6'11"), Georgia Tech (Fr.)
5. Miami Heat – Dwayne Wade (6'5"), Marquette (Jr.)
6. Los Angeles Clippers – Chris Kaman (7'), Central Michigan (Jr.)
7. Chicago Bulls – Kirk Hinrich (6'4"), Kansas (Sr.)
8. Milwaukee Bucks (via Atlanta) – T.J. Ford (6'), Texas (So.)
9. New York Knicks – Michael Sweetney (6'8"), Georgetown (Jr.)
10. Washington Wizards – Jarvis Hayes (6'7"), Georgia (Jr.)
11. Golden State Warriors – Micokeal Piektrus (6'6"), France
12. Seattle Sonics – Nick Collison (6'9"), Kansas (Sr.)
13. Memphis Grizzlies (via Houston) – Marcus Banks (6'2"), UNLV (Sr.)
14. Seattle Sonics (via Milwaukee) – Luke Ridnour (6'2"), Oregon (Sr.)
15. Orlando Magic – Reece Gaines (6'6"), Louisville (Sr.)

## News Briefs

**TUCSON, Ariz.** — A wildfire tore through Ponderosa pine and brush in an Arizona national forest, about 250 miles north of another blaze that has destroyed more than 300 mountaintop homes and burned six cabins as it jumped into a new subdivision. The new wildfire erupted Saturday night in the Prescott National Forest, forcing the evacuation of about 100 homes, said forest spokesman Steve Sams.

**WASHINGTON**—President Bush says he will not accept any outcome that allows Liberian President Charles Taylor, a one-time warlord wanted on war crimes charges, to remain in power in his embattled country. African leaders have asked Bush to decide whether to send American troops to help bring stability to Liberia before he departs Monday for his trip to the continent. The White House gave no indication of a timetable for a presidential decision, although it said Bush did not feel bound by the deadline.

**MONROVIA, Liberia**-- Liberian President Charles Taylor said Friday he will step down once international peacekeeping troops are in his war-torn country. "Before I transit, I think it is important that peacekeepers be present," he told a meeting of Liberian clerics. Peacekeepers are needed to establish law and order, he said. The United States is considering sending U.S. troops to the county to lead a peacekeeping force.

**QUETTA, Pakistan** – A suicide attack on a packed mosque killed as many as 47 people Friday, sending enraged Shiite Muslims on a rampage through this southwestern city. The government called in troops and imposed a curfew to try to quell the violence. Scores more were wounded in one of the bloodiest attacks in a long series of assaults on the country's Shiite Muslim minority.

**CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla.** - The launch of the latest Mars rover, delayed several times in the past two weeks, has been pushed back again. NASA officials said late Saturday that battery problems forced the cancellation of Sunday night's planned launch of the rover Opportunity. NASA wants to try again Monday night

## SPORTS ZONE

**BASKETBALL**-- After claims of threats and fearing for their lives, a missing Baylor basketball player and his roommate bought three guns and took target practice on a rural property outside Waco, the landowner says. Patrick Dennehy was last heard from almost three weeks ago. His sport utility vehicle was later found abandoned without its license plates in a Virginia Beach, Va., parking lot.

**GOLF** -- A squirrel making a mad dash across the sixth green darted at Tiger Woods' ball, sprinted away from it and then finally took a flying leap over it. It's the closest anyone got to Woods all day. Woods shot a 7-under 65 Saturday in the 100th Western Open, setting the 54-hole tournament record at 18-under 198. That breaks by three strokes the mark set by Sam Snead in 1949, and matched by six others.

**BASEBALL**-- The Boston Red Sox hit a record seven home runs off the New York Yankees -- and those weren't the only things flying into the stands. David Wells tossed his glove and hat into the seats after getting tagged as the Red Sox played their own version of the Boston pops on the Fourth of July, powering past New York 10-3 Friday. Switch-hitter Bill Mueller homered from both sides of the plate, Jason Varitek and David Ortiz each homered twice and Manny Ramirez also connected. All of Boston's runs came on homers, making it easy for Derek Lowe (10-3) to win his career-high seventh straight decision

**TENNIS** — Serena Williams earned a bittersweet Wimbledon title Saturday by beating her ailing sister. With Venus Williams battling an abdominal strain she aggravated in the semifinals, Serena won 4-6, 6-4, 6-2, earning her sixth Grand Slam championship and her second in a row at Wimbledon

# Change of Command



LTC Richard Evans, incoming commander of the 404<sup>th</sup> Aviation Support Battalion, receives the unit colors during a change of command ceremony at Camp Speicher. The departing cdr was LTC Alan Stull.



LTC Glen Grothe, incoming commander of 180<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion, receives the unit colors during a change of command ceremony. The departing commander was LTC David Cotter.



LTC Christopher Wicker, incoming commander for 544<sup>th</sup> Maintenance Battalion receives the unit colors during a change of command ceremony. The departing commander was LTC Ricky Sherman.



## Local Happenings

### Religious Services Sunday

Protestant - 9:30 a.m.  
LDS- Noon - DFAC  
Gospel- 11:00 a.m.  
Catholic- 1:00 p.m.

### Friday

Jewish- 7:30 p.m.  
Muslim 12:25 p.m.

### Wednesday

Prayer & Praise  
6:30 p.m.  
Bible Study  
7:00 p.m.

### Soldiers' Inn Movies



7 July Next Friday  
8 July Conair.  
9 July Money Talks  
10 July 15 Minutes  
11 July As Good as it Gets  
12 July Invincible  
13 July Say Nothing  
14 July One Hour Photo Shows Begin at 8:00 p.m.

### 449<sup>th</sup> Mail Room Hours

Monday-Friday  
9:00-Noon & 3:00-6:00  
Saturday  
3:00 to 6:00 p.m.  
Sundays  
9:00 to Noon.  
Located next to the  
HHC, 4<sup>th</sup> ID warehouse

### 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division Band Performances

Mon. - Jazz 5:45-6:30 p.m.  
Wed. - Brass 6-7 p.m.  
Fri. - Variety 6:30-7:45 p.m.  
*at Soldiers' Inn*