



VANGUARD POINT

Volume II, Issue 16
December 2005
Special Year In Review



*A vote
for the
future of
Iraq ...*

Inside



Soldiers give an Iraqi man the gift of mobility.



The Soldiers of E Co., 4-64 keep the memory of a wounded comrade alive.



The Soldiers of 1-76 FA and 3-3 ACR honor their fallen comrades.



A woman casts her vote Dec. 15 in Karrada during the Iraqi Parliamentary Elections. For the story and photos, see Page 11.

Spc. Dan Balda

To the Point: Voices and viewpoints from around the brigade

Vanguard 6

The Brigade commander looks back over the last year at the successes and the effect the Soldiers of the Vanguard Brigade. **Page 3**

Vanguard 7

The Brigade's top enlisted man talks about making good impressions with the incoming brigade and staying focused until the mission is done. **Page 3**

Around the Point: Stories from around the Brigade

Returning home

The joy of homecoming isn't without peril, but there are ways to keep the joy alive. **Page 5**

Soldiers make extra effort

Soldiers from 1-184 Infantry went the extra mile to help an Iraqi man so he will be better able take care of his family with a unique vehicle. **Page 6**

Troops honor wounded comrade

When one of their NCO's was wounded and had to return to the states, his comrades in E Co., 4-64 Armor created a patch to honor his sacrifice. **Page 7**

In memory

Ceremonies remember fallen comrades. **Pages 8 to 10**

Parliamentary elections make history

The Iraqis made history during the national elections as entire families came out to cast their vote. **Pages 11 to 13**

Ambassador of good will

1-76 FA helps to escort embassy officials all over the country and have earned the respect of their charges. **Page 14**

A look back at the last year

A look back at the last year for each unit of the 4th Brigade. **Pages 15 to 23**

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4th Brigade Commander
Colonel Edward Cardon
4th Brigade Command Sergeant Major
Command Sgt. Maj Louis Torres
4th Brigade Public Affairs Officer
Maj. Alayne Conway
4th Brigade PA Operations Officer
Capt. Ryan Avila
4th Brigade Public Affairs NCOIC
Staff Sgt. Raymond Piper
Staff Writer
Spc. Dan Balda
Broadcast Journalist
Spc. Nakisha Fonoti

On the cover:

An Iraqi man casts his ballot during the Iraqi Parliamentary Elections Dec. 15. Photo by Spc. Dan Balda



VANGUARD 6 SENDS ...

Brigade shines throughout the deployment

Col. Edward C. Cardon

4th BCT Commander

Congratulations on a job well done. I am extremely proud of each and every one of you.

Every Soldier played a vital role in our mission and I am pleased with your professionalism and sense of duty. The teamwork that each of you continually demonstrated over this deployment was the key to our overall mission accomplishment.

At the foundation of our team is U.S. Soldiers from both active and Reserve components. Standing with us are men and women from the Navy and Air Force, Coalition Soldiers and a number of U.S. government civilians. We must include the contracted civilian employees whose service allows us to put more forces on the ground.

Building on this foundation are the Iraqi security forces, and brave Iraqi civilians who work with us every day to improve security, governmental institutions, and essential services of Iraq.

All of us working together as a team led to our success.

So what did we accomplish? When we arrived in Baghdad in February, we had the mission of training and employing Iraqi security forces throughout our area of operations.

Our brigade was initially partnered with three Iraqi battalions.

Now 11 months later, we are working with more than 13 different Iraqi battalions within our area of operations. Our brigade took the lead in the activation and training of the 5th Iraqi Army Brigade.

The Iraqi security forces have really improved over the past year – the December national elections showed the growing power of Iraq's security forces. The security forces provided the security for each polling site with different combinations of police, police commandos, public order brigade soldiers, and Iraqi Army Soldiers.

Our forces remained in the background ready to respond to incidents at a moment's notice and nothing happened of significance. To watch these forces oper-

ating vigilantly and professionally was a testament to all of the hard work thus far in training the Iraqi Forces.

As the Iraqi Security Forces have gotten stronger, so has the Iraqi government. We contributed to the success of such milestone events as the seating of the first freely elected Iraqi government and more than 100 subsequent sessions of the Iraqi Transitional National Assembly.

This led to the ratification of the Iraqi Constitution, which became the basis for the December elections where Iraq elected its first four-year government.

Another one of our primary missions has been helping to rebuild the civilian infrastructure.

In the space of 12 months, we have helped Iraqis conduct more than 300 projects within the districts of Karkh, Karradah, North Babil and Rasheed to improve the sewer, water and electrical infrastructure, dramatically improving the lives of countless Iraqi citizens.

SUCCESS continued next page

VANGUARD 7 SENDS ...

Keep your focus while on point

Command Sgt. Maj. Louis Torres

4th BCT Command Sergeant Major

Greetings Vanguards and happy holidays to you and yours wherever they may be. As the Vanguard Brigade prepares to redeploy I ask all our Soldiers and troopers to meet, welcome, and provide all our Cobra brothers and sisters with everything they need for a great and successful deployment. I remind everyone about the old cliché, "First impressions are lasting impressions!" As we welcome the Cobra BCT into our AO, ensure that we continue to do the right things and sustain the same high levels of appearance, conduct, and discipline we have maintained for the last 11 months. We will not leave behind unsatisfactory and unfit living areas or areas of responsibility. Like Vanguard 6 continuously points out, "You are only as good as your last major event!" Our next event will be the safe departure of the Vanguards and the successful arrival of the Cobras.

I reiterate to all Soldiers, maintain focus on the continuing mission out in sector. The mission is not complete until you step off the bus and on Cottrell Field; or wherever your reunion may be.



The enemy does not conduct tactical halts or transitions; he continues to conduct lethal operations against our Soldiers and troopers. Remember our fallen heroes, particularly our most recent ones, every time you think the enemy have slowed down; he has not, and will not. We must sustain the same amount of offense, defense, and focus that we have had for the last 11 months. Do not become complacent, do not get comfortable;


and do not consider the job done, the enemy always has a vote on when we are done and when we leave. I ask you as always stay alert, stay alive, and continue to watch each other's backs wherever or whatever you and your Soldiers may be involved in.

Soon, everyone will be home with families, friends, and loved ones. Please do not forget what you've accomplished here. Do not forget the team you were part of, the comrades that have kept you alive, and the friendship and camaraderie that has grown over the

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past 11 to 12 months. Be extremely proud of your accomplishments, of your unit's successes, and of the great leadership demonstrated by your chain of command and your fellow Soldiers. Whether you patrolled out in sector, fired or didn't fire your weapon, did or didn't leave your FOB, every Soldier and trooper in this fine BCT played an instrumental part in making this mission a success. As the commander and I go around and participate in award ceremonies, it makes us proud to be associated with such a great group of professionals. Do not let us down as we prepare to end our part of this mission. Stay focused and do the right thing!

I hope to see as many Soldiers and troopers around the holidays, and I hope to see the rest of you on Cottrell Field. From the commander and me, have a blessed holiday period, and Godspeed to you, your comrades, your families, and our great Army! Let's make it home, safe, sound, and mission complete!

As customary, my unsung heroes selected by their senior NCO Support Channel. Although few, everyone here is an unsung hero, for what we've accomplished for this country, its people, and our nation shall never be forgotten. For our fallen brothers who paid the ultimate sacrifice as always, "we will not fail you!" Vanguard's up Front! 

VANGUARD'S UNSUNG HEROES



Spc. Michele Sims
Headquarters 4-3 BTB, attached to HHT 6-8 CAV

She has been part of the great Mustang team since February. She has trained Iraqi Soldiers on basic skills, tested them on STX lanes, and conducted joint patrols in sector. She just reenlisted to stay on the team; a great warrior and a Mustang and Vanguard unsung hero.



Spc. Christopher W. Beckett
B Battery, 1-76 FA

He has served as the lead gunner for the past six months for all embassy missions. In addition, he is the platoon SME on enemy SIGACTs and enemy TTPs. He provides daily updates and briefings to his platoon on enemy activity, and briefs assigned principles each day on enemy threats and actions for routes frequented by his patrols.



Sgt. James Houser
Mad Dog Company, 3rd Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry.

Sgt. Houser distinguished himself as the operator of the Squadron's Buffalo. His actions have had a positive and direct influence on the successes of the Squadron's counter-IED operations, resulting in minimizing damage to equipment, vehicles, and possibly saving the lives or reducing injuries to coalition forces. "AI-EE-YAH"



Spc. Mathew Viner
Mad Dog Company, 3rd Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry.

Spc. Viner has distinguished himself as a crewman on an Abrams Tank in the 3rd Armored Cavalry. Specifically during a rollover of the 2nd Platoon, PSG's tank, Viner risked his life by diving into a cold, muddy canal in Southern Baghdad to assist in saving the lives of fellow troopers. "AI-EE-YAH"

Buster's

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SUCCESS continued from previous page

Our diverse and complex team has stood up to many challenges and succeeded time and time again. Each of you has made a difference in Iraq.

Progress in Iraq is measured in different ways. You have indelibly imprinted Iraq with a view of freedom and a symbol of hope. And there's no question that the cause of freedom is stronger and healthier because of you.

When you consider the immensity and diversity of the team and the complexity of the tasks we faced everyday, we have set a very high standard. We played a crucial role in Iraq's history. It has not been without personal cost: we are fewer in number, and those Soldiers will never be forgotten. They are more than just a name in history – they are part of us and we will always honor their memory.

Over the next few weeks, our Soldiers will conduct a relief in place and return to the many places collectively known as home. While thoughts of home and family and friends are becoming more vivid as our time in Iraq comes to a close, continue to center your focus on the mission. This has been your hallmark and is now your reputation – maintain this standard to the very end.

As much as I would like to, I will be unable to bid each of you farewell and thank you personally for your contributions to our brigade combat team. I thank each and every one of you for your professionalism and personal dedication to this mission. You have been a true inspiration to me and it has a true honor to serve with each of you.

Each of us has a better appreciation for the freedoms we enjoy in the United States. As Soldiers, you define the best America has to offer. You have much to be proud of as we return home and allow others to continue to build on what has been accomplished. Congratulations on a job well done and have a safe journey home!

VANGUARD! Rock of the Marne!

Returning to family life after military deployment

www.Militaryonesource.com

Special to the Point

A great deal of attention is paid to the separation side of military deployment, when military personnel leave families and partners for overseas operations. We can understand the worry and the feelings of loss and loneliness a military deployment can bring to a family. But the return and reunion with families and partners can be just as stressful -- sometimes more so. The difficulties and strains of return can be surprising and sometimes painfully disappointing to military families. But there are steps you can take to make the transition back as joyful and stress-free as possible.

Understanding the ups and downs of reunion

Couples who have been separated by military deployment often look forward to a service member's return as a time of happiness, a chance to get back to "normal" life. Lovers and spouses miss each other and look forward to time together. Children look forward to having a missing parent back at home. The absent service member looks forward to a joyful reunion and the comforts of home. After a dangerous deployment, families are relieved that the service member is returning home safely.

But mixed in with those feelings of excitement and anticipation are also some perfectly normal worries and resentments. Husbands and wives worry that their spouse has changed, that there will be new strains in the relationship. Both partners may dread giving up the independence that being apart has allowed them, and may resent what they imagine as the freedom the other has enjoyed during deployment. While everyone looks forward happily to getting back together, they may also feel some anger at having been separated in the first place.

Reunions can be especially challenging if the deployment was longer or more dangerous than usual, if the deployment created serious money problems for the family, if communicating back home was more difficult than expected, if the deployment is just the latest in a series of deployments, or if there are feelings of jealousy or rumors of infidelity. Without these special strains, reunions are generally much less stressful.

The initial reunion often is happy. But because expectations on all sides are so high, it can also be disappointing. The list of opportunities for crushed hopes is a long one.

What can make return from deployment an unhappy and stressful time is the mismatch between high expectations and the reality of family life, and the need to change and fit into new family roles and routines. But knowing this is also the key to making the return a happy time with a minimum of stress and disappointment.

Before the reunion

Despite the best of intentions, the service member or the partner at home may be too exhausted, busy, or anxious to prepare the way they would like to for the reunion. Combined with high expectations -- and sometimes unrealistic hopes -- for the reunion, this can lead to disappointment.

Unpredictable timing can also get in the way of happy and relaxed reunions. Both partners need to understand that late flights, bad weather, incorrect passenger lists, family emergencies, and missed phone calls or messages can spoil even the most careful plans.

What you can do

Do your best to find out and communicate the details of the return plan, and to keep yourself and your partner updated on any changes to the schedule.

Make backup plans in case the flight arrives at a time when the

partner at home can't be there. This might happen because of a work schedule, children's needs, a family emergency, or simply lack of advance notice. How will the service member get home? Are there phone numbers where the partner at home can be reached at different times of day and night?

Plan something special for each other. The returning service member might bring gifts for those at home. The partner at home might plan a welcome-back meal or some other celebration.

Be ready to be understanding and forgiving if the reality of the reunion doesn't match your plans and hopes.

The day of the reunion

Be prepared for exhaustion, jet lag (the service member's adjustment to a change in time zone), and unpredictability and changes in the return schedule. Be prepared, too, for reactions to the return that aren't what either or both of you may have expected.

The partner at home may have planned a joyful welcome, for example, with banners, gifts, or favorite foods, only to find the service member too exhausted to notice. A gift from overseas may not be received with the appreciation the returning service member expected. Babies and young children may pull away from or cry at the returning parent's efforts to hold and hug them. (It takes time for young children to get to know a parent again after a long absence.)

What the returning service member can do

Be patient if no one is there to meet you when you arrive. Use your backup plan to call someone or get yourself home. Understand that changes in your return schedule, a missed message, or family or work responsibilities are probably the reasons, not a lack of desire to see you as soon as possible.

Make a conscious effort to make only positive comments about any changes you notice when you get home. Try to keep this up for at least the first two days.

Look for positive changes, such as how your children have grown and matured, new skills they have learned, or household improvements your spouse has managed. Tell family members that you are proud of them.

Show your appreciation for the extra work your spouse has taken on while you were away, handling all of the household responsibilities alone. Don't criticize the ways your partner is handling these added tasks, even if it's very different from how you would do it. Many returning service members feel a little hurt at finding out how well their families have managed without them. Do your best to express this instead as pride in how they've stepped up to new responsibilities.

Expect that your children might not welcome you back immediately with smiles and hugs. Very young children may see you as a stranger at first and be shy or even scared of you. Be patient as they take the time to get to know you and accept you as a parent again. Older children may be angry at you for being away so long, at least at first. Teenagers may hold back as a way to try on new independence. Try to remember that these are all natural responses for children at different ages.

What the spouse or partner at home can do

Do something special to welcome the returning service member home. Make a banner, prepare a meal with your partner's favorite foods, or have your children make a special homecoming gift. But don't be hurt if your spouse is too tired on first arriving to notice how you've prepared.

Editor's note: *Written with the help of Dr. D. Bruce Bell and Dr. Walter R. Schumm.*

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Mohammed thanks Sgt. Edward Dominguez, the main designer of the "armcycle" for his gift. Mohammed told the mechanic and Irvine, Calif., native, "You are now my brother."

Spc. Dan Balda



Soldiers make extra effort to help Iraqi man

Spc. Dan Balda

4th BCT PAO

The U.S. military takes part in many drops; food drops, soccer equipments drops, medical aid drops. The word "drop" is a bit of a misnomer; it is not a reenactment of the Berlin Airlift. The Soldiers goal is not only to help the people out but to talk to the people of Iraq to foster better relations by giving them things they normally would not have access to or afford.

Soldiers assigned to 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry Regiment "dropped" something a bit out of the ordinary – an "arm-cycle," Nov. 22.

The area the Soldiers went to could be called a village but it is more of a small collection of thatched homes in the middle of a farming area. The Soldiers call this area "Estradaville" in honor of one of their fellow Soldiers who was murdered while on leave to California.

Command Sgt. Major Edgardo Coronado, 1-184 command sergeant major struck up a friendship with the people who inhabit Estradaville during a patrol when they offered his Soldiers hints on how to navigate the rough terrain. The head of the clan struck Coronado as different, not because he has lived without legs since he lost them in a car accident when he was 13, but because of how hard he worked without the aid of his legs.

"There are so many people who don't have jobs in this country for whatever rea-

son," said Coronado, a native of Orcutt, Calif. "This guy has specially rigged a tractor so he can still plow his fields, and he is going out everyday looking to do some kind of work. I've got Soldiers who complain about working too hard here. I tell them to come out here and see how productive Mohammed is."

Mohammed has not been as productive as he once was because his wheelchair had broken sometime ago and relied on his nephew or his own hands to get from his house to his tractor. Coronado realized this and wanted to do something about it. He went to his motorpool in search of a mechanic who was willing to try to build something adapted for Mohammed's needs. He found a group of people who were not only willing and able, but who didn't mind putting in extra hours each day on top of the normal workday at Forward Operating Base Falcon.

On top of the willingness to help, one Soldier was specially qualified to help Coronado with his vision. Sgt. Edward Dominguez, a mechanic assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, is a mechanical designer back home in Irvine, Calif. He assured Coronado he and his Soldiers could do the job, they just needed the parts.

"We had no parts, no materials so I searched the whole FOB everyday looking through trashcans," Dominguez said. "We found a lot of scrap (metal) lying around the motorpool."

Once they had the beginnings of the arm-cycle, Dominguez modeled the concept on his computer in three days. After he had the model, it was time to start cutting steel and hand shaping every part of the bike except the nuts and bolts.


The Post Exchange donated broken bicycles and one of his Soldiers picked through the junkyard to find every conceivable part that could be used on the project.

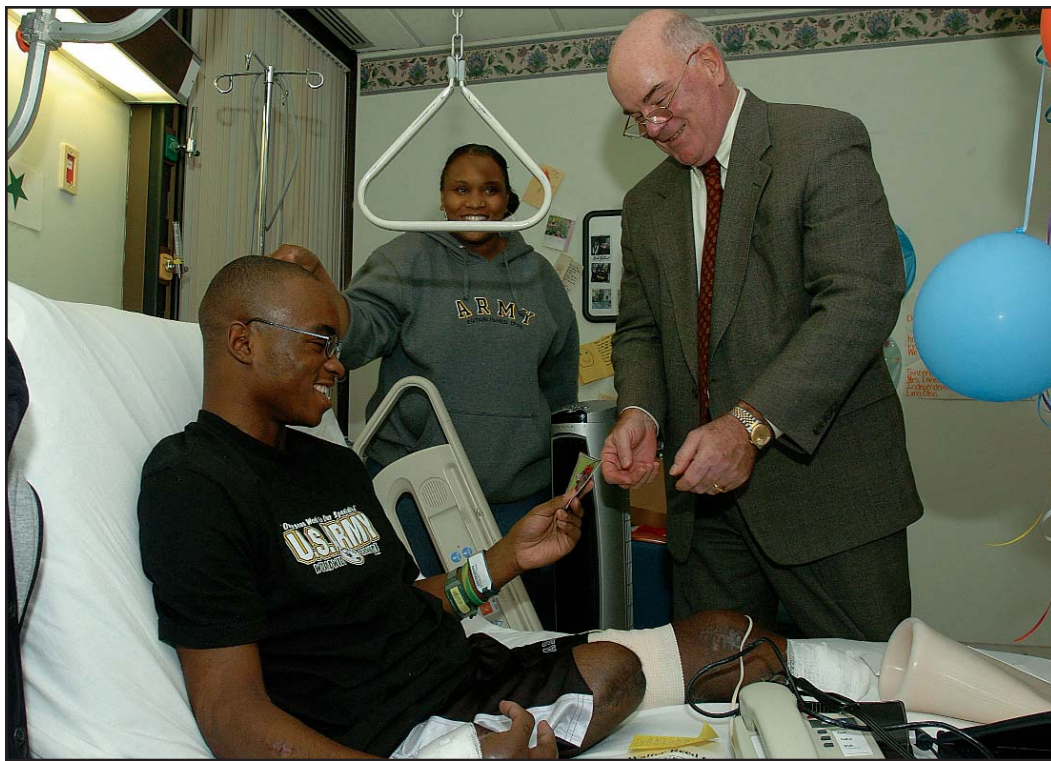
The project was completed in three months, including many nights where Dominguez stayed up until midnight or later.

Although Dominguez was not collecting any overtime pay, he was repaid more than he could have hoped when he accompanied the Soldiers who presented Mohammed with his new mode of transportation.

"This is the best feeling I've had in a long time," Dominguez said. "It's like a little kid on Christmas, it felt good. It's hard to live in this country as it is. ... He does what he can for his family, his clan. That's why I wanted to do the project for him."

For Dominguez, it was a tangible result of all the hard work the military has put into rebuilding the country.

"I'm just glad that we could help this guy and to see that we are really doing something here, not just waging war. I'm never going to complain again... maybe just a little bit," he joked. "This makes all the hard hours worthwhile." 



The Honorable Francis J. Harvey, secretary of the Army, presents Staff Sgt. Ronell Bradley with the patch his Soldiers designed for him.

Courtesy Photo

Soldier honored with patch while recovering from injuries

Spc. Dan Balda

4th BCT PAO

There are many Soldiers who join the Army for the experience, for the health and college benefits and because of their love of country. If those Soldier's lives were changed drastically, they might take the Army up on its offer to join the civilian world.

Staff Sgt. Ronell Bradley lost one of his legs in an IED attack while on a Buffalo mission and had to have the other leg removed during surgery at the combat support hospital in Baghdad.

Bradley's battalion sergeant major, Command Sgt. Major Clarence Stanley, was present to make sure he was okay. Right before Bradley was anesthetized he implored Stanley, "Don't let me out of the Army."

The Army has every intention of honoring Bradley's wishes; but while he is recovering from his injuries at Walter Reed Army Hospital, his brothers in E Company, 4th Battalion, 64 Armor do not want anybody to forget what he means to them.

The company has designed a patch inscribed with "Don't let me out of the Army," that each Soldier carries on their person when they go on patrol. It's their way of taking him out on patrol even while he recovers.

Sgt. Rayner Lopez, a team leader who was in the vehicle with Bradley when it was struck, designed the patch. The Miami native wanted to honor Bradley and his sacrifice, but almost as important, he wanted to honor his friend and mentor.

"He was my first team leader when I got into the Army," Lopez said. "He taught me everything I know, and I owe all my military accomplishments to him."

They served together during OIF I and made it home together, and even though Bradley won't be on the airplane going back to the United States with Lopez, Lopez will make sure his patch is fastened snugly in his pocket until he can see his mentor.

By chance, Bradley has already seen the patch that bears the unofficial motto of E Company. The Secretary of the Army, Francis Harvey, was visiting FOB Prosperity and a Soldier managed to tell him all about Bradley and presented Harvey with a

patch. Once Harvey returned to the States he made his way to visit Bradley at Walter Reed. He presented him with the patch and told him how his brethren back in Iraq had chosen to keep a small part of him out in sector with them.

Capt. Barrett Emenheiser, Bradley's company commander couldn't say enough nice things about Bradley and his obvious aptitude at his job.

"The Army is his life, he is a hardcore Sapper, he is a graduate of the Marine Sapper Leadership Course (Urban Mobility Breaching Course) a real tough school," said Emenheiser, a native of Lebanon, Penn. "He epitomizes what a Sapper should be."

Emenheiser said that Bradley goes the extra mile when it comes to training his Soldiers. He thinks it ended up saving his life.

"It was his squad members that pulled him out of the Humvee, administered initial first aid and evacuated him to the (combat support hospital)," Emenheiser said. "Whenever they had downtime he was doing weapons training, PT or something else to make sure his guys excelled. He went above the call of duty of any squad leader I have ever seen in my 10 years in the Army."


Since Bradley has been at Walter Reed, he has been visited by Secretary Rumsfeld and President Bush. Emenheiser thinks this may have to do with his personality.

"He is a great American," Emenheiser said. "He loves being a warrior he loves being with Soldiers. He is light to everyone; he has a big smile and a huge heart."

Sgt. 1st Class Dennis Brigham, Bradley's platoon sergeant and a native of Manheim, Germany was the one who carried him into the CSH and was as amazed then at how calm Bradford was. He is not amazed at how hard Bradley has been working at Walter Reed.

"He just took his first step with his prosthesis (recently)," Brigham said. "I'm not surprised at all."

Emenheiser can't wait to see Bradley in action back at Fort Stewart.

"He is that dedicated that when we have a division run or something, he will be running faster than the fallouts and trying to motivate them as best he can. He is a real inspiration." 

Patriots memorialize leader, friend

Spc. Dan Balda
4th BCT PAO

1st Lt. Kevin Smith, or KJ to his friends, was remembered as one who did not shrink from the fight.

The A Battery, 1st Battalion, 76th Field Artillery Regiment Soldier was killed when an IED struck his vehicle, Dec. 8.

Lt. Col. Daniel Pinnell, 1-76 battalion commander, began his remarks using an oft-used passage from Shakespeare's Henry V slightly modified to fit the circumstances.

"Let he that hath no stomach for this fight depart. His path shall be made and coins for travel put into his purse. We will not fight in that man's company. Who fears the fellowship to serve to suffer, and perchance to die with us. He that outlives this day, and comes home safe will stand on tiptoe when these days are named and rouse himself the names of his fallen comrades. He that shall live through these last days to see old age, will yearly on that day throw a feast for his neighbors. Then he will strip his sleeve to show his scars and say, 'These wounds I earned with my fellow patriots in the land between the rivers. Where civilization was born and nearly perished. Old men forget nearly all things will we forget but he will remember with absolute clarity what feats he did in these days. Than shall our names familiar in his mouth as household words, be freshly remembered as they drain their toast. The stories of these days will the good man teach us and day shall ne'er go by from this day till the ending of time but we in it shall be remembered. We few, we happy few we band of brothers for he that sheds his blood with me today shall be my brother.'

Smith was somewhat new to Iraq, having answered his commander's call to help restore the strength of a team damaged by tragedy. Pinnell lauded his infectious smile and can-do attitude along with his exceptional care of his fellow Soldiers and camaraderie as the prime reasons for the rebirth of confidence in that unit.

According to Pinnell, one of Smith's favorite sayings was, "Quitters do not win, and winners never quit."



Spc. Dan Balda

1st Lt. Colby Broadwater pays his final respects to his fellow platoon leader.

"And contrary to the supposed words of wisdom that tell you the opposite, nothing ventured is absolutely everything lost," Pinnell said. "Kevin was absolutely everything lost."

Capt. Brian Adams, Smith's battery commander remembered the night Smith arrived in Baghdad. He arrived in the middle of the night and was told to get some sleep and when he was ready Adams would brief him on everything

he needed to know regarding his mission. Smith told Adams that he didn't need the sleep and stood ready to execute the mission.

"This was typical of Kevin," Adams said. "He needed minimal guidance to execute the more difficult missions. He never complained and always gave the credit for a job well done to his

PATRIOT continued Page 10

Soldiers assigned to 3rd Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, take a moment to reflect on the loss of “the kind of hero we dreamed about being as kids.”

Spc. Dan Balda



Soldiers honor memory of fallen trooper

Spc. Dan Balda

4th BCT PAO

Soldiers assigned to the 3rd Infantry Division and other units came together to mourn the loss of a fellow Soldier at Forward Operating Base Falcon Nov. 30.

Sgt. 1st Class Eric Pearrow, a platoon sergeant assigned to M Company, 3rd Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment was killed Thanksgiving Day in a tank accident.

Lt. Col. Ross Brown, 3-3's squadron commander spoke with the audience at length about his decision to move Pearrow's platoon leader to another platoon because of "his talent, maturity and leadership; but also because of my complete faith in Pearrow as a leader," he said.

Brown recalled how lucky he was to have spoken with Pearrow Thanksgiving Day. Brown said he had spoke to him on ly a few hours before the accident and was glad for the opportunity.

"I explained it was my confidence in him that played such a large part in why I moved his lieutenant. I'm very thankful I was able to tell Sergeant Pearrow this before he died."

Brown did have one solace from Pearrow's death however.

"He died doing something that he loved to do, that was to tank," Brown said. "He thrived in being a tanker on the move and in the fight."

Pearrow's company commander, Capt. Michael Hensley preferred to remember him as a hero.

"The kind of hero we dreamt about being as kids," Hensley said. "Pearrow was a professional noncommissioned officer who was extremely dedicated. He served his country with the vigor and tenacity of a true cavalry trooper."

He shared a story of his first meetings as a new company commander with his platoon sergeants to discuss their Soldiers.

"Initially Pearrow was laid back and quiet," Hensley said. "He would present his information but never expand it beyond the topic we were covering. As we went on and I learned more about him, I realized that everything I needed to know was just a question away. Anytime I would stop in he would smirk, he would huff and he would ensure that I knew the displeasure with the tasking or mission that was falling on Maddog. And then I would learn that he had already looked at this issue and developed a way to fix it."

According to Hensley, Pearrow not only met the standard but he made sure he was taking standards to higher levels.

"He would take my company standards, even the ones he thought were garrison policies, revise them, improve them and emplace them to ensure that his Soldiers led the way. He led from the front and ensured their health and welfare came first. He loved his job, he loved his platoon and even though we lost him last week we can be comforted that he died doing what he loved."

White Platoon Leader 2nd Lt. Pedro Rivera had an especially unique story to share with the assembled mourners. He had known Pearrow in some way, shape or form for the last 10 years. They had been stationed together as both young NCO's and drill sergeants.

Rivera remembered the two of them as "young tank gunners trying to take over the whole armor force." He explained how even 10 years ago, Pearrow's skills as a tanker went high above all his peers and most of his supervisors.

They reunited later as drill sergeants in the same training company at Fort Knox. As they neared the end of their time training young privates, Rivera prepared to head off to officer

THUNDER continued next page



Spc Dan Balda

Pfc. Adam Mattis, displays the injuries received when Lt. Smith saved his and three other Soldiers lives.

Patriot continued from Page 8

Soldiers.”

Some might think that his easygoing attitude was because of carelessness. Adams disagreed with that notion saying, “(It) was because of confidence. His style of leadership was fun caring and stern. He was a superb junior leader and a great friend.”

1st Lt. Colby Broadwater, one of Smith’s fellow platoon leaders, took his turn at the lectern not to remind the assembled mourners of KJ the Soldier, but KJ the friend.

As officers sometimes spend time with their own, Smith went against the grain and befriended everybody he came across, regardless of rank or unit affiliation.

“He would help Soldiers that weren’t even in his platoon deal with financial difficulties,” Broadwater said. “He’d spend hours talking to people not in his battery about their lives and their plans for lives.” He reminded the Soldiers present to remember the sage-like advice they received.


One Soldier was in a unique position, as Smith’s driver to receive a large

amount of that advice.

Pfc. Adam Mattis, spoke of a new lieutenant who swiftly won his Soldiers over with his quick wit, discipline and care for his new charges.

“He gave us the goal of having the highest PT average of any platoon in the battalion,” Mattis said. “Not because he wanted to brag but because he wanted to teach us that with a little teamwork we could accomplish anything.”

Mattis remembered his L-T as kind and full of life, but who also went the extra mile to make sure all the guys in his truck got home safely. His final act assured that his guys would be able to tell their grandchildren about 1st Lt. Kevin Smith.

“What happened Thursday morning was tragic,” Mattis said. “But if it had to happen, he wouldn’t have wanted it any other way. He always told us that he would do anything for us. It is my belief that on that morning he saved the lives of Capt. Putnam, Lt. Peterson, Spc. Krebs and myself. And for that I am eternally grateful. I can say that for those of us whose lives he touched, his memory will last an eternity.” 



A Soldier assigned to 3-3 ACR pays his final respects to Sgt. 1st Class Eric Pearrow at FOB Falcon, Nov. 30.

Thunder continued from previous page

candidate school and the two young men thought would be funny if after Rivera earned his commission he became Pearrow’s platoon leader.


They laughed at the absurdity of the whole idea as they each left to their new assignments. A year and a half later their paths crossed yet again, this time in Iraq in the same company, Rivera commanding Pearrow’s platoon.

“As a platoon sergeant, Eric always placed readiness first,” Rivera said. “He believed by doing that he was protecting his Soldiers from the dangers of this deployment. He was an old school tanker, who ran his platoon efficiently and always to standard. I was truly honored to be assigned to the same platoon as he was, this time I was his PL, during my first night out on patrol he showed me the squadrons AO and briefed me on it.

“That night we talked for hours about the old days, old friends. We also laughed about the times we got in trouble. Eric is a true tanker, a true hero, a true friend, and we owe him more than we can ever repay.”

Sgt. Chris Hanmer knew Pearrow from basic training as well. Except in his case Pearrow was his drill sergeant.

“When I heard my drill sergeant from basic training was going to be my platoon sergeant, I was nervous, but just like anything he had another side that not everyone saw,” Hanmer said. “Even though he was physically one of the biggest men I have ever seen, he was just a big kid who loved to play with his toys. The Army was the place where he found them. He took me under his wing as his mentor and showed me how to lead and to be a better person. He was like a dad to me.”

Rivera summed up the assembled mourners feelings best when he finished his remarks with, “Eric, I am much honored to have served with you as a young noncom, as a drill sergeant and as your platoon leader. Thank you for the memories and the good times we had.” 



Maj. Alayne Conway



Photos by Spc. Dan Balda

Iraqis set milestone with national elections



Spc. Timothy Story
An Iraqi woman holds an Iraqi flag after voting during the historic Dec. 15 national elections.



Spc. Timothy Story

Iraqis wait in line for their chance to vote in the historic Dec. 15 national elections.



Spc. Dan Balda

Iraqi children play soccer in the streets during the Dec. 15 national elections.

Generations of Iraqis cast their vote

Spc. Dan Balda
4th Brigade Combat Team PAO

The day seemed downright festive: children marched in impromptu parades, men wore suits (on their day off no less), entire families took long walks from their homes to polling sites.

The Iraqi parliamentary elections Dec. 15 gave Iraqis a chance to showcase the pride they have in their country and the hope they have for the future.

“Nationalism is defined by the actions of the people,” said Maj. Ross Coffman, 4th Brigade Combat Team executive officer. “It only takes a moment to see their faces as they vote, to see their pride, not only because they are voting but because they are part of something bigger. That is promising. Not only for the efforts we’ve made, but also for the future of the country.”

The future seems to be the center of Coffman’s focus and for good reason.

“Today, they chose their leaders for the

next four years,” Coffman said. “If someone chooses to vote as many did, they chose to vote because they believe in the future of their country. It’s another step for democracy for this country, but it also shows that Iraqis believe in their future.”

Hundreds of thousands of Baghdad residents were able to vote mainly because of the security at polling stations provided by Iraqi Security Forces.

Coffman said the violence stayed at or below normal levels. There were a few terrorist attacks with improvised explosive devices and isolated indirect fire incidents, but otherwise election day was very safe, he said. This can be directly attributed to the ISF, who took the lead on all matters electoral.

“The ISF took the front, just as they have for the last two elections,” Coffman said. “Basically this was run by Iraqis, the polls and the security, and the Americans were there in case something happened and they needed our assistance. Today was another milestone in the ISF’s capabilities. They were able to secure numerous sites across the country and prevent Anti-Iraqi Forces from influencing those sites.”

Staff Sgt. James Bryant, a team leader with B Company, 4th Battalion, 64th

Armor Regiment was especially heartened by the performance of the ISF. He has been part of a military transition team training ISF members since August. He ran into a number of his former trainees during a foot patrol through Karradah during the election.

“It’s great seeing these men out here because they are like my own Soldiers,” he said. “When you train up the new guys in your unit, and you see them excel, it’s a good feeling to see them out there and see that they are using all the skills they’ve learned and (are) doing their job. It’s going to make a big difference for this country’s future.”

Coffman was heartened by the actions of the troops on this monumental occasion.

“The job the Iraqis and our forces have done is nothing short of amazing,” he said. “The Military Transition Teams and Special Police Training Teams that have stood beside the Iraqi forces during training and mission execution over the last year will carry Iraqi security in the future for the next five to 10 years. It’s an honor being part of America’s team here in Iraq, standing side by side with Iraq’s team making sure that this is a safe place for the Iraqi people.”



Photos by Spc. Dan Balda

An Iraqi family makes their way to their local polling site during the Iraqi Parliamentary Elections.



Spc. Timothy Story

(Above) Iraqi Police search people before they enter the voting center during the elections.



(Right) An Iraqi man has his identification checked prior to voting during the Iraqi Parliamentary Elections.



A Soldier assigned to B Company, 4th Battalion, 64th Armor passes in front of election posters during a dismounted patrol during the Iraqi Parliamentary Elections.

Patriots work to keep officials safe on roads

Spc. Dan Balda

4th BCT PAO

For the myriad of groups that aid in the reconstruction of Iraq, they are often on the road, inspecting sites, and providing advice to the Iraqi ministries. The Patriots of 1st Battalion, 76th Field Artillery Regiment are essential to this mission as often they are escorts and guardians for these agencies, and for many people, they are the escort of choice.

Marine Lt. Col. Steven Christensen, a logistician by trade, is the logistics advisor for the Iraqi Ministry of Interior. As per his job title, he spends about 12 hours a week working directly with the MOI director-general of logistics so he spends a lot of time on the road.

With the present threat on the roads he could not perform his job without a security escort. According to Christensen, his escort of choice is 1-76.

"They keep things very low-key and are very responsive to my needs," he said. "They are extremely professional ... when they perceive a threat, they will place their vehicle between the threat and my vehicle."

During one of Christensen's trips to the MOI, one Patriot showed the entire Army what it meant to be professional. Spc. Miguel Carrasquillo was the gunner in the lead truck when he saw a suicide bomber coming towards the convoy. He intercepted the suicide bomber that was coming for the vehicles and engaged the car with his weapon causing the bomber to detonate his load early, killing Carrasquillo, but sparing the rest of the convoy, Christensen said.

An extreme example of what being dedicated to the mission maybe, but to Christensen it showed how a field artillery unit was able to adapt to a new mission upon arriving in Iraq.

"(My first time in Iraq) I was here with a Marine civil affairs team and we had to take a lot of Marines and convert them to Civil Affairs," he said. "That's what we do in the military. You adapt, do your training and complete the mission."

One of the things he appreciates about 1-76 is that they are more receptive to him as a passenger. He shared the story of a recent trip when a civilian vehicle was getting too close to his convoy and the gunner used a little bit of foul language to warn the car off. Christensen spoke up and the patrol leader immediately asked the gunner to



keep his language down.

"Everything was smooth," Christensen said. "You can understand why he would get excited but at the same time he was professional as soon as it was brought to their attention they brought it under control."

Lisa Bachiller, who works at the U.S. Embassy, feels much the same way Christensen does, and believes the Patriots treat (Iraqis) like the good, hardworking people they are.

She works for the IRMO on implementing the advanced first responder network system. When finished, the system will offer 16 cities a 911 dispatch-type of capabilities. This will allow the police and ambulances, among others, to respond to emergencies more efficiently. As part of her job she must travel with a security escort all over the country. She takes these meetings very seriously, and not just because it is her job but because she is taking a number of young men into the unpredictability of the Red Zone.

"It puts a lot of pressure on me personally to make sure I make the most of the meetings that I plan," Bachiller said. "I often try to explain to the Patriots what I'm doing so they understand how they are helping to reconstruct Iraq."

Bachiller has a 22-year-old son who just graduated from college that plans on joining the military in the near future. Seeing as how most of the Soldiers that escort her are close to her son's age, she feels protective of them.

"From the very beginning I look at them like there are my own children," Bachiller said. "They all have mothers just like me

back in the States worrying about their sons. I really take my job seriously so that if something happens, and I'm holding one of their sons after an attack than I could look in the face of that mother, and I could tell her that it was worth it; that he gave his life for something important."

Since she would not be able to pick many of the Soldiers she encounters out of a lineup because of the amount of protective gear they wear, she thinks of them as a group of quasi-Lone Rangers.

"They are like the masked men of goodwill, putting their lives on the line for me," Bachiller said. "They are serving their country and believing in a higher mission of helping the Iraqi people and performing this mission that they weren't really trained to do to the best of their ability and with professionalism. They say, 'Well if I can't shoot off artillery I might as well drive around Baghdad and protect these State Department officials.'"

One of the things that makes Bachiller proud is the fact that they take their ambassador role seriously. She laughs as she talks about the Patriots driving around using a microphone to speak in Arabic to the people they pass.

"If it's not an Arabic speaker there is some sergeant from Texas using his drawl to be polite and clearing traffic," she said.

Their ability to safely maneuver through traffic adds to the blanket of safety, Bachiller feels they wrap around her.

"They are vigilant and keep everybody safe while also being ambassadors of goodwill," Bachiller said. "I see it in the faces of the Iraqi people; they smile and look up in awe at the gunners."

"They are like the masked men of goodwill, putting their lives on the line for me."

3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment Cottonbalers



The Cottonbalers completed their transfer of authority with 1/7 Cav. Feb. 15 and immediately set out to dominate their battle space. Over the course of the year, the battalion would experience tragedy and success in bringing security to the area and setting the stage for two dramatic democratic exercises by the Iraqi people. Now preparing to go home, the Cottonbalers can look back with a mixture of pride in what they accomplished, sorrow for fallen brothers, and hope for the future of this country.

3-7 Inf. knew coming out of TOA that the battalion would have a hard fight on its hands. The battle space included neighborhoods of high-ranking former Baathists, enclaves of aggressive Mahdi Militia units, as well as potent mixture of local and foreign insurgents. Perhaps most importantly, area of operations Baler included the notorious Route Irish. Not long after taking operational control of West Rashid, 3-7 Inf. struck to destroy terrorist cells in the area. April 3 the Cottonbalers conducted Operatin Saydiyah Sweep which detained several former Baathists and the insurgent network.

April 30, the battalion struck again during Operation Baler Reloaded. Again, this was a battalion level operation designed to dismantle terrorist cells in AO BALER. Three more times during the course of the year, the Cottonbalers massed their forces to strike at the heart of the insurgency in the area. Operation Saydian Slam (June 2), Operation Baler Resolve (Sept. 10), and Operation Coffin Nail (Oct. 6) were the other large-scale raid operations conducted by 3-7 Inf. during OIF III. All of these raids were successful in clearing the area of insurgent personnel and equipment. In fact, throughout OIF III, the Cottonbalers posted an 89 percent Abu Ghraib retention rate. In other words, those who were targeted and arrested were almost always convicted of terrorist activities.

The high success and retention rates of the battalion allowed the Cottonbalers to focus their efforts on Route Irish, where IED and rocket attacks remained a substantial threat. In June, the battalion began Operation Irish Ghost. This operation was a combination of lethal targeting, information operations, and civil-military operation projects. Meanwhile, patrols conducted sweeps up and down the route in order to find IEDs and push civilian traffic

off of the sides and median of the road. The message went out through the Iraqi media: Do not stop on Highway 8 for any reason. The battalion put up signs along the road stating the same message. As a result, the Cottonbalers were able to minimize the hazards presented by terrorist activity hidden by civilian traffic. The results of the operation are indisputable. The battalion found more than 40 percent of all IEDs placed on the route. Also, those that were detonated usually did not pack much of a punch because insurgents did not have the time to emplace a large device. The operation was so successful that the sister battalion adopted the same techniques in their areas of responsibility. Perhaps one statistic most clearly illustrates the success of Operation Irish Ghost: Since March, no U.S. soldiers were killed on Route Irish.

The Cottonbalers are also proud of the amount of non-lethal operations conducted during their time here in Baghdad. Since July, the battalion has conducted at least one large-scale MEDCAP operation in the battalion area of operations. During these operations, 3-7 Inf. was able to bring desperately needed medical supplies and medical treatment to people in their sector. The MEDCAPs helped each company to bring communities together by supplying the children with toys, candy and soccer balls. Each one of these weekly events became festivals in which the Cottonbalers could demonstrate the goodwill and generosity of American Soldiers and the American people. Every soldier in the battalion credits these operations to the high morale of the troops and the trust built with the local residents of West Rasheed.

Finally, the events of June 20th are seen by the Cottonbalers as the truly seminal moment in the course of events in West Rashid and around Baghdad. On that day, several patrols from the battalion had to fight through complex ambushes in order to help Ministry of Interior Commandos and Iraqi Police Officers who were being attacked in the municipality of Al Bayaa. 30 foreign fighters had infiltrated the area and launched a brutal attack on Commando and IP stations on Route Raiders. Using VBIEDs, RPGs and small arms, the foreigners attacked. However, the ISF, led by Lt. Col. Jalal of the IPs

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1st Battalion, 76th Field Artillery Regiment Patriots

1st Battalion, 76th Field Artillery Regiment, also known as the “Patriot” battalion, was re-activated June 24, 2004 during the 3rd Infantry Division’s re-organization. What was originally conceived as the Vanguard Brigade’s on-call indirect fire asset was called upon to evolve itself to adapt to a non-standard mission. Training on various tasks that included dismounted infantry patrolling to room clearing – the unit took on the combat escort mission for the Brigade, where “Patriot” Soldiers place their lives in harms way daily to transport U.S. Embassy personnel to destinations throughout central Iraq.

Since the unit deployed to the combat theater in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom III, on Jan. 23, the Soldiers of the unit have conducted 3,642 combat escort missions that have transported 56,544 principals (U.S. Embassy Personnel) safely to their destinations without loss or injury over 509,000 miles of IED and ambush laden roads. In addition to principals, the “Patriot” Soldiers ensured the safe delivery of \$47.41 billion to the Iraqi government, providing it with the veritable fuel that drives reconstruction and development.


On numerous occasions, the unit had found itself in harms way. One of the most notable occasions occurred on May 24, when a B Battery, 1-76 FA combat escort patrol was hit by an EFP attack. Three Soldiers were mortally wounded in the initial attack. While a vehicle lay smoldering in flames with a critically injured principal inside, Lt. Kutataladze of the Georgian Army and Staff Sgt. Vernon A. Jackson rushed to the vehicle to rescue him from imminent death. Vernon then began to perform first aid immediately upon moving him to safety.



Subsequently after removing his fellow Coalition Forces brother that was trapped in the vehicle, it exploded. Jackson placed the life of another Soldier/principal before his own. Acts of heroism such as this are the embodiment of the Battalion’s creed “Liberty or Death.” The selflessness and courage of the battalion’s Soldiers became well known throughout the U.S. diplomatic community, as it accrued its many accolades. The battalion received laudation from the State Department for its outstanding execution of their daily mission.

The 418 Soldiers that make up the battalion have proven themselves time and time again upon the most dangerous roads in the world. Of these 418 Soldiers, 316

received the Combat Action Badge. Their valor and courage provided the means by which the people of Iraq will be allowed to experience what most of them have never truly known – freedom and democracy. However, this did not come without cost. Six “Patriots” gave their lives in the fight to end 30 years of oppression and tyranny. Another 21 Soldiers received the Purple Heart for wounds sustained during combat in OIF III.


In conclusion, the “Patriot” Battalion has written itself into the annals of history during its participation in this conflict. The courage and steadfastness of the “Patriot” soldiers will facilitate the rebirth of a nation and the unshackling of a people. 

Continued from previous page

fought off the attackers, killing all but seven of the attackers (the rest were captured). By the time the Cottonbalers could get to the main objective area, the ISF had the situation under control. 3-7 Inf. forces then swept the area killing and capturing four of the attackers. A large cache of mortars, RPGs and small arms was found.

Of all of the effects of this great success story, none was more noticeable than the new confidence of the ISF. They went from being too timid to patrol the streets to actively pursuing and killing the enemy. It was if their performance proved to themselves that they could defeat the terrorists. They continue to do so to this day.

All things considered, the Soldiers of 3-7 Inf. can look back with pride on everything they have accomplished in the last year. After two successful electoral operations in which no

attacks took place, the Cottonbalers acknowledge the friendships they have built with the local people. They can also see their brothers in the ISF doing what they are trained to do. The Iraqi Security Forces in West Rashid are ready to assume the main effort in the fight against terrorism in their own country. The Cottonbalers look forward to watching them do so with pride. For the men of 3-7 Inf, one thing will ring true. Their mission was accomplished. 



4th Battalion, 64th Armored Regiment Tuskers



Late January 2005, Task Force 4-64 Armor deployed to Camp New York, Kuwait, in order to prepare for Iraq. While in Kuwait, the task force conducted small arms training, IED classes, entry control point training, Abrams tank screening, Bradley weapon zeroing and prepared for onward movement.

After signing for equipment from 3-8 Cav., and conducting right and left seat rides, Task Force 4-64 Armor conducted a transfer of authority March 3, with the primary mission of securing the International Zone, controlling the neighborhoods of Salhya, Janain, Tashree, and Qadisya, in the district of Karkh, and training 302nd Iraqi National Guard Battalion. The Task Force conducted these missions with the organic companies of: Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Alpha, Bravo,

Charlie, Delta, Engineer, and the Forward Support Company; along with the attached units of B Company, 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry Regiment from the California National Guard, F Troop, 2nd Squadron, 278th Cavalry Regiment, from the Tennessee National Guard; and Alpha Company, 4th Anti-Terrorism Battalion (United States Marine Corps). The Task Force military in transition team with the ING battalion's focus was to control and clear the Haifa Street area of Karkh, known to be the worst area of Baghdad.

During April, the Task Force's battlespace expanded to include the the district of Karadah; along with mission of training 2nd Battalion, 5th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division. The Headquarters Company conducted basic training for the new Iraqi Army battalion and began patrolling the streets of Karadah.

The MTT taught the Iraqi Army soldiers how to conduct squad, platoon, company and with battalion level operations. They also taught the Iraqi Soldiers how to better interact with the local populace, collect intelligence, and conduct administrative and logistical operations.

In June 2005, the Task Force battle-

space expanded again with adding the neighborhoods of Kindi and Zawrar in Karkh. The Task Force also was given an additional IA Battalion to train, 1st Battalion, 5th IA Brigade. B Company assumed the responsibility to train the new IA battalion, and began conducting joint patrols in the district of Karkh.

In July 2005, the Task Force Engineer Company was given the mission to conduct IED sweep missions with the newest vehicle in the Army's inventory, the Buffalo. Over the past five months the company has successfully conducted more than 220 missions, finding at least 50 IEDs.

In late August, the Task Force was given the additional mission to train the 5th Iraqi Army Brigade. This mission entailed manning the brigade staff, housing them and finding suitable working conditions.

The Task Force completed the renovations of a headquarters building in the International Zone, which would then be used to house the 5th Iraqi Army Headquarters and staff.

Throughout the months of August and September, the Task Force focused on Operation Thunder. The Division level operation was aimed at disrupting VBIED makers and cells throughout the area of operations. During these missions, Iraqi Army and Task Force 4-64 Armor, conducted multiple cordon and knocks detaining possible insurgents and confiscating VBIED making materials in the District of Karadah.



See *TUSKERS*, page 23

6th Squadron, 8th Cavalry Regiment Mustangs



Lt. Col. Mike Harris
Squadron Commander, 6-8 Cavalry

This evening while enjoying a meal with some fine Mustang Troopers, they were explaining to me, with amazement in their voices, how incredible it feels to be so close to the completion of our deployment and how quickly this year has gone. But soon after expressing their enjoyment, they began speaking about their next assignment, about being promoted to the next grade, and the need to get to their next unit in order to begin preparation for the next deployment; and then the discussion transitioned to complaining about flights home they knew would be delayed, to hassles of getting their vehicles out of storage, the high cost of gas, and having to wear the new uniform. I couldn't help but recall the words of wisdom from many of our experienced NCOs, "If Joe ain't complaining then something is wrong." Soldiers are amazing ... the Lord's gift to a free society. Soldier's will complain about having to go on a deployment, complain during the deployment, yet many of them will look forward with excitement to the next opportunity to deploy, to serve and lead others in combat.

The great thing about meal-time is it provides Soldiers the forum to recount the day's events, and to recall and often embellish the more exciting missions they've been part of, or swear they were part of. Although the Soldiers accept that we are all part of one team, Soldiers of one squad will always attempt to convince Soldiers from another squad that their success was greater and that the only reason the other squad was even half-way successful was based more on luck than on talent or intestinal fortitude...and the bantering goes on and on. Normally, I just sigh, listen and smile during these bolstering sessions, often laugh out loud with the men, but inside, I always recall the truism that every leader understands regarding luck... We are all great believers in luck, and we find the more we prepare, the more we have of it. I'm grateful for the luck we've all enjoyed this year...and the tremendous success we have incurred as a result of that luck... and the training we conducted before our arrival.

Listening to these stories I'm also reminded of the phrase that, "Teamwork is the essence of life," and the fact that for many of our Soldiers, the opportunity to participate in this mission will fill their lives with a sense of lasting significance, the opportunity to have participated and contributes in an event so significant that the

outcome will have a global impact for decades to come. My hope is that all our Soldiers understand that what they have contributed and sacrificed is for possibly the greatest cause.

It's been a great deployment for the squadron. The men and two women female search team from the 4th Brigade Troops Battalion, initially assumed a sector consisting of more than 120 sq. km, consisting of approximately 250,000 Iraqis. The previous unit was being engaged by the enemy almost every night and it was common for mortars and rockets to be fired from this area into the International Zone. Within the first week of assuming sector, and with the assistance from B Company, 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment, A Co. 1st Battalion, 187 Infantry and E Battery, 1-23 Air Defense Artillery, enemy activity in the AO dropped to nearly zero, and the indirect fire attacks into the Green Zone stopped.

A couple of months later, the squadron got the opportunity to train the newly formed 5th Iraqi Army Brigade and its four subordinate battalions. Along with HHC/4-64 Armor, lots of patient mentoring from the enlisted, NCO and officer corps, within 10 weeks after beginning training, more than 2,500 Iraqi Soldiers were conducting counter insurgency operations in and around the IZ, in the Karadah Peninsula, in the rural areas south of Baghdad, and with our squadron along Airport Road and the adjacent Muhallas. Although not initially anticipated, when the training was completed and the men from our squadron, 4-64 Armor Battalion, and 3-3 Squadron began conducting combined operations with our Iraqi Army brothers, we all shared a great deal of pride in what we had accomplished, what the Iraqi Army had accomplished and the monumental task they have before them to assume our role with securing their borders and ridding their country of an insurgent force. For those of us who trained and have conducted dozens of combined operations with these Iraqi Soldiers, we have total confidence they will succeed.

Once the 5th IA Brigade was trained and its Soldiers distributed and assigned to other units in different AOs, the squadron assumed the mission to secure what was then called, "the most dangerous road in Iraq." Soon after assuming the mission we realized that this road had a bad rap. After a month of conducting combined operations with the 3rd Battalion of the 5th IA, with the

Continued next page

Continued from previous page

1st and 3rd Battalions of the Special Police supported by an outstanding SPTT team, we began referring to Airport Road as the most secure road in Baghdad. Once the squadron assumed the mission, the troopers simply conducted a thorough and deliberate area recon, installed obstacles to canalize all vehicular traffic, maintained persistent ISR operations and coordinated our activities with those of the Special Police and Iraqi Army... a true combined effort to accomplish the mission. Additionally, and just as important, the combined actions of 3-7 Infantry and 3-3 Squadron to our south, 4-64 Armor and 1-184 Infantry to our East, elements of 10th Mountain Division to our north and 1-3 Aviation in the skies above us have defeated the enemy to such a degree that Airport Road and the its adjoining Muhallas are reaping the benefits. At this point, we are now measuring our success in preparing our ISF to assume the area security mission with little more than oversight from our follow-on unit. To everyone involved, thanks for helping us with shaping our battle space to defeat insurgents, neutralize destabilizing influences, secure key terrain and train Iraqi Forces.

Looking back on this deployment the troopers of 6-8 Cav. have much to be proud of. much success, yet much sacrifice. We will never forget our two fallen comrades, Pfc. Landon Giles and Pfc. Min Soo Choi; God bless you both, and all the Coalition and Iraqi service men


that have given their lives for this great cause, Operation Iraqi Freedom.

On behalf of all the 6-8 Cavalry troopers, we would like to thank everyone who has given us the opportunity to serve our great country, to participate in the fight to rid the world of terrorism, to be members of 3rd Infantry Division, and the 4th Vanguard Brigade. It has been an honor to operate with the leaders and soldiers from the Cottonbaler, Stalker, Tusker, Viper, Patriot, Maintainer, and Sentinel battalions, the troopers from Thunder Squadron, the Georgians, and the hundreds of men that have volunteered to serve as members of the Iraqi Security Forces. The success our squadron achieved could only have occurred by the superior performance and from the determined efforts of your soldiers operating along our flanks and supporting our operations. We would like to thank our interpreters and the people of Iraq who are willing to move forward towards democracy and a better way of life, and to those who are willing to stand up against tyranny and those wishing to de-rail their future. All of you have contributed to making this a worth-wild experience for our troopers.

We would like to also thank our wonderful family readiness group members, specifically Meghan Smith, Sandy Hillig, Keyliz Castillo, and Danielle Corenchuk of Alpha Troop; Erica Hume and Lina Knight of Bravo Troop; Bea Miller, Kim Lee and Patti Notine of Charlie Troop; Kara Collins, Robin Arndt and Jenni Bable of the Forward Support Company; Jenni West,

Chandani Buccino and Hope Johnson of Headquarters Troop; and Vicki Taylor and Angie Harris representing the squadron leadership; and a special thank you to Bud and Georgia Ricci, John Hummer of Victory Trophy and Phil Pendergraft of Pension Financial Services. Your concerns for the well-being of our spouses and family members and generous contributions will forever be appreciated; your selfless efforts have directly enabled the troopers to concentrate on the mission while you ensured the families were offered support, understanding and when necessary, a helping hand.

We want to thank our Rear-Detachment team consisting of Capt. Ryan McDermott, Sgt. 1st Class Vega, Sgt. 1st Class Alvin and Staff Sgt. Kifferly and other family, friends and sponsors who have support operations on the home-front and provided valuable support to our forces forward in Iraq.

Lastly, I would like to thank the leadership of the squadron, my command sergeant major, Command Sgt. Maj. Taylor, one of the finest Soldiers I have ever had the privilege to serve with and a true friend, my field grade officers and staff, my troop commanders and first sergeants for being the key ingredient of a successful and enjoyable command, and lastly to all the fine American troopers that make up the combat power of the squadron. Squadron command has been nothing less than phenomenal because of all the Troopers that make up our team. My sincerest thanks and admiration to you all. Hoorah MUSTANGS!! 



1st Battalion, 184th Infantry Regiment Nightstalkers



Ken James/UPI


In February the men of 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry Regiment (Air Assault) deployed to Iraq. The unit is comprised of Guardsman from California and Minnesota. Following a brief left-seat/right-seat ride with elements from 1-8 Cav. the 184 Inf. began operations in Karrada and Al- Dora.

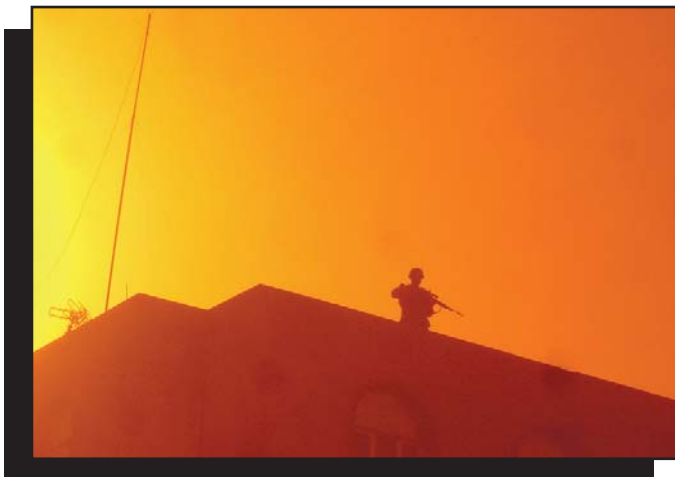
The men of the 1-184 spent their year in Iraq ensuring that the country would have the chance it needed to become a functioning democracy. They trained the ISF and observed raids conducted by the Wolf Brigade and 3-4 Public Order Brigade; thwarted terrorists bent on destroying the democratic process, gave food and medical supplies to the citizens of Iraq and secured several key sites to include The 14th of July Bridge, Dora Power Plant, and the Dora Oil Refinery.

The Soldiers of 184 not only killed and captured terrorists in a series of dynamic operations, they conducted numerous humanitarian missions. One of the most significant and dramatic of these missions was the rescue of a young girl who was shot by AIF in the neck. 184 Inf. medics quickly provided her with lifesaving first aid and then oversaw her evacuation to the combat support hospital, where she underwent a series of surgeries that removed the bullet from her neck. Other less glamorous but equally noble incidences of charity occurred daily as the men of the 184 Inf. undertook the task of winning the support of the local population. The results of their hard work paid off as Iraqi citizens began to report IED's and suspected terrorists in greater numbers. By far the most important work undertaken in the last year was protecting voters

and election officials during both the Iraqi Constitutional Referendum and the recent election of the Official Government. The lack of AIF activities in the 184 Inf. area of operations during the elections showed just how effective the training of the ISF by the 184 Inf. had been.

As of this time the 184 Inf. has been awarded 80 Purple Hearts, captured numerous terrorists, and participated in more than 26 major operations to include Operation Clean Sweep and Vanguard Tempest.

With the completion of their mission near at hand the soldiers of the 184 Inf. stand ready to assist their brothers of the incoming unit as they prepare to carry the torch of liberty forward in Iraq. 



703rd Forward Support Battalion Maintainers

The 703rd Forward Support Battalion deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom III roughly two years to the day from their deployment to Operation Enduring Freedom/Iraqi Freedom. This



battle-hardened FSB hit the ground running in Kuwait in late January. In three weeks time, the 703rd FSB would armor more than 100 vehicles, draw 30 pieces of prepositioned equipment from Kuwait, and move more than 100 containers to Camp New York, Kuwait in preparation for the movement into Iraq. This was accomplished while providing seamless support to the Vanguard Brigade's push north into Baghdad.

Upon arrival in Baghdad, the 703rd tackled the daunting task of establishing operations in two separate locations: one in the International Zone and one at Camp Falcon. On March 4, 703rd conducted a Transfer of Authority with two battalions from the 1st Cavalry Squadron, 215th FSB and 515th FSB respectively.

703rd assumed its support role to the Vanguard Brigade ensuring no interruption in combat operations. Providing split-based operations proved to be a challenge that 703rd mastered. Never allowing an interruption of supplies or services, the Vanguard Brigade focused on its mission to provide for a secure and stable

Baghdad. Continuous pushes of supplies to the IZ and back to Camp Falcon became the norm. Soldiers logged thousands of miles in combat logistics patrols through the most dangerous streets of Baghdad, most notably Route Irish.

Our Soldiers provided logistical support to more than 15 battalion-sized organizations including many area support customers not normally task-organized under the BCT throughout the Baghdad area. Our medical staff ensured more than 10,000 Soldiers, contractors, Department of Defense civilians, local nationals and detainees received world-class health care no matter the location or time of day.


With the draw down of the IZ, 703rd consolidated at Camp Falcon in mid-June. They provided uninterrupted support to the Vanguard Brigade while relocating itself, the IZ's ammunition holding area and a huge contingency of the brigade as well.

The Supply Support Activity has established itself as the busiest warehouse in the Division with one in 10 requisitions processed in the theater passing through 703rd's SSA. A Company, the battalion's distribution company, has provided more than one million gallons of fuel and thousands of gallons of potable water to the brigade, transported an innumerable amount of supplies, logged thousands of miles through the most dangerous routes in Iraq, and sustained the brigade through tough, focused support.

The field maintenance company (B Company) has afforded the brigade the ability to conduct its combat operations unhindered by maintenance readiness issues. In conjunction with the Forward Support Companies, the Field Maintenance Company has maintained 4th BCT's equipment to one of the highest operational readiness rates in the

Division: above 90 percent across all fleets. The medical company (C Company) has provided world-class health care to more than 10,000 Soldiers, contractors, DOD civilians, Iraqis, and detainees. They logged approximately 800 Explosive Ordnance support missions; managed more than 150 traumas, and conducted the most current training techniques for all medical personnel to ensure the Vanguard Brigade is well cared for.

The Headquarters and Headquarters Company has been the glue that has held the battalion together. Whether providing administrative support, equipment management, tactical updates, enemy intelligence, spiritual guidance, reenlistment services, or expert leadership guidance, the headquarters has allowed the companies to focus on their missions.

703rd FSB has been a great force multiplier to the Vanguard Brigade. The Soldiers have given their all in support of the brigade, the 3rd Infantry Division, and the United States. As the 703rd FSB's time to redeploy draws near, our Soldiers still focus on the mission. Once our replacements arrive, we can focus on one last mission: the redeployment of the best Soldiers that the Vanguard Brigade and 3rd Infantry Division has to offer. 



4th Brigade Troops Battalion Sentinel



The 4th Brigade Troops Battalion enhanced 4th Brigade Combat Team, Third Infantry Division during Operation Iraqi Freedom by establishing and maintaining a reliable communications network, providing timely and accurate intelligence collection and analysis, managing civil military operations, operating the Brigade Internment Facility, training Iraqi policemen and security forces, and providing female search teams.

A Company provided a reliable brigade communications network (99.94 percent efficiency rate) that supported the 4th BDE tactical operations command and TAC, five maneuver battalions, two support battalions, joint U.S. Forces, and two coalition battalions across an area spanning more than 500 square kilometers. The company used the Army's new satellite based systems (Joint Node Network and Command Post Nodes) and legacy systems (RETRANS, MSE, High Capacity LOS) to provide SIPRNET, SIPRLITE, NIPRNET, CENTRIX, and DSN services. A Co. accomplished all of this while retaining the most Soldiers within the battalion (a reenlistment rate of 229 percent).

The B Company produced more anti-Iraqi Forces and IED reports than any other signal intelligence site in Baghdad, Iraq. B Co. SIGINT platoon provided actionable intelligence on several AIF groups throughout theater that led to the capture of high level insurgents in 4th BCT's area of operations.

The platoon accredited and operated the only Secret Compartmentalized Information Facility in 4BCT. B Co.'s HUMINT platoon consistently led the division in productive actionable source reporting for the entire deployment by submitting more than 3,279 HUMINT reports.

The analysis control team collected, analyzed and developed 25 significant AIF targeting folders to support major BDE level operations, such as Vanguard Tempest, resulting in the capture of over 63 known insurgents in 4BCT AO and detention of 1,500 others suspected of terrorist activity.

Headquarter and Headquarters Company successfully executed several, diverse and complex tasks (reconstruction and contracting, base operations and force protection, female search

teams) in addition to providing superb military police, battalion staff and logistical support.

The battalion staff coordinated and tracked more than 1,000 combat patrols, 417 customs inspections, maintained a 97 percent average organizational ready rate and processed more than 300 awards. HHC increased troop billeting at FOB Union III by 10 percent and managed base operation and force protection for more than 600 tenants for six months without incident.

The military police platoon processed 2,000 detainees while overseeing the Brigade Internment Facility and conducted detainee transfer missions.

The military police platoon did much to train Iraqi policemen and security forces. They provided training and assessments of six police stations which helped get Iraqi policemen out of sub-standard, poorly secured police facilities and on the street supporting local residents.

The MP platoon also formed a 4th Brigade's Military in Transition Team to the Ministry of Defense. Their efforts great-

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improved the ministry's were critical to Iraqi Security Forces learning to secure, fight, and defend their newly formed government.

The Infrastructure Coordination Element (HHC) was involved with managing 326 civil and essential service projects worth more than \$248 million which benefited more than two million Baghdad residents.

This small (only five officers, two noncommissioned officers, and five Soldiers) yet dedicated section managed 50 electric projects (23 muhalla networks, rehabilitation of 15 power substations, and 12 electric feeders).

It also managed 50 water related projects such as 16 muhalla water nets, 11 treatment plants, and eight pump stations at a cost of more than \$27 million. The ICE managed 55 sewer related projects for over \$61 million including 21 pump station rehabilitations, eight muhallah network projects, and five sewer line collapse repair projects.

The section also contracted 15 VBIED/IED blast repairs to immediately assist local residents at cost exceeding \$700,000. It also managed contracts to resurface more than 30 kilometers of roads ranging from two lane neighborhood roads to six lane highways.


The ICE constructed five new med-



ical clinics, improved four hospitals, and constructed one health research facility for more than \$24 million.

The efforts of the ICE greatly increased Baghdad's capabilities to repair its infrastructure by purchasing: 33 construction and utility vehicles, tool sets, and spare parts for district sewer departments, 23 maintenance trucks for power departments, 40 com-

puters and automation equipment for city design departments to include training.

4-3 BTB strived daily throughout Operation Iraqi Freedom III to provide quality support and ensure success of Vanguard and Marne Teams efforts to increase security and stability of Baghdad, Iraq. "One Team One Fight". 

TUSKERS continued from page 17

From October through December, the Task Force with the 5th Iraqi Army Brigade focused on Operation Free Speech and Operation National Unity, in support of the Constitutional Referendum vote, and the General Parliamentary Election. Elements of the Task Force emplaced barriers throughout the Area of Operations at polling centers, while the 5th IA Brigade and IPs provided security at 37 polling sites and District Election Offices throughout the task force AO.

The Task Force also supported Operation Courthouse, in support of the Iraqi High Tribunal for the Saddam Hussein trial. The culmination event for Task Force 4-64 will occur Dec 29, when the Task Force transfers control of the Districts of Karkh and Karadah to the 5th Iraqi Army Brigade, who answers directly to 6th Iraqi Army Division. The significance of the event displays the first and only Iraqi Army Brigade trained by 3rd Infantry Division during Operation Iraqi Freedom III.

Throughout the year the Tusker Battalion has conducted various Humanitarian Assistance missions and Civil Military Operation projects in order to improve the local essential services and economy. Some of the projects include food drops throughout the neighborhoods of Kindi, Janain, and Karadah; school supplies being supplied to various local schools; soccer equipment supplied to the Iraqi Youth Soccer League; medical equipment being supplied to local hospitals; new generators being installed at the Salhiya orphanage and the Bibil Health Clinic; sewer pipe repairs throughout Karadah; renovations of the Al Bitar Hospital in Salhiya; and repairs to the Al Kindi Pumping Station.

The soldiers of the Task Force Tusker's received the following

metals and badges for the superb efforts during Operation Iraqi Freedom III: 33 Purple Hearts, 7 Bronze Stars for Valor, 172 Bronze Stars, 5 MSMs, 19 ARCOMs for Valor, 71 Combat Infantry Badges, 300 Combat Action Badges, and 9 Combat Medic Badges. The Tuskers strived to ensure that the Districts of Karkh and Karadah remain a safe and secure place for the Iraqi populace to live and work, while improving the Iraqi Army's training every day.

Tuskers ... We Pierce! 



Freedom is never free



*Your sacrifice
will never be
forgotten*