



Ironhorse Desert News

Operation Iraqi Freedom



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“Steadfast & Loyal”

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GEN John Keane, Acting Army Chief of Staff, pins a Purple Heart on the uniform of SFC David White, SGT Charles Meyers stands next in line to receive his. Both soldiers are assigned to 1-22 Infantry Battalion, 4th Infantry Division.



The Purple Heart was presented to 11 soldiers from 1-22 Infantry Bn. and one soldier from the 4th Forward Support Bn. on July 6:

Front (l to r): SFC David White, SPC Hector Lopez, PFC Sergio Cardenas, SPC Juan Cabral, SFC Joseph Walden, SGT Charles Meyers, and SPC Joshua Whitson.

Back: SSG Roger Garcia, SSG James Parker, SPC William Velez, SPC Devon Pierce and SSG John Lewis.

By MSG Debra Bingham

TIKRIT, IRAQ--One soldier was making a phone call after a long duty day, one was riding in a vehicle just a few feet away from entering a military complex, and another was getting ready to attack an enemy position.

Although their stories are different, they share a common bond represented by the heart-shaped medal pinned onto their uniforms. It's a medal that will be briefly worn before being carefully removed and placed inside a case. But it will never be far away; memories and scars serve as reminders of the sacrifice required to wear it. These soldiers have earned the Purple Heart.

The Purple Heart is not an award soldiers actively seek, but one clearly treasured by the 12 soldiers who stood proudly in one of Saddam Hussein's marble-pillared palaces in Tikrit, Iraq. GEN John Keane, Acting Chief of Staff of the Army, placed the medal on their uniforms. Sweat ran down the soldiers' faces, some wore uniforms marked with salt-stains; a testament of the excruciating heat and daily physical demands they face. The general spoke briefly with each soldier, asking them about the events that led to the award. All of them had a story.

SPC Juan Cabral, assigned to the 4th Forward Support Battalion from Fort Hood, Texas, went to the Civilian Military Integration Center (CMIC) in downtown Tikrit to make a phone call. The 24-year old light wheeled mechanic from Ogden, Utah, had his phone call interrupted when a rocket propelled grenade slammed into the building. Cabral suffered shrapnel wounds in his left arm and back.

SFC David White and his Bradley Fighting Vehicle crew from 1-22 Infantry Battalion, Fort Hood, Texas, had finished patrol duty and were driving along a stretch of road they'd traveled many times before when they hit a land mine. "We were 200 meters from the gate to K-2 Airfield in Bayji, Iraq," White said. "I saw a big flash and the vehicle came to a stop," the 34-year old infantryman from New Hampshire recalled. White said his military training helped him get control of a chaotic situation. Despite his own bruises and cuts, White pulled the badly injured driver out of the vehicle, began treating him, and established security to prevent an ambush.

Operating as part of a Quick Reaction Force near the village of Imam Mukarrim, Iraq, SSG Roger Garcia, was inside a Bradley being fired on by the enemy. The infantry dismount squad leader, also with 1-22 Infantry, said his Bradley was moving into position when it hit treacherous terrain and overturned.

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PURPLE HEARTS, FROM PAGE 1

Garcia injured his side, ribs and back. "It happened so fast, I didn't know what was going to happen to me," said the native of San Antonio, Texas.

The common bond linking Cabral, White and Garcia with other soldiers earning the Purple Heart is that they willingly faced and survived the constant hazards that accompany the profession of soldiering.

"Being a soldier is all about doing stuff that other people can't do and doing stuff that maybe you don't even want to do, but that's what this lifestyle is. Other people are all about taking care of themselves, we're all about taking care of one another," Keane said.

As for the Purple Heart, White expressed a sentiment echoed by his peers. "It's a good thing to have I guess, but I never wanted it," he said.



The plant at Ba'Qubah is one of the few plants to have a laboratory for testing the quality of water



COL Robert Nicholson, 4th Infantry Division Engineer, speaks with the water treatment facility manager about the needs of his plant

Story by SSG Craig Pickett

BA'QUBAH, IRAQ—Amidst the whirl of numerous water pumps, COL Robert Nicholson and his team of engineers from Task Force Ironhorse began their inspection of a water treatment facility in Ba'Qubah, Iraq. They were under the watchful eye of the plant manager and a few other employees.

Earlier in the week a civil affairs team identified the location of the plant and did an initial assessment. During Nicholson's visit the division engineers performed a deliberate assessment and identified specific areas where the facility needs improvement.

This is the beginning process of rebuilding Iraq ; plant-by-plant, and town-by-town. The team of engineers will travel through all three provinces Task Force Ironhorse is responsible for. They will also conduct assessments on power stations, roads, bridges and sewage treatment plants. Their assessments will help determine the level of assistance required at each site. Once all facilities are inspected, they will make a list and give priority to sites having the greatest impact on the area and population. Other sites may get advice or suggestions from the engineers.

"We'll encourage them to fix the problems themselves," said Nicholson. "Often times it is just a matter of putting the power people in touch with the water people."

Nicholson has found that many facilities do not communicate with other nearby facilities. For instance, one plant may have tons of pipes and a limited supply of chlorine, while another may have the opposite, but they never talk to each other.

In the case of the water plant at Ba'Qubah, CPT David Acker, an environmental and civil engineer, said it was in pretty good condition. "It's one of the better ones I've looked at," said Acker. "Their problem was with the chlorination process."

Acker's recommendation is to replace or repair their internal chlorination system. With that repair, he feels the water quality would be close to U.S. standards. Throughout the visit the plant manager was close on the heels of the inspectors. Not apprehensive about what they may find, but eager to help and answer questions.

"He was very friendly and cordial," said Acker. "That has been the case across the country as far as I've seen. They want their systems fixed and understand we are here to help."

As the engineers leave Ba'Qubah and head back to base camp, they are already planning for the next day's assessments and the rebuilding of Iraq. The water plant is only one stop of many in this town.

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Iraqi engineers guide a train carrying supplies into the station.



Workers load a container onto a railcar.

MAJ Howard Geck, a Civil Affairs Officer for 64th CSG, translates instructions to Iraqi train station workers.



By MSG Dave Johnson

BAYJI, IRAQ –Soldiers know how important supply lines are. When those lines are down, necessary items like equipment, food, water and mail come to a screeching halt. When it's all said and done, the supply and logistics folks help keep the Army running. The 4th Infantry Division enhanced its capacity to receive bulk supplies when the railhead in Bayji opened for business.

"Anytime you add assets in transportation that is a supply multiplier," said SGM Osvarado Vazquez, the G4 supply and services SGM for 4th Infantry Division. "We'll get more supplies in now."

The rail station re-opened thanks to the combined efforts of the 4th ID transportation office and the 64th Corps Support Group. "The 64th is the link in the supply chain between 4th ID units and the theatre," said Vazquez. Now the rail station can be used to transport American military vans carrying supplies.

"This was a total team effort," said MAJ Mark Glowacki, the support operations transportation officer for the 64th CSG. "All the 4th ID's transportation, loading and force protection, in concert with the 64th's offloading the train, made this such a great team effort," he said.

Soldiers will soon see the benefits of the rail operation according to MAJ Christopher Croft, Division Transportation Officer for 4th ID.

"This is just a small example of the potential to support military operations when you bring all the transportation assets together. We received five bottles of water per soldier for the entire task force of over 33 thousand personnel," Croft said.

The team effort involved many Taskforce Ironhorse units. The 345th Rear Area Operations Center performed the initial reconnaissance of the rail station. According to 1LT Sean Sherwood, operations officer for the 345th, once the station was surveyed for safety, security and feasibility, the force protection elements were positioned. The 345th is a V Corps and Taskforce Ironhorse asset.

Soldiers from the 1-68th and 3-66th Armor Battalions, 4th ID, provided security for the site. According to SSG Johnnie Gabbert, a quick reaction force non-commissioned officer, 3-66th Armor, his unit found unexploded ordnance only four kilometers from the rail station. They destroyed the UXO and security forces began patrolling the area to prevent looting. This improved security allowed the DTO to push forward to open accessibility for rail cargo.

With security under control, movement of supplies began. Soldiers and equipment from the 180th Transportation Battalion, from Fort Hood, provided the container handling equipment and trucks needed to offload and transport mil vans back to the 64th's area of operation.

There have been some challenges with rail operations according to Glowacki. One of them was dealing with the way the Iraqis' control movement and change rails. The train station's computers and electronic equipment were looted, so there is no computerized movement control of the trains. They now use a manual operation or token system dating back to old U.S. railroad history.

"Each engineer has to pass the token -- like a baton for a track runner on a relay team—to indicate the track is clear and another train is not on it coming toward you," Glowacki explained.

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RAIL, FROM PAGE 3

Members of the 588th Movement Control Team are now helping track and control transportation movement. According to 1LT Larry Lara, commander of the 588th, all convoys and movement within the taskforce are tracked by the MCT.

"We issue transportation movement credits," said PFC Charles Halter, a movement control specialist with the MCT. "Then we monitor the convoys until they reach their destinations."

The 4th ID's first rail shipment contained food, water and other beverages. More bulk cargo will follow, according to Glowacki, including critical repair parts and all classes of supply.

Opening and maintaining supply channels is vital in sustaining life support and improving living and working conditions for soldiers of Task Force Ironhorse. With rail movement added to the Ivy Division's ability to distribute goods, improvements in maintenance of equipment and quality of life will soon follow.



Above: Fish caught earlier in the day are prepared in traditional Kurdish fashion for the banquet.

Right: Soldiers relax and enjoy the swimming pool at the resort. The PUK hosted the soldiers on July 4th.



By PFC Derek Dexter

LAKE DUKAN, IRAQ-- Nestled in the higher elevations of northern Iraq lies Lake Dukan surrounded by mountaintops covered in light green grass. The craggy precipices form a backdrop for a resort hotel. This scenic spot was the site for a special 4th of July celebration for approximately 200 U.S. soldiers. The Patriotic Union of Kurds, or PUK, hosted the event.

The celebration was the idea of Mr. Jalal Talabani, the leader of the PUK, who wanted to show the soldiers how much they appreciate their efforts during Operation Iraqi Freedom. The PUK invited military personnel from all over northern Iraq to spend the night in the hotel and interact with the PUK. Soldiers from the 4th Infantry, the 101st Airborne (Air Assault) and the 173rd Airborne Divisions participated in the event.

The 60 soldiers from the 4th Infantry Division who attended didn't know what was in store for them. "It was kind of a surprise," said PFC Biff Mosby, an ammo supply specialist with the 1-10 Cavalry. "I thought it was some kind of bad detail. I didn't know until we circled the resort."

The hotel was similar to the buildings soldiers have seen on the various Iraqi palace grounds, with marble floors and columns lining the foyer. But instead of being empty, its corridors had plush couches and areas of soldiers to relax in. The hotel also boasted a swimming pool where soldiers could cool off and enjoy a view of both the lake and mountains.

The hotel offered a variety of amenities that were a welcome change for soldiers used scorching temperatures and sleeping in sand-saturated tents. It had spacious rooms and another welcome plus--air conditioning "turned down to Antarctica" according to Mosby. Large, soft beds gave soldiers room to stretch out and sleep in comfort.

"I cohabitate in a room with bats, spiders, and scorpions," said Mosby. "So when I'm sleeping tonight in the air conditioning, yeah, it's nice to get a break."

Many soldiers were overjoyed about having running water, a bathroom that worked, and being able to take a good long shower.

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CELEBRATION, FROM PAGE 4

As the sun set low on the mountaintops, the sky filled with shades of red, yellow and oranges which were reflected in the lake. Soldiers headed to a feast prepared in their honor. A Kurdish man played the Star Spangled Banner on a keyboard in honor of his guests, followed by the national anthem of Iraqi Kurdistan.

Appetizers of fresh fruit, vegetables and Kurdish dishes were brought out to start the banquet. As they ate, soldiers watched Kurdish dancers perform traditional dances dating back several centuries. Music filled the air as singers performed Kurdish songs, some lasting over ten minutes.

While enjoying the show, PFC Dusty W. Leblanc, a signal support signal specialist with the 1/10 Cavalry, said it felt good to spend time with the Kurdish people.

"There isn't a better place in Iraq to spend my 4th of July," Leblanc said. He added, with a sly grin, he wished he could spend more time at Lake Dukan, maybe even finish out his tour at the resort.

After a two hour show, waiters served the main courses of fresh fish caught from the lake that morning, grilled chicken breasts, rotisserie chicken, roast beef, and lamb accompanied by rice and fresh vegetables. All the food was prepared in the Kurdish tradition.

"You can see their appreciation," said CPT Andrew Morgado, the 4th I.D. liaison officer to the PUK. "They are going all out to show us their appreciation."

After dinner, Cuban cigars were handed out to anyone who desired one.

As the festivities concluded, five Kurdish men began a simple traditional dance and soon were joined by soldiers. By the time the 45-minute song finished, 125 Kurds and Americans were dancing side-by-side.

Mr. Amanj Barzinji, a member of the PUK, said American forces were welcome in Kurdistan. "There are many Americans here and this is not their home. We must do something for them," said Barzinji.

After the final dance, many soldiers headed to their rooms, while others headed to the pool for a midnight swim.

In the morning, soldiers enjoyed a breakfast of fresh breads, eggs, fruit, vegetables and juice. "If my whole trip to Iraq was like this, I'd probably do a two-year hardship tour," said Mosby, as he enjoyed a breakfast of fried eggs and a toasted bagel.

It was a 4th of July that won't soon be forgotten—by the soldiers or their Kurdish hosts.

Local Happenings

449th 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, 4th ID warehouse

4th 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

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



14 July One Hour Photo
15 July As Good As It Gets
16 July Lock Down
17 July Collateral Damage
18 July MIB II
19 July Blood Work
20 July Tombstone
21 July The Grinch Who
Stole Christmas
Shows Begin at 8:00 p.m.

Task Force News

By SSG Craig Pickett

BA'QUBAH, IRAQ--The world of international law and the law of collegiate sports have one thing in common - CPT Edward Lupomech. Although one is practiced in the Army and the other in the civilian world, Lupomech finds the two similar.

Lupomech, from Indianapolis, deployed to Iraq with the 418th Civil Affairs Battalion, from Belton, Mo., as their International Law Officer. The Army Reservist left behind his full time job with the NCAA, as the Assistant Director of Enforcement, to come to the post-war country.

In Iraq, Lupomech has been in charge of returning confiscated property and money to detainees and former enemy prisoners of war.

"When detainees are taken, their effects are put in a bag," said Lupomech. "Any large sums of money are collected and sent to the brigade area."

His biggest challenge is tracking down these bags of personal items. Often the belongings are put in a sand bag or Meal Ready to Eat bag and stored in a mil van or some forgotten room in the rear area. Detainees are given a number corresponding to a bag with their items. Many times this is the only information Lupomech has to work with to piece together information and try to locate the items.

The 10-year veteran of civil affairs has been working in Ba'Qubah at the Civil Military Operations Center. Lately, he has been busy with claims such as when a soldier hits an Iraqi car or runs over a wandering goat. Lupomech collects information from the distressed Iraqi, and if necessary, begins paperwork for compensation. He carefully pieces together information to get the facts straight to insure justice is served. He said it is similar to his job at the NCAA, where he investigates rule violations.

"I interview coaches, players, and friends and family, though only coaches and athletes have to cooperate," he said. In the Army, Lupomech deals with young kids much like the student athletes of universities across the country. Though at age 47, he said he has stopped pretending to understand them.

One thing he understands is the difficulties of a long deployment.

"I sleep on a cot I compare to a lawn chair," he said "This is the most spartan deployment I've been on." Also, the heat is overwhelming. "You just can't get out of it," he said. "Even when I was in Africa, we could get out of it."

The only reprieve from the sun comes when it dips below the horizon and the stars come into view. In the dark, from the rooftop of the old government building that houses the CMOC, one can hear a multitude of sounds. Muslim prayers boom from loudspeakers at a nearby mosque. Automatic gunfire echoes through the darkness at any given time. Then there is Lupomech with his bagpipes.

The native of North Platte, Neb., seeks solace in this age-old form of music. He only knows three tunes, but says that is all you need to know to pass yourself off as an accomplished player. Lupomech said he learned to play the pipes when he moved to Indianapolis in 1999.

"Indy was key to me playing the bagpipes," he said. When Lupomech first arrived in Indianapolis he visited a downtown bar where the male bartender was wearing a skirt. Lupomech asked if by chance he played the bagpipes and he said he did. Lupomech explained that he always wanted to learn but didn't know how to get started. That's when the bartender slipped Lupomech a piece of paper with an address on it and told him to be there Tuesday night. Since then he has been playing at various events around Indy and most recently, as a way to relax in Iraq.

Lupomech knows the next day will bring back the scorching sun and the crowd of locals seeking retribution from the U.S. Army, but he finds the job rewarding.

"We are helping a lot of the Iraqis that have problems," he said. "Just imagine being an Iraqi, going through war and not having hope for the future."

"I do think we did the right thing," said Lupomech. "Many are now looking forward to a better future."



- Capt. Edward Lupomech listens intently to the issues of a local couple from Ba'Qubah. Lupomech is the International Law Officer for the 418th Civil Affairs Battalion.

Unit Spot Light



Above: Camp Middleton, an old Iraqi fortress utilized by 1-10th Cavalry Regiment.

Right: 1-10th CAV soldiers stand guard along the Iran – Iraq border.



BY MSG Dave Johnson

CAMP MIDDLETON, KHANAQIN, Iraq – Sun-baked Camp Middleton looks a lot like a fort from the American Old West, when the cavalry was in its embryonic stage. Fast-forward to present day Iraq near the Iranian border. The area even looks like the desert landscapes of the southwestern United States. That's the area patrolled by the 1st Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment from Fort Hood, Texas.

The cavalry mission has remained constant over the years and eras. From the scouts of the early nineteenth century to modern day, the cavalry has been the eyes forward for its command. Scouts in days of old rode horses. Modern-day cavalry soldiers use tanks and helicopters. Buffalo soldiers roamed the prairies during the Indian wars. Present day 1 –10 Cav. soldiers are also called Buffalo Soldiers in tribute to their predecessors.

"The cavalry is out here providing forward security and reconnaissance for the division. That's what we do," said SSG Anthony Ulmer, a tanker with B Troop.

The 1-10 Cav. has given the 4th Infantry Division safety for its troops in this region and established border patrols. "The integrity of the border has been maintained since 1-10 Cav. has been in this area of operation," said Ulmer.

The reconnaissance has been invaluable to stopping illegal border crossings between the countries. The patrolling elements have excellent intelligence, imperative to success in the difficult terrain. The information brought back from the scouts' reconnaissance missions helped establish key locations for checkpoints. The 1-10 Cav. has established traffic control points in those choice locations in its AO.

"We look for people breaking rules," said Ulmer. "We confiscate automatic machine guns and put bad guys in a temporary holding area. That's how we keep the peace and security."

The 1-10 Cav. uses its Bradleys, M1A2 Abrams tanks, and Kiowa Warrior helicopters to ensure peace is preserved. They've been patrolling the area and keeping the peace since the unit arrived in April.

"You really see what people are made of out here," said SGT Travis Sirek, from Headquarters Troop, the noncommissioned officer in charge of heavy wheeled maintenance. "You see what their problem-solving skills are. I'm glad I'm working with these guys in my troop. They're motivated."

Keeping the equipment operational is also key for any sustained operation. The excellent maintenance section has kept the 1-10 on the road and in the air. Part of that success is due to Sirek, who ordered a lot of spare parts well in advance before the unit came to Iraq.

"Without fuel and maintenance, the Bradleys can't fight," said Sirek. "We just completed our 50th successful wrecker mission. We've pulled out a lot of vehicles that got stuck in foxholes," he said.

The entire 1-10 Cav. has demonstrated superb planning. Not only do the logistics and maintenance areas have a proven track record of success, but patrol operations have also been profitable, with the capture of numerous law violators.

The efforts of the 1-10 Cav. are not all concentrated on patrols and checkpoint control. The squadron has also made inroads in community relations, as well. The soldiers have discovered most of the people in this region of Iraq are friendly toward the U.S. and the area has been mostly serene.

"We have a good relationship with the community," said Ulmer. "We refurbished the youth center. When we leave, we'll turn it over to the Iraqis, and they'll have a great facility for the kids."

Because the 1-10 Cav. has and continues to perform its security mission, the Iraqi citizens enjoy the comforts of safety and will have improved facilities in the community.

"Because the 1-10 Cav. was here, we made this a better place for the Iraqis," added Ulmer.

News Briefs

CANBERRA, Australia — Australian Prime Minister John Howard remained unrepentant Friday before analysts and opposition lawmakers who suggested his administration knowingly misled the country over the war with Iraq. For several months Howard and his conservative government have fended off claims they deceived the Australian public over the weapons of mass destruction threat posed by Iraq to justify Canberra's commitment of 2,000 troops to the war.

WILLSHIRE, Ohio--Wooden pallets and steel drums from the town's general store floated by as Rhonda Hunt surveyed the muddy water that flowed through her back yard. Returning home Thursday for the first time in two days, Hunt found the flooding had ruined air conditioners, snow blowers and other equipment she was forced to abandon in her garage. "It's just a mess. It's upsetting," Hunt said. "You don't want to give your home up." Homeowners in this northwest Ohio village and across northern and central Indiana were getting some relief after nearly a week of fighting the St. Marys and other rising rivers.

RACING--Alessandro Petacchi sprinted to his fourth stage win of this year's Tour de France when he won the 230-km sixth stage from Nevers to Lyon on Friday. The Italian surged in the last 150 meters to outclass his rivals once again in the town that hosted the first Tour de France finish in 1903.

BASEBALL--Randall Simon was suspended for three games and fined \$2,000 by major league baseball Friday for hitting one of the Milwaukee Brewers' sausage mascots with his bat. The Pittsburgh Pirates first baseman did not play Thursday against Milwaukee, so that game will count as one of the three games, a club spokesman said. Simon chose not to appeal the fine or suspension, which he continued serving Friday night against the Houston Astros. "I'm certainly not happy with the suspension," Pirates manager Lloyd McClendon said. "We are playing a first-place club. We've gotten ourselves back into the race. I would like to have my first baseman in there against this team."

JEFFERSON CITY, MO--A Missouri couple has claimed half of the \$261.3 million Powerball lottery jackpot, but as for who held the other winning ticket, sold in Pennsylvania that remained a mystery. William and Claudia Walkenbach of Hermann, Mo., were decidedly modest in how they plan to spend their newfound fortune. William Walkenbach, a production supervisor, said he wants to "finally get me a tractor with brakes." Claudia Walkenbach, a substitute teacher, said she'd buy a new refrigerator to replace the couple's 30-year-old model.

WASHINGTON--The U.S. military's research wing is seeking to develop a new generation of unmanned aircraft able to blow up terrorist camps or other targets anywhere in the world, without relying on overseas bases or slow-moving manned warplanes. "It's a wonder weapon," said John Pike, a defense analyst at Globalsecurity.org, a military think tank. The Pentagon hopes to have a version of the super-fast drone aircraft up and running in less than a decade. If the craft works as planned, it will be able to strike targets anywhere in the world in less than two hours, and many targets could be hit even faster. "In a matter of hours — sometimes."

SPORTS ZONE

GOLF--The wind kicked up at the Senior Players Championship on Friday, and most of the scores reflected the harsh weather. Then there was Tom Watson. In blustery conditions more apt for a British Open, Watson shot an 8-under 64, one off the course record, to grab the second-round lead at the TPC of Michigan. Watson missed a 3-footer for birdie on 18 that would have tied the record at the Jack Nicklaus-designed course. His 10-under 134 total in the Champions Tour major was two shots better than Andy North, the two-time U.S. Open champion who had a 69 Friday.

MOTOR SPORTS--Chicagoland Speedway has been very good to Kevin Harvick. Harvick won the track's inaugural race in 2001 en route to winning Winston Cup's Rookie of the Year award. He followed up that performance with another Tropicana 400 victory last year, one of few bright spots in a turbulent season. Harvick and his crew believe the return to Chicagoland could be the start of a second-half surge for the No. 29 car.

JAKARTA, Indonesia — Indonesian police arrested seven suspected members of the southeast Asian terror group Jemaah Islamiyah and seized a large cache of explosives and weapons from a bomb-making factory, officials and media reports said Friday. One of the suspects committed suicide Friday while in police custody in Jakarta, police said. Two other suspects were arrested Tuesday in Jakarta, and four more were arrested Wednesday in the central Javanese town of Semarang, where the explosives were seized. The arrests and seizures were the latest in a series targeting suspected Islamic militants in the world's most populous Muslim nation after last year's bombings on the island of Bali killed 202 people, most of them foreign tourists.

WASHINGTON — The discovery of a gaseous planet 13 billion years old and 5,600 light-years away could change theories about planet formation and about the evolution of life, astronomers say. More than twice the size of Jupiter, the object is the oldest and most distant planet yet discovered, astronomers said Thursday. The planet orbits two stars, a pulsar and a white dwarf that linked together about a billion years ago. They are in the constellation Scorpius within a globular cluster called M4 that formed billions of years before the sun and the Earth.

BASKETBALL--Jason Kidd picked the New Jersey Nets over the defending champion San Antonio Spurs in hopes of winning his first NBA title. Kidd ended 11 days of free agency angst for the resurrected Nets when he spurned an offer from the Spurs on Friday and agreed to a six-year, \$99 million deal with New Jersey.

BASKETBALL--In the first release of documents surrounding the arrest of Los Angeles Lakers star Kobe Bryant, officials made a mug shot available Friday on the Internet. Eagle County Sheriff Joe Hoy released the photo taken when Bryant turned himself in July 4 on suspicion of sexual assault. Media organizations had challenged Hoy's effort to keep the mug shot from public viewing. Hoy said he made the photo available on the advice of attorneys.

BASEBALL--Since winning the 1997 World Series, Florida has had few days as good as Friday. The Marlins rallied to beat the Expos 5-4 with two runs in the top of the ninth. The comeback win came just hours after Florida acquired Ugueth Urbina from Texas, and rookie lefty Dontrelle Willis was named to the All-Star Game to replace Kevin Brown.