



Ironhorse Desert News

Operation Iraqi Freedom



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“Steadfast & Loyal”

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Above: SPC Nathan Herbert and SPC A.J. Hayden, C Co., 1-22 Infantry, secure a road in Mosem during a raid conducted as part of Operation Ivy Serpent.

Center: Members of 1-22 Infantry sort through over 200 AK-47s and other munitions captured during a raid. The weapon cache was just one of many found during Operation Ivy Serpent.

Right: Members of the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, lead detainees to a holding room after a raid on complex where the suspected Ba’ath Party loyalists were hiding.

By SSG Craig Pickett

TIKRIT, Iraq—A sword-toting, horseback riding statue of Saddam Hussein came tumbling down in a ball of fire in final testament to the success of Operation Ivy Serpent. Engineers from the 555th Combat Engineer Group, from Fort Lewis, Wash., brought down the effigy of the former dictator on the final day of the week-long operation conducted by 4th Infantry Division and Task Force Ironhorse.

Operation Ivy Serpent was a combined effort striking out against regime loyalists and other subversive groups bent on disrupting the process of stabilizing and reconstructing Iraq. The operation focused specifically on locating weapons caches and yanking them out of the hands of hostiles who have been using them in recent attacks against coalition forces.

Task Force Ironhorse soldiers conducted 86 raids within the central Iraq area, capturing hundreds of Iraqi aggressors and a virtual arsenal of weapons. The around the clock raids netted a total of 394 AK-47s, 57 rocket propelled grenades, 507 standard grenades, 1,736 mortar rounds, 54 50-pound crates of C4 plastic explosive, and a variety of other illegal weapons and contraband.

CPT Jon Cecalupo, commander of C Company, 3-66 Armor Battalion, took part in one highly successful raid. His mission the morning of the 16th was to conduct an area reconnaissance of the northern sector of Mosem village, just a few miles northeast of Tikrit.

While his M1A1 Abrams tanks secured the area, members of 1st Platoon, C Company, 1-22 Infantry, from Fort Hood, Texas, searched houses, yards and vacant lots for signs of weapons.

Cecalupo said his soldiers had been finding a few AK-47s and other weapons in the houses, but “that is standard issue in every house in Iraq,” he said.

That was until they entered a large home where they stumbled upon a surprisingly large amount of weapons. At first, they pulled the standard three rifles from the home, but the soldiers kept searching and found ammunition, pistols and photos of Saddam posing with the occupant. With their energy levels fueled by the find, they began a search of the outlying buildings and yard. Soon, soldiers found a cache of AK-47s that was buried under miscellaneous rubble in an unassuming block building.

As sweat-drenched soldiers pulled rifles from the building you could hear them yelling out about the immensity of their find. At first, shouts of 50 or more rifles echoed through the doorway then 100, and finally the admission that the stack was 4-foot deep and surrounded by bags and bags of ammunition. In all, 225 rifles were pulled from the building along with 25,000 detonator caps, flare guns, and tens of thousands of rounds of 7.62 millimeter ammunition.

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However, the plethora of weapons did not end in the building. A search of the yard found 42 crates of Composition 4 plastic explosives buried beneath the lime trees that engulfed the yard. Though the soldiers had been up since 1 a.m. and were literally soaked with perspiration, their faces could not hide the excitement they felt.

"I'm really glad we found something," said PFC Jacob Lynn, C Company, 1-22 Infantry. "It's definitely a morale booster. We go on a lot of raids and go into a lot of houses with sad looking people. It's nice to finally find something."

Finding large caches of weapons is not only an emotional boost for war-weary soldiers and their leaders; it is also a means to an end.

"I'm just glad we took it (weapons) off the hands of the guy who could have used it against us," said SSG Peter Venardos, C Company 3-66 Armor. "I'm glad we are potentially saving U.S. lives. That's what it is all about – everyone getting home."

The bite of Operation Ivy Serpent succeeded in accomplishing its mission of making the area safer for coalition troops and putting a handicap on subversive elements out to do harm.

By CPL Gabe Nix



TIKRIT, Iraq – 'It's raining, it's pouring, the old man is snoring. An old man snoring simply could mean you're sleeping in the same room as your 1SG, but if it's raining or pouring you can bet the 4th Infantry Division Combat Weather Team knew about it first.

The airmen work hard at analyzing information received through the Tactical Meteorological Observation System or TMOS. They use TMOS to help prepare forecasts and determine if the weather will present problems during upcoming missions.

TMOS collects information on temperature, humidity, dew point, precipitation and wind speeds. This information allows the 3rd Weather Squadron to provide

mission planning and mission execution weather forecasts to Task Force Ironhorse leadership.

"We provide weather support to the warfighter," said Air Force CPT Rich Shull, the 4th Infantry Division Staff Weather Officer.

The approximate 20-man team also works very closely with 4th ID's 4th Aviation Brigade to keep them informed of changing weather patterns.

"We rely on them for vital weather information," said CWO Boone McKaig, a Blackhawk helicopter pilot with 4th Brigade, "They are a part of our pre-flight briefing."

With average region temperatures between 115-120 degrees, weather can be a major factor on equipment. "Every weapon system 4th ID employs is affected by weather in one way or another," said Shull.

Extreme temperatures can also inhibit operations. "We put out the best weather forecast we can so leaders know what to expect and keep weather from becoming a limiting factor in their operation," said Shull, who likes to be called "the Shullmeister."

Exercises at the National Training Center and recent Warfighters helped prepare the weather team for its current mission, although they've still had some challenges. While deployed, the weather squadron does not have access to the same equipment that is available back at Fort Hood, Texas, but the team still manages to complete its necessary daily weather updates.

Though the team accurately predicts the weather, they remind everyone they don't control the heat and hot temperatures. That's another next challenge for the Air Force squad.



Above: Soldiers from C Co., 1-22 Infantry provide covering fire for fellow soldiers.

Below: A soldier searches for hidden weapons using a mine detector.



CPT Rich Shull and 1LT Gary Clinton, members of the 4th ID Combat Weather Team, review information on the TMOS.

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By SSG Craig Pickett

TIKRIT, Iraq—For years, two giant brass statues of Saddam Hussein loomed over the entrance to his palatial grounds in Tikrit. In a flash of fire and smoke, the last remaining edifice of the former dictator was wiped from the city's skyline.

Engineers from the 555th Combat Engineer Group, from Fort Lewis, Wash., brought down the effigy of the ousted ruler with 12 pounds of Composition-4 ribbon-cutting charges. The charges were placed on small I-beams that supported the massive structure. The blast cut through the beams and pushed the looming brass figure forward and down with a thunderous crash.

"It's a good thing to see it go," said PFC Brian Wolf, with the 555th. "People around here see it as a significant thing."

PFC Sheldon Edwards, also with the 555th, hopes the razing of the statues will help people realize Saddam's reign is over. "Hopefully it will be the building block of their country," he said.

No one knows if it will be a building block for Iraq, but it will definitely be the foundation for a monument dedicated to 4th Infantry Division soldiers.

"Both statues are made of brass and will be melted down and taken to Fort Hood," said CPT Patrick Maginn, personnel and public affairs officer for the 555th.

Once there, he said it will be turned into a monument in honor of all the 4th Infantry Division soldiers who lost their lives during Operation Iraqi Freedom.



Top Left: A sword-wielding Saddam on horseback is engulfed in a ball of flame as it is blown from its perch on a palace gate in Tikrit.

Lower Left: Plumes of black smoke rise into the air from 12 pounds of C-4 plastic explosives as Saddam goes down into the dust.

Lower Right: PFC Brian Wolf, 555 Combat Engineer Group, helps carry the metal head of Saddam Hussein to a vehicle. The metal will be used to make a memorial honoring 4th Infantry Division soldiers who lost their lives during Operation Iraqi Freedom.



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By MSG Dave Johnson

AL SECCOR , Iraq – “Hey Mista, Hey Mista” is a phrase American soldiers heard daily from the Iraqi children when they first arrived here in Iraq.

The Iraqi children’s vocabulary has expanded exponentially over the past weeks to include “What’s your name; We’re glad you’re here,” and “How are you, sir?” Their grasp of the English language will surely improve over time with the rebuilding of Iraq.

Iraqi schools, banks, health clinics and businesses have re-opened and there is much more interaction between 4th Infantry Division soldiers and the local populace, especially children.

References to soaring eagles proliferated on June 28th at a re-opening ceremony for the Al Seccor health clinic, just outside Camp Speicher in Tikrit, Iraq.

Al Seccor means “The Eagle,” or eagle village and the 4th Brigade is called the “Iron Eagle” brigade. It’s not just a play on word association. The village and the Iron Eagle brigade’s S-3 operations section have worked together closely since April. Goodwill abounded in the Al Seccor community as teachers and health care workers welcomed members of the 4th Infantry Division at the health clinic.

According to CPT Harmon Esplin, civil military operations officer, 4th Brigade, the building was badly damaged during the war.

The Iron Eagle brigade provided the funding to refurbish the building so it could re-open to treat patients. “We provided a welder, but 95 percent of the work was done by local Iraqis,” said Esplin.

“This is the template for rebuilding efforts. These guys have done a great job here,” said COL Michael Moody, commander, 4th Brigade.

“I feel like a free bird,” said Abass Hussien, project coordinator, through the American interpreter, Egziabher, who works for 4th Brigade. “We’re free to open our clinic.”

Discussions ensued between Moody, Esplin and COL(P) Albert Bryant, Jr., 4th ID’s Assistant Division Commander for Support, regarding re-supply of medical items to keep the clinic running since it has re-opened.

The schoolyard was vibrant, too, as the whole community celebrated the opening of the clinic. Children were exuberant while American soldiers walked around the nearby playground. The school re-opened in mid-May.

According to Esplin, transient Arabs occupied the school for a few months, because they were displaced from northern Iraq. The 4th Brigade’s S-3 worked at securing local housing for them so the school could re-open.

With a recent merchant’s bazaar, the school’s re-opening and now the refurbishing of the health clinic, much has been done to help rebuild the village’s infrastructure. Additionally, positive interaction has increased greatly between the locals and soldiers.

“Kids are conversing more in English,” said SFC David Pippin, operations non-commissioned officer in charge of the 4th Brigade’s S-3. “Merchants are learning more English, too. They want our money. We’re helping their economy.”

The Iron Eagle brigade’s civil military operations section has produced positive results. The thankfulness could be seen in the eyes of the adults and heard in the voices of the children.



SGT Jason Murray is surrounded by kids on a playground in Al Seccor. Soldiers from 4th Brigade helped Iraqi residents re-open a health clinic in the city.

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From left: PFC Juan Martinez, 1404th Trans. Co., SPC Kristi Adamski, 475th QM Co., and PFC Rickie Timmerman, 1404th Trans. Co., enjoy a game of Monopoly inside the Soldiers' Inn



PFC Shawn Wheatly, Alpha Company, 1-10 Cavalry, plays ping-pong during his stay at the R & R facility in Tikrit, Iraq.



SSG Rapage Gibson, 230th Finance Co., eyes the distant horseshoe ring at Soldiers' Inn at Forward Operating Base Ironhorse. The center serves as an R & R site for soldiers.



The view from Soldiers' Inn. The facility overlooks the Tigris River.

By CPL Gabe Nix

TIKRIT, Iraq -- A soldier bobs his head to the beat of music from a boom box as he plays cards. Steel on steel clangs as horseshoes are tossed into a pit. A volleyball is served and flies over a net blown by a breeze off the nearby lake. These are a few of the relaxing scenes found at Soldiers' Inn.

Soldiers' Inn is located on Forward Operating Base Ironhorse in Tikrit, Iraq. It occupies one of Saddam Hussein's former palaces on a complex filled with palaces. Soldiers' Inn sits high on a cliff overlooking the Tigris River. A lake shoulders the building and a variety of fruit and fig trees and flowers surround it. The palace has marble floors and pillars, inlaid wooden doors and chandeliers light its many rooms and hallways. Rooms that once served as meeting halls or banquet rooms now offer a place for soldiers to rest and recuperate.

Soldiers from B Company, 223rd Engineer Battalion were some of the first "guests" at the inn. "I've been able to relieve a lot of stress and tension," says SSG Keith Spratlin, non-commissioned officer in charge of the 223rd. "We have not had a day off since we've been here."

Soldiers receive four days and three nights off as they rotate through the Soldiers' Inn for an R and R tour. For many, it's the first time they've slept on a cot or enjoyed air conditioning or been able to escape the talc-like sand that's everywhere.

"The best part is not having anyone tell you what to do," says Spratlin. "If I want, I can sleep in late or even stay up late."

Soldiers can also take part in several different activities. The Soldiers' Inn offers a movie theatre, reading room, video games, pool tables, weight room, and a swimming pool. Outdoor recreation includes fishing, biking, horseshoes, and basketball.

"Fishing is the most popular activity so far," according to SPC Jason Crippen, 418th Civil Affairs out of Belton, Mo. Crippen issues recreational equipment at Soldiers' Inn. "I think it makes people feel like they are fishing at their favorite spot back home," Crippen said.

Soldiers also enjoy being able to leisurely stroll around the palatial grounds. "I enjoy being able to walk around, take pictures, and not having to be on duty," says Spratlin.

The Soldiers' Inn gives soldiers a much-needed break and a chance to re-charge before getting back to the work of helping rebuild Iraq.

Unit Spot Light



SPC Kenneth Prater, a Switch Operator, 124th Signal Battalion, maintains equipment and monitors data at a signal switching shelter.

By Sgt. Ryan Sills

TIKRIT, Iraq – We have all grown accustomed to the convenience of communicating with each other over long distances at a moment's notice. Communication is also vital to an effective fighting force. The people responsible for giving the Army its "voice" are the signal soldiers. The jobs they do are an absolute necessity to mission success.

The Large Extension Node Platoon (LEN) of the 124th Signal Battalion is in Tikrit, Iraq, at Forward Operating Base Ironhorse. Their job is to construct and maintain communications between Task Force Ironhorse members.

"We're the cornerstone of the division; without us the commanding general can't communicate with his brigade commanders," said SFC Edward Strickling, platoon sergeant and Telecommunications Chief for LEN platoon.

The LEN platoon has two operating line-of-sight antennas with a third available, if needed. Line-of-sight antennas operate as long as there is nothing obstructing the path to other antennas. These antennas have an effective range of 40 kilometers. They are used to transmit and receive information from other node stations in the 4th ID area of operations.

The antennas also allow soldiers to communicate from one Digital Non-Secure Voice Telephone (DNVT) to others within headquarters complex, as well as ones at distant locations that are linked to the network through similar antennas.

"Cable system installers run the DNVT wires and then act as the signal platoon's customer service," said 1LT Katherine Noll, platoon leader.

As the division's primary hub for communication, the LEN Platoon, is responsible for connecting and troubleshooting the DNVT network. The process begins with cable system installers who do the initial setup as well as the customer service portion of technical problems.

The experts from 124 Signal advise customers that there are two things that must be considered when a problem with a DNVT arises. If a non-affiliation tone is heard while listening to the receiver, then the user can fix the problem by dialing 8-R-1-1-1, followed by the user phone number to re-affiliate the device. If the problem is more complex, such as a power failure, a cable system installer can be sent to correct the error by filling out a "trouble ticket" found at the signal unit's office.

The platoon also maintains a Remote Access Unit antenna that allows secure connections up to 15 kilometers in all directions with vehicles containing a Mobile Subscriber Remote Terminal. The antennas are maintained by radio transmission specialists.

The 124th also has switch operators who are responsible for maintaining links between the various node stations as well as a connection with V Corps. The operators also provide video tele-conference support for senior leaders. This enables a commander to have "face to face" communication with subordinate commanders when geographically separated. The switch shelter operators also maintain and care for the equipment.

"One problem that we face with the equipment (here) is the overheating of the switching shelters," said Strickling.

The shelters, which sit on the back of Humvees, have built in heat sensors that trip when a switch overheats. To control the problem fans are pointed at the switches and the environmental control units must be frequently cleaning and filters replaced.

High winds were another problem the platoon faced when it arrived overseas. This problem was quickly fixed by reinforcing the antennas to add stability against the elements.

Despite the challenges they face, the signal soldiers of 124th work hard everyday to keep the Army "talking." Although they often work behind the scenes, the importance of the job they perform can't be ignored. Without them, there's silence.

VIP Visits TF Ironhorse

Change of Command



GEN John Abizaid, CG, CENTCOM, visits the 4th Infantry Division Headquarters in Tikrit on July 20. MG Raymond Odierno, CG, 4th ID, and CSM Charles Fuss, 4th ID's CSM, accompany him.



MG Raymond Odierno, Commander of the 4th ID, is accompanied by COL James Bosner (L) and COL Christopher Toomey (R) on the reviewing stand during a change of command for 555th Engineer Group in Tikrit.



COL Christopher Toomey, Commander, 555th Combat Engineer Group, receives the unit flag as the incoming commander during the change of command ceremony.

Local Happenings

Package Mailing Hours 449th Mail Room

Monday-Friday, Noon-6:00 p.m.
Weekends- Noon-3:00 p.m.

Located next to the HHC, 4th ID warehouse

Combat Stress Team Now available at FOB Ironhorse

Located at the Aid Station

Briefings
Critical Events Debriefings
Leadership Consultations
Stress Management
Support to Soldiers
Call 534-0161

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



21 July Tombstone
22 July The Grinch Who Stole Christmas
23 July XXX
24 July Ballistic
25 July Bourne Identity
26 July Final Fantasy
27 July Independence Day
28 July Waterworld
29 July Ace Ventura: When Nature Calls

Showtimes;
Mon-Sat.

10:00 am, 2:00 & 8:00pm
Sun.
8:00 pm

News Briefs

NEW YORK--Dozens of people were treated for smoke inhalation early Saturday after a fire broke out beneath a subway train in Brooklyn, authorities said. The train was at the York Street station when the blaze erupted at about 3:15 a.m., according to Charles Seton, a spokesman for New York City Transit. He said about 100 people were evacuated from the station.

NEWARK, DELAWARE--It's 113 degrees in the shade in Iraq and weary troops dealing with outbreaks of resistance are also battling a new element – extreme heat. Just how hot is it? The military's soap is melting and shaving cream cans are exploding. But one military mother is sending some relief from the desert heat. Frankie Mayo, of Newark, Del., has organized Operation Air Conditioner, an effort to ship as many cooling units as possible to the troops. She got the idea earlier this summer when she received a letter from her son, who is serving in Iraq, asking if she could get local businesses in Delaware to send air conditioners to his platoon. "They put a lot of gear on. You might as well add 20 degrees with body armor, helmet, and weapons," Mayo said. She started by collecting donations from family members, neighbors, and friends and was able to purchase 14 air conditioners to send to Iraq. But that turned out to be just the beginning. Her desire to keep troops cool heated up and Operation Air Conditioner was soon "getting a lot of donations and really expanding quickly," Mayo said. Mayo's goal is to send 200 air conditioners over to the troops, but added that she may surpass that number thanks to the outpouring of generosity she's received from corporations such as Home Depot to individual online donations of money.

MIAMI--Return to sender: one Elvis Presley tooth. After 10 days on the eBay auction block, no one posted the minimum \$100,000 bid for a purported Elvis tooth, lock of hair and gold record. So the South Florida owners say they plan to sell the collection in pieces, with the items likely to be offered again on eBay sometime this weekend. That came as a relief to die-hard fan Joni Mabe. She already owns an Elvis wart, and "maybe an Elvis toenail."

SPORTS ZONE

GOLF- Tiger Woods has made his move, kind of. Woods crept within two strokes of the lead after nine holes Friday at the British Open, which is being played at one of the most difficult courses in recent history. Golf's incomparable star, Woods had three birdies before bogeying the ninth hole at Royal St. George's Golf Club to drop to even par for the tournament, two shots behind Davis Love III.

TENNIS- No. 2 seed Guillermo Coria ended Mikhail Youzhny's hopes of repeating as champion of the Mercedes Cup in no uncertain terms. The 21-year-old Argentine crushed the 12th-seeded Russian, 6-0, 6-0, Friday to advance to the semifinals of the \$665,000 clay court event..

HOCKEY-Left wing Tyson Nash, who was acquired by the Phoenix Coyotes last month, signed a one-year contract Friday. Financial terms of the deal were not disclosed.

BASKETBALL- After living up to his billing as a first-round pick in the recently completed summer league, guard Reece Gaines officially signed with the Orlando Magic.

WHITERIVER, Ariz. — Favorable weather and progress by crews in taming a wildfire that charred an American Indian reservation allowed thousands of people forced to flee the blaze to return home. About 5,000 people evacuated Whiteriver, on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation in eastern Arizona, as the lightning-sparked fire approached the town earlier in the week. It came within a quarter-mile of some homes before firefighters ringed the blaze with firebreaks. No homes were damaged.

DENVER, COLORADO--Federal investigators are looking for possible connections between the theft of 1,100 pounds of an explosive chemical from construction companies in Colorado and California in the past week. The chemical is ammonium nitrate, a key ingredient in the bomb that destroyed the Oklahoma City federal building in 1995.

VIENNA, AUSTRIA--The U.N. atomic agency's chief has called North Korea "the most serious threat" to nuclear proliferation while urging Iran to let inspectors investigate suspect nuclear facilities. Mohamed ElBaradei, director-general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, said Friday he was concerned about reports that North Korea is reprocessing fuel rods.

LOS ANGELES-- Investigators believe an elderly driver who crashed through a crowded farmers market, killing 10 people, may have been speeding away from the scene of a collision at the time. Russell Weller, 86, might have hit a Mercedes after leaving a post office, then fled less than a block west toward the street market, said Tom Marshall, a spokesman for the California Highway Patrol. Details about the Mercedes crash were not immediately available.

SOUTHMOOR, England — A body found in the Oxfordshire woods added a dark twist Friday to questions about the intelligence Prime Minister Tony Blair used to justify war in Iraq. Police tentatively identified the dead man as David Kelly, a Defense Ministry expert suspected of being the source of media claims that the government hyped its reports on Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction. Blair, speaking in Tokyo on Saturday as he began a tour of Asian nations, called Kelly's apparent death an "absolutely terrible tragedy"

FOOTBALL--Orlando Pace may be unhappy, but Torry Holt is ecstatic. The St. Louis Rams on Friday signed Holt, a 1,000-yard receiver each of the last three seasons, to a seven-year contract extension.

BASEBALL— Amando Benitez was smiling. In his first game in Yankees pinstripes, he made the boos go away. The former Mets closer came in with a four-run lead and pitched two innings in his new role as a setup man, preserving Roger Clemens' 302nd win as the New York Yankees beat the Cleveland Indians 10-4 Friday night. "Everybody believes that I can do it," Benitez said.

MOTOR SPORTS--Wiston Cup and Busch qualifying rained out: Thunderstorms in the Loudon, N.H. area have canceled Winston Cup and Busch Series qualifying. The field for both races have been set by owner points, putting Kevin Harvick on the Busch pole and Matt Kenseth on the Cup pole.

BASKETBALL—After two long weeks, Lakers' star Kobe Bryant received the news Friday afternoon that he had indeed been charged with one account of felony sexual assault. The news was surprising to Bryant, who claimed in a news conference that he was indeed guilty of adultery, but under no circumstances was he guilty of sexual assault.